

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 1 of 84

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [3- Witte Exteriors Ad](#)
- [3- Today's Events](#)
- [4- Groton Transit Fundraiser Ad](#)
- [5- School Board Story](#)
- [6- Groton school board member to lead SDHSAA board](#)
- [6- Changes likely for All-State Band auditions](#)
- [7- Schools elect new SDHSAA board member, approve NIL amendment](#)
- [8- SDHSAA Board considers policy change for football schedules](#)
- [9- Jr. Teeners beat Watertown in pair of games](#)
- [11- Jr. Legion Tourney moved to Groton](#)
- [12- SD News Watch: Poll: Majority of South Dakotans want new system for primary elections](#)
- [16- SD SearchLight: Man in photo Noem used as alleged proof of cartels says it's hindered his right to a fair trial](#)
- [18- SD SearchLight: The wait begins for Leonard Peltier](#)
- [20- SD SearchLight: Noem's 'banish the cartels' obscures statewide drug problem, tribal leaders say](#)
- [24- SD SearchLight: Republican IVF bill fails in U.S. Senate](#)
- [27- Weather Pages](#)
- [31- Daily Devotional](#)
- [32- Subscription Form](#)
- [33- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [34- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Thursday, June 13

Senior Menu: Breaded pork cutlet, creamy noodles, tomato spoon salad, peaches, whole wheat bread.  
U12 R/B at Aberdeen 12, 5:30 p.m. (2)  
SB 10 Gld at Webster, 6 p.m. (2)  
SB hosts Mellette (U8 at 6 p.m. (1), U10 Blk at 6 p.m. (2), U12 at 7 p.m. (2))  
Wage Memorial Library Story Time, 10 a.m.  
Groton Lions Club Meeting, 6 p.m., at 104 N Main  
Youth Golf Lessons at Olive Grove  
Jr. Teeners at Webster, 5:30 (Moved from July 1)

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



## Friday, June 14 - FLAG DAY

Senior Menu: Tater tot hot dish, green beans, acini depepi fruit salad, whole wheat. bread.  
Legion hosts Lake Norden, 6 p.m. (2)  
T-Ball G/B scrimmage, 6 p.m.  
SDSU Alumni and Friends Golf Tourney at Olive Grove

## Saturday, June 15

U10 at Milbank Tourney  
Possible U8 Tourney in Groton  
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 2 of 84

# 1440

In partnership with **smartasset**<sup>™</sup>

## Inflation Cools, Fed Chills

Federal Reserve officials yesterday kept interest rates steady at a 23-year high and signaled they expect to reduce rates only once this year—fewer than the previous forecast of three cuts.

The central bank's announcement came as fresh government data showed the consumer price index, which measures changes in the cost of a basket of goods and services, remained flat month-over-month in May and rose 3.3% year-over-year, slightly better than expectations.

While the latest annual inflation figure remains above the Fed's 2% target, it has fallen from a 9.1% peak in 2022, hovering between 3.1% and 3.5% since October 2023.

The Fed has maintained the benchmark federal funds rate at 5.25%-5.5% for seven consecutive meetings after raising it 11 times since March 2022. Officials expect four rate cuts next year and four more in 2026—more than previously anticipated—to bring inflation to 3.1% by the end of 2026.

## Port of Baltimore Reopens

Two-way shipping traffic resumed in Baltimore Harbor's deep federal channel yesterday, the culmination of an 11-week, \$100M cleanup of the collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge and removal of the 900-foot Dali container ship. Port officials expect trade to return to normal levels by next year. The disaster has cost the region an estimated \$1.2B in disrupted trade.

Early on March 26, the Dali lost power as it left port and drifted into the steel bridge, plunging its 1.6-mile span into the Patapsco River and killing six construction workers. Over 100 million pounds of debris was removed from the river to open the port, requiring the region's largest floating cranes. The 300-year-old Helen Delich Bentley Port moves the most farming equipment and cars in the nation and is the closest deep-water harbor to the nation's capital.

Federal officials have pledged to fund the replacement of the 50-year-old bridge at an expected cost of \$2B. Current estimates peg its opening for 2028.

## Shackleton's Last Ship

The final ship sailed by famed explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton has been discovered, officials announced yesterday, located about a quarter-mile off Canada's eastern coast in the Labrador Sea. Shackleton suffered a fatal heart attack aboard the ship in 1922, with the vessel falling far short of its goal of reaching Antarctica and mapping thousands of miles of unexplored coastline.

One of the most famous explorers of the early 20th century, Shackleton became the first person to reach the magnetic South Pole. Among his adventures, he is best known for leading the "Endurance" expedition, where he carried out a monthslong rescue effort after the ship became stuck in ice and sank.

The ship itself, named the "Quest," far outlived Shackleton. Following the ill-fated expedition—regarded by historians as the end of the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration—the boat served as a seal-hunting vessel, sinking in 1962 after hitting ice.

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Jerry West, Basketball Hall of Famer and 14-time NBA All-Star who was the inspiration for the NBA logo, dies at 86. Sports world reacts to West's death.

Sony Pictures acquires Alamo Drafthouse Cinema, becoming first major production company to own a movie theater in 75 years. Françoise Hardy, iconic French singer-songwriter and actress, dies at 80.

The 2024 US Open men's golf tournament kicks off today from Pinehurst, North Carolina; see full preview and schedule. World Cup 2026 reveals knockout stage schedule for hosts the US, Canada, and Mexico.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 3 of 84

## Science & Technology

Child sacrifices in ancient Mayan city of Chichén Itzá focused exclusively on males, often involving twins or close relatives, new DNA analysis reveals. Findings suggest potential link to the Popul Vuh, which includes the Mayan creation myth.

Key brain signal in long-term memory formation shown to deteriorate during poor sleep; discovery helps explain link between sleep quality and memory retention (More)

Researchers map the 5,500-year history of the evolution and spread of the two deadliest malaria-causing parasites; study tracks the disease's transmission through wars, trade routes, and European colonialism.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets end mixed (S&P 500 +0.9%, Dow -0.1%, Nasdaq +1.5%), with the S&P 500 closing above 5,400 for the first time. Cryptocurrency payment platform Terraform Labs agrees to \$4.5B fine in US civil fraud case.

European Union to impose tariffs of up to 38% on Chinese electric vehicle imports, citing "excessive" Chinese subsidies; the US imposed 100% tariffs on Chinese EVs last month. International Energy Agency forecasts an oil supply glut by 2030, with outlook projecting supply to outpace demand by 8 million gallons per day.

Tesla shareholder meeting begins today, with vote on \$56B compensation package for Elon Musk scheduled; the package was previously voided by a Delaware court.

## Politics & World Affairs

House votes 216-207, mostly along party lines, to hold Attorney General Merrick Garland in contempt for withholding audio of President Joe Biden's interview in classified documents case; Biden has asserted executive privilege over audio.

Hezbollah launches rockets targeting northern Israel in retaliation for an Israeli airstrike that killed a senior commander of the Iran-backed militant group; no casualties were reported in Israel. Russian warships

arrive in Cuba ahead of military exercises in the Caribbean; Cuba is a longtime ally of Russia.

Southern Baptists vote down formal ban on churches with female pastors; official guidelines still restrict pastor roles to men. US court finds banana company Chiquita liable for eight deaths resulting from its financing of paramilitary groups in Colombia from 1997-2004.

**WITTE**  
**EXTERIORS LLC**

**Specializing in Asphalt and Wood Shingles**

Call for an estimate

Zack Witte ~ 605-695-7874

Webster, SD

No Contracts!

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 4 of 84

## Groton Transit Fundraiser

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

5:00 pm - 7:00pm at

### Groton Community Center

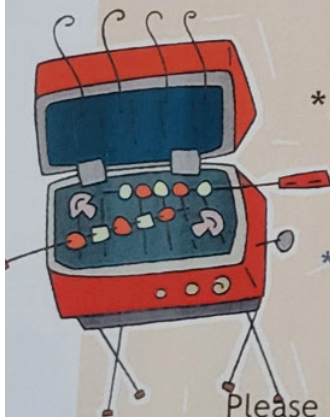
\*\*\*109 N 3<sup>rd</sup> Street-One block East of Groton  
Transit\*\*\*

Let us do the cooking for you!!

Burgers, Brats, Beans,  
Watermelon, Chips and the  
Famous Mini Donuts!!

\*Food\*Fun\*Door Prizes\*

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



Please join us & Help support Groton Transit!!

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 5 of 84

## Groton school board discusses school hires, coaching agreements, more

A handful of hires and a new elementary science curriculum led topics of discussion at Monday's Groton Area School District Board meeting.

The board approved two resignations and more than three new hires, though one of those hires is a familiar face in the district.

The board approved hiring Mary Johnson as middle school reading and social studies teacher for the 2024-2025 school year. Johnson served in that position at the district before, leaving in 2018.

Other hires include Jennifer Kunze and Aleshia Ambright as special education paraprofessionals at \$15.33 per hour.

The board also hired summer OST staff, including Leah Jones, Mckenna Tietz, Emma Davies, Drake Peterson and Gavin Englund at the student worker rate of \$11.75 per hour in May and June and \$12 per hour in July and August. Janice Hoffman, Camryn Kurtz, Shaylee Peterson, Bryson Wambach, Kyleigh Englund and Mckayla Johnston were hired at the adult worker rate of \$14.74 per hour in May and June, and \$15.33 per hour in July and August, with a \$2 per hour differential for certified teachers.

Teachers hired for additional roles for the next school year include Caitlyn Fischbach as assistant volleyball coach and Landon Brown as show choir director.

The board approved two resignations on Monday.

Chris Kucker resigned as girls soccer coach, writing that he has enjoyed the past nine years as coach, but wants to focus on family. He added, "the program is in perfect shape for someone to carry the torch for our returning state championship runner ups."

The board also approved the resignation of Chattarida Sukhmon, special education paraprofessional.

Agreements for a handful of coaches and advisers were also approved.

- Amanda Bisbee as thespian adviser for three months at a total annual salary of \$2,340.
- Madisen Bjerke as assistant cheer coach for four months at a total annual salary of \$819.
- Brian Dolan as head boys basketball coach for four months at a total annual salary of \$5,616.
- Joni Groeblichhoff as Co-DI coordinator for 12 months at a total annual salary of \$1,170.
- Chelsea Hanson as head volleyball coach for four months at a total annual salary of \$5,148.
- Matt Locke as head girls basketball coach for four months at a total annual salary of \$5,616.
- Brenda Madsen as senior class adviser for 12 months at a total annual salary of \$468.
- Julie Milbrandt as Co-DI coordinator for eight months at a total annual salary of \$1,170.
- Aubray Miller as cheerleading coach for seven months at a total annual salary of \$2,340.
- Ryan Olson as head boys soccer coach.
- Kristi Peterson as yearbook adviser for 12 months at a total annual salary of \$3,744.
- Kelby Tracy as junior high girls volleyball coach for three months at a total annual salary of \$2,340.
- Trent Traphagen as assistant girls basketball coach for four months at a total annual salary of \$3,744.
- Darin Zoellner as head wrestling coach for four months at a total annual salary of \$5,616.
- Troy Zoellner as junior high wrestling coach for four months at a total annual salary of \$2,340.

The board approved a new elementary school science curriculum as the current curriculum subscription is set to expire.

The new curriculum subscription is set to last for six years, with 300 student licenses per year. Those licenses include consumable work books and technology subscriptions, said Elementary School Principal Brett Schwan. The new curriculum is elevateScience from Savvas, the same publishing company used by the elementary school for its math curriculum.

The total cost for the six-year period is about \$63,000, and elementary teachers said the new curriculum seems to align well with the curriculum in place, Schwan said.

More items of interest include authorizing the business manager to publish the proposed 2025 fiscal year budget and schedule a public hearing at 7:30 p.m. July 8.

The district is also looking at adding a feature to the current Groton Area School District app that would allow teachers, coaches, parents and students to communicate. The goal is to start rolling it out in mid-July, said Superintendent Joe Schwan.

## Groton school board member to lead SDHSAA board

By Dana Hess For the S.D. NewsMedia Association



**Marty Weismantel**  
(GDI File Photo)

PIERRE — A Groton school board member and Watertown's school superintendent are the new leaders of the South Dakota High School Activities Association board of directors.

Mary Weismantel of Groton will be the chairman of the board the next time it meets in August. Two seats on the board are reserved for school board members. Weismantel is the board of education representative for small schools.

Jeff Danielsen, the Watertown superintendent, will serve as the vice chairman. SDHSAA organizes schools in four divisions, from largest to smallest. Danielsen is the board representative from Division II.

For a while, the board that Weismantel leads will be shorthanded. At its meeting on Wednesday, June 12, the board accepted the resignation of Eric Denning of Mount Vernon, the Division IV representative. Seven board positions rotate between superintendents, high school principals and activities directors. During the current cycle, Denning's board position must be filled by an activities director. He has accepted a position as a principal in Dell Rapids.

SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos said the board will accept nominations for the Division IV representative at its August meeting with the new board member likely to be seated at the November meeting.

## Changes likely for All-State Band auditions

By Dana Hess For the S.D. NewsMedia Association

PIERRE — The South Dakota High School Activities Association is looking for some direction from the state's high school band directors about how to change the procedures for conducting auditions for All-State Band.

After a lengthy discussion at its meeting Wednesday, June 12, SDHSAA board members voted to convene a meeting of SDHSAA staff and high school band directors to find some common ground.

The current procedure calls for the association to use the state airplane to fly judges to audition locations across the state for two weekends in January. The judges are driven to the audition site on the third weekend. If inclement weather grounds the plane or forces a school hosting auditions to close, students record their auditions.

Recorded auditions are traditionally used when students try out for All-State Jazz Band. Some high school band directors have been hesitant about using recorded auditions for All-State Band because they believe it's best for have students perform live for the judges.

Kimberly Carda, the band director for Roncalli High School in Aberdeen, told the board that live auditions give the students a "real world, life experience."

According to SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos, inclement weather has played havoc with auditions the past two years. Two years ago, after two weekends of live auditions, bad weather caused students on the third weekend to send in recorded auditions. This year weather was bad on the first weekend, so all students sent in recorded auditions.

"It's not a good situation," Swartos said. "To get three straight weekends of good weather in South Dakota is a crap shoot."

SDHSAA Assistant Executive Director Brooks Bowman, who handles fine arts activities for the association, said the main concerns are keeping students safe during inclement weather, missed class time for students and band directors and the inequity of holding auditions over three weekends, essentially giving

some students one or two more weeks of practice before their auditions.

Bowman offered the board two options to consider. One option was video-recording all auditions. All auditions would need to be turned in to the association office by Jan. 25, 2025. Band directors would ensure that students met all the audition requirements. SDHSAA would develop and distribute guidelines for making recordings.

According to the report Bowman gave the board, that option handles concerns about safety and inclement weather, lost class time and the inequity of some students having longer to prepare for their auditions. His report does note the concern that not all schools may have adequate recording equipment and that the option would create more work for some band directors.

Currently audition judges are paid a flat fee of \$1,500. Bowman suggested changing that fee to \$10 per audition. With approximately 650 auditions that cost would be \$6,500 annually.

The second option Bowman gave the board was for live recordings of all auditions on Jan. 25, 2025. The chairs of the eight music regions would be tasked with selecting host sites, scheduling audition times and hiring proctors to do the recordings.

In the second option, Bowman proposed purchasing video recorders for each region as well as two SD cards for each recording device. This would result in one-time costs to the association of \$9,500 for recorders and \$1,520 for SD cards. Bowman estimates that hiring proctors would cost \$4,600 per year as well as the \$6,500 cost for hiring judges. Region chairs would be paid \$200 each.

While weather could still play a factor, Bowman's report said the second option addresses the equity of having all students make their recordings on the same day. There could be concerns about mechanical or technical issues with the recorders.

Swartos said that the association is more concerned with safety and equity than it is with costs. Currently the association budgets \$25,000 for All-State Band auditions. Because of the inclement weather this January, the association spent about \$7,000 on the auditions. Bowman said about \$1,000 of that amount came from hotel rooms that he could not cancel.

Asked by the board which option he preferred, Bowman chose the first. "If we do recorded auditions, we don't have to worry about kids traveling in bad weather," Bowman said.

A vote to accept the first option resulted in a 4-4 tie with one board member missing. Four band directors were in the audience. When asked to pick their favorite option, that vote resulted in a 2-2 tie.

On a 7-1 vote, the board decided to have SDHSAA staff and high school band directors meet to work out a solution. The board will make a decision about how to conduct All-State Band auditions at a special meeting in late August or early September.

## **Schools elect new SDHSAA board member, approve NIL amendment**

**By Dana Hess For the S.D. NewsMedia Association**

PIERRE — During a recent election, schools that belong to the South Dakota High School Activities Association chose a new board member and gave their overwhelming support to an amendment that spells out how the organization will handle student-athletes that monetize their social media accounts.

Elected as the Native American at-large representative to the board was Chuck Wilson, athletic director at Todd County with 83 votes. Wilson will replace Dani Walking Eagle of St. Francis Indian School. He will start his five-year term on July 1.

Other candidates for the position and their vote totals included Rich Crow Eagle of Tiospa Zina, 18; Francis Big Crow of Lakota Tech, 8; and Tre'voun Buffalo of Wakpala, 8. All the candidates are athletic/activities directors

To be elected, a candidate had to receive a majority of the votes cast. None of the candidates received a majority in the election for a new West River at-large board representative. At its meeting on Wednesday, June 12, the SDHSAA board set a runoff election between superintendents Chris Long of Lyman with 43 votes and Mark Naugle of Custer with 35 votes. Other superintendents in the race and their vote totals were Erik Person of Lead-Deadwood with 17, Kelly Daughters of Faith with 15 and Cory Strasser of Rapid

City with 8.

According to SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos, member schools will soon receive notice of the runoff election so they can vote. Board members will approve the results of the runoff election at their August meeting and the new member will have his first board meeting in November. The winning candidate will replace board chairman Kelly Messmer of Harding County who has completed his term.

Members schools gave their support to an amendment to the organization's constitution that spells out the ways in which athletes can monetize their name, image and likeness. Breaking the NIL rules can result in the loss of an athlete's amateur standing for a year.

Schools approved the amendment on a vote of 115 to 7. To be approved, an amendment must garner 60% of the votes cast.

The constitution's previous standard caused athletes to lose eligibility if they receive "remuneration for the use of their name, picture and/or personal appearance as an athlete in the promotion of a commercial or profit making event."

That language was thought to be very broad, making it difficult to rule on an athlete's eligibility.

Most students earning money on their name, image or likeness on social media are found at the college level. However, SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos said he has received some inquiries from the parents of high school athletes about the association's NIL rules.

The amendment serves to clarify the rules for high school athletes who seek to get paid for the use of their name, image and likeness. According to the amendment, the social media activity of the athlete must not:

- Interfere with academics.
- Be tied to athletic performance such as pay to play.
- Induce the athlete to attend a particular school.
- Receive payment from the school or agents of the school like booster clubs or foundations.
- Use SDHSAA or a member school's marks or logos.
- Use the school's name, mascot or uniforms.
- Promote or endorse activities associated with alcohol, tobacco, vaping, controlled substances, gambling, banned athletic substances or other illegal substances or activities.

## **SDHSAA Board considers policy change for football schedules**

**By Dana Hess For the S.D. NewsMedia Association**

PIERRE — For South Dakota high schools, one of the most anticipated times of the year is the March release of the fall football schedules. Football coaches like to know who their opponents will be. School administrators like to know when to schedule homecoming.

At its meeting on Wednesday, June 12, the board of directors of the South Dakota High School Activities Association approved the first reading of two policy changes that may hurry along the process of releasing the schedules.

One policy change says that in alignment years, all members schools must have specific information to SDHSAA by the February board meeting. That information includes whether a school is adding or removing football from its offerings. Schools must also tell the board if, for the upcoming classification cycle, they are joining a new football cooperative or dissolving an old football cooperative.

Another policy calls for football schedules to be released for each class as they are completed. Delays by schools in reporting their participation or changes in cooperatives may delay the release of the schedule for affected classes.

Releasing schedules as they are completed means that bigger schools will likely get their schedules first since there are fewer teams in the higher divisions. SDHSAA Assistant Executive Director Randy Soma, who makes the football schedules for all member schools, said small schools may have some "heartache" if bigger schools get their schedules first. Despite the potential for heartache, Soma added that most of what he has heard from schools is "let's have them released when you have them done."



## Groton Jr Teeners 14U Defeat Watertown White Sox 14U Behind Strong Performance From Alex Abeln

By GameChanger Media

Alex Abeln struck out 10 batters as the right-handed pitcher led Groton Jr Teeners 14U past Watertown White Sox 14U 21-2 on Wednesday. Abeln gave up one hit and two runs over four innings while walking one.

Abeln collected three hits in four at bats in the win. Abeln singled in the first inning, singled in the second inning, and singled in the fourth inning.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U got on the board in the top of the first inning after Ryder Schelle hit a sacrifice fly, scoring two runs, John Bisbee singled, scoring one run, and Koltan Antonsen drew a walk, scoring one run.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U added to their early lead in the top of the second inning after Schelle doubled, and Watertown White Sox 14U committed an error, each scoring one run.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U scored 15 runs on four hits in the top of the fourth inning. An error scored one run, Braeden Flihs singled, scoring one run, Jordan Schwan doubled, scoring one run, Ethan Kroll drew a walk, scoring one run, Antonsen drew a walk, scoring one run, Kason Oswald drew a walk, scoring one run, Abeln drew a walk, scoring one run, an error scored one run, Layne Johnson drew a walk, scoring one run, Flihs drew a walk, scoring one run, Schwan doubled, scoring two runs, an error scored one run, an error scored one run, and Oswald drew a walk, scoring one run.

Grant Mayo took the loss for Watertown White Sox 14U. The righty went three and one-third innings, allowing 11 runs (nine earned) on 10 hits, striking out two and walking three.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U piled up 11 hits in the game. Schwan led Groton Jr Teeners 14U with three runs batted in. The outfielder went 2-for-2 on the day. Flihs collected two hits for Groton Jr Teeners 14U in three at bats. Antonsen led Groton Jr Teeners 14U with three walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, collecting 12 walks for the game. TC Schuster, Schwan, Abeln, and Flihs each stole multiple bases for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. Groton Jr Teeners 14U ran wild on the base paths, amassing 13 stolen bases for the game.

Levi Brownlee led the team with one run batted in. Dray Dahlgren led Watertown White Sox 14U with one hit in one at bat.

Copyright © 2024 GameChanger Media, Inc. All rights reserved. Any reuse or republication of this story must include the preceding attribution and is subject to the Dick's Sporting Goods, Inc. Terms of Use, License Agreement, and Privacy Policy.

## Braeden Flihs A Difficult Out As Groton Jr Teeners 14U Defeat Watertown White Sox 14U

By GameChanger Media

Braeden Flihs collected three hits in three at bats, as Groton Jr Teeners 14U defeated Watertown White Sox 14U 25-1 on Wednesday. Flihs singled in the second inning, doubled in the third inning, and singled in the third inning.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U got on the board in the top of the first inning after Flihs was struck by a pitch, Kolton Antonsen singled, and Zach Flihs was struck by a pitch, each scoring one run.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U scored 11 runs on seven hits in the top of the second inning. John Bisbee singled, scoring one run, Flihs singled, scoring two runs, an error scored one run, Shaydon Wood drew a walk, scoring one run, Ethan Kroll drew a walk, scoring one run, TC Schuster doubled, scoring two runs, Ryder Schelle doubled, scoring two runs, and Layne Johnson singled, scoring one run.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U added to their early lead in the top of the third inning after Antonsen singled, Wood walked, Kroll was struck by a pitch, Schuster singled, Bisbee singled, Johnson singled, Sam Crank singled, Flihs singled, Antonsen walked, Flihs walked, and Wood grounded out, each scoring one run.

Lincoln Shilhanek earned the win for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. They gave up one hit and one run over three innings, striking out two and walking two. Case Hulscher took the loss for Watertown White Sox 14U. The right-handed pitcher went two innings, allowing 14 runs (six earned) on nine hits, striking out two and walking six.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U tallied 16 hits in the game. Antonsen seized on their opportunities, leading Groton Jr Teeners 14U with four runs batted in from the number seven spot in the lineup. They went 2-for-3 on the day. Johnson, Flihs, and Bisbee each collected three hits for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. Schuster collected two hits for Groton Jr Teeners 14U in four at bats. Shilhanek paced Groton Jr Teeners 14U with three walks. Overall, the team had patience at the plate, collecting 12 walks for the game. Shilhanek and Flihs each stole multiple bases for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. Groton Jr Teeners 14U ran wild on the base paths, accumulating seven stolen bases for the game.

Grant Mayo went 1-for-1 at the plate to lead Watertown White Sox 14U in hits.

Copyright © 2024 GameChanger Media, Inc. All rights reserved. Any reuse or republication of this story must include the preceding attribution and is subject to the Dick's Sporting Goods, Inc. Terms of Use, License Agreement, and Privacy Policy.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 11 of 84

**The Junior Legion tournament that was scheduled in Britton for June 29-30 will now be in Groton.**

## **Saturday, June 29**

8:00: Britton U16 vs. Groton U16  
10:00: Britton U14 vs. Sisseton U14  
Noon: Platte-Geddes U16 vs. Mobridge U16  
2:00: Lake Norden U14 vs. Sisseton U14  
4:00: Britton U16 vs. Mobridge U16  
6:00: Platte-Geddes U14 vs. Lake Norden U14  
8:00: Groton U16 vs. Platte-Geddes U16

## **Sunday, June 30**

9:00: Britton U14 vs. Lake Norden U14  
11:00: Platte-Geddes U14 vs. Sisseton U14  
1:00: Britton U16 vs. Platte-Geddes U16  
3:00: Britton U14 vs. Platte-Geddes U14  
5:00: Groton U16 vs. Mobridge U16



## Poll: Majority of South Dakotans want new system for primary elections

By **STU WHITNEY**

**South Dakota News Watch**

South Dakotans by a wide margin support a constitutional amendment that would change the way the state conducts primary elections, according to a scientific poll of 500 registered voters co-sponsored by South Dakota News Watch.

The statewide survey, also sponsored by the Chiesman Center for Democracy at the University of South Dakota, showed that 55% of respondents favored the plan to change the state's election format, with 33% opposed and 12% undecided.

That's a jump in support from a similarly structured November 2023 poll, which showed 49% supporting the measure, 34% opposed and 17% undecided.

If passed, Amendment H would establish "top-two" primaries for governor, Congress and state legislative and county races rather than political parties conducting separate primary contests.

All registered voters would be eligible to weigh in on which two candidates advance to the general election. Currently in South Dakota, a voter registered with a political party can only vote in that party's primary. Those registered as non-affiliated can participate in Democratic primaries but not Republican contests.

"The main argument for this amendment is fairness," said South Dakota Open Primaries chairman Joe Kirby, a Sioux Falls businessman and government reform advocate. "All voters should have an equal voice in electing their representatives and leaders."

### Could open primaries hurt Democrats?

The issue has gained prominence in the wake of historically low voter turnout in South Dakota's June 4 primary elections, which featured 44 Republican legislative primaries in addition to county contests but a lack of statewide engagement. There was one Democratic legislative primary in the state.

Just 17% of registered voters in South Dakota cast ballots in the election, including 10% in the state's largest county, Minnehaha.

Julia Hellwege, an associate political science professor at USD and director of the Chiesman Center, said Democrats and non-affiliated voters feeling shut out of the process could lead to more willingness to explore alternatives, such as open primaries.



**Poll workers wait for the next South Dakota primary voter at the Instructional Planning Center in Sioux Falls, S.D., on Tuesday, June 4, 2024. Statewide turnout was historically low, with just 17% of registered voters casting a ballot.** (Photo: Stu Whitney/

South Dakota News Watch)

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 13 of 84

The News Watch poll showed that Amendment H is supported by 82% of Democrats and 59% of independent voters. Republicans aren't as convinced that a change is needed, with 40% in favor of open primaries, compared to 43% against and 18% undecided.

Female voters support the measure by a margin of 62% to 28%, compared to men, who support it by a margin of 47% to 38%.

The Legislative Research Council estimated that if Amendment H passes, an average of more than 50,000 additional ballots every two years would be needed to meet voter demand for primary elections.

It's not clear if increased engagement will bring more political balance to South Dakota, where no Democratic candidate has won a statewide election since 2008.

"If the feeling is that a Republican is going to win anyway, (open primaries) create a weird incentive for Democrats and Democrat-leaning independents to vote for a moderate Republican, which actually strengthens one-party control," said Hellwege. "We already know that Democrats are losing ground and have lost financial support in the state, and this could actually make that worse."

### More robust opposition expected

Mason-Dixon Polling and Strategy conducted the survey 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.

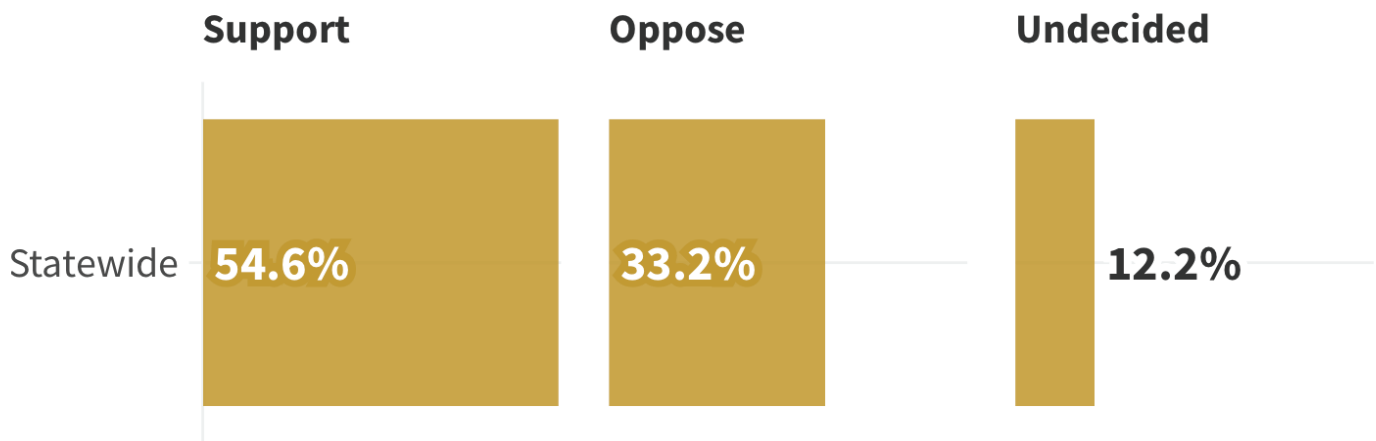
With a proposed South Dakota abortion amendment drawing most of the controversy and media attention, open primaries mostly flew under the radar during the signature-gathering and certification process.

## Do you support open primaries?

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. One said 'support', one said 'oppose' and one said 'undecided'. **Note 2:** Three answered 'other' for gender. Two said 'oppose' and one said 'support'.

Graphic: Michael Klinski / South Dakota News Watch

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 14 of 84

One of the detractors was South Dakota Freedom Caucus chairman Aaron Aylward, a state representative from Harrisburg, who told News Watch that the proposal would essentially create "two general elections in South Dakota."

Early opposition also came from South Dakota Republican Party chair John Wiik and U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, who told News Watch that "our current primary system has served us well."

Now that the primaries are over and Amendment H is certified for the ballot, more sparks are expected to fly.

Aberdeen businessman Toby Doeden, whose Dakota First PAC was involved in supporting more conservative Republicans against establishment foes in the primaries, said on Facebook that "it's time to refocus and re-energize and start working on things like the radical ballot initiatives coming up in November."

Doeden, who did not respond to an interview request from News Watch, listed the abortion and open primary amendments as his group's top two targets.

"We would not be surprised to face opposition to our proposal to let all voters vote," said Kirby when asked about the Dakota First effort. "Some folks like the system that lets 17% of voters decide the outcomes in South Dakota. We don't."



**Joe Kirby of Sioux Falls, S.D., (second from left) and other South Dakota Open Primaries supporters pose at the South Dakota Capitol in Pierre, S.D., on May 6, 2024, while turning in signatures for their amendment, which was certified for the November ballot.** (Photo: South Dakota Open Primaries)

## 'We have a big job ahead of us'

Other responses in the News Watch/Chiesman poll revealed serious concerns among South Dakota voters about American democracy and the integrity of election systems.

More than 6 in 10 South Dakotans said they were dissatisfied with how democracy is working in the United States, including 32% who said they were "very dissatisfied." By party affiliation, 41% of Republicans, 32% of independents and 13% of Democrats said they were very dissatisfied.

As for recent elections, 74% of respondents said they accept the outcome of the 2020 presidential election, with clear party distinctions. While 96% of Democrats and 88% of independents said they accepted President Joe Biden's win over Donald Trump, 58% of Republicans said they did.

"It's not uncommon for people of a party label to disagree more with results that don't align with their preferences," said Hellwege. "But here we're seeing that it goes beyond that to where Republicans in particular are less likely to believe not only in the accuracy of election results but in democracy itself as a system."

Citizen groups such as the South Dakota Canvassing have pushed electoral activism in the state by echoing accusations from conservative media and demanding proof of secure systems, despite no evidence of substantial voter fraud in a state that Trump won in 2020 by 26 points.

Asked in the poll about the most recent election in 2022, only 31% of Republicans said they were confi-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 15 of 84

dent that the results were counted accurately, compared to 97% of Democrats and 75% of independents. "These are registered voters – that's the more engaged population," said Hellwege. "Election administrators, elected officials, practitioners and academics have a big job ahead of us to restore confidence in the accuracy in elections. Rather conclusively, academic research has shown that elections are accurate and free of fraud. We can be confident in the results. And yet even the more engaged registered voters don't believe us. We need to do more."

## Counties with key races saw better turnout

Election canvassing in South Dakota has shown that when voters are invested in a specific issue or contest, they'll head to the polls.

Part of the reason for the low 2024 primary turnout was that the Republican and Democratic presidential nominees were already decided, and there were no U.S. Senate or U.S. House primaries to spark voter interest.

In 2008, when the Democratic presidential primary race was still roiling between eventual winner Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, South Dakota's voter turnout was 37%, including 51% among Democrats.

This year, the June 4 primary had a few examples where local issues on the ballot boosted participation in certain counties:

- In Davison County, where 41% turnout was among the highest in the state, Mitchell voters weighed in on competitive races for mayor and on a bond issue regarding potential improvements to Lake Mitchell. Both election results were close enough to trigger a possible recount.

- Also among the highest-turnout counties was Gregory (39%), where the ballot included an initiated measure on whether elections should be hand counted with paper ballots only, with no electronic voting devices or tabulators. Voters rejected the measure, as did voters in Tripp and Haakon counties, where turnout was 37% and 34%, respectively.

Haakon County auditor Stacy Pinner told News Watch that she was encouraged by the level of civic engagement on the hand-counting issue, and also the outcome.

"The results showed that our citizens are confident in how elections are conducted in Haakon County," she said.

## Three states use top-two primaries

Supporters of open primaries believe that Amendment H can bring that level of civic engagement to candidate primaries for statewide, legislative and county offices.

Though nearly half of states have some form of open primary system, only three currently use a top-two primary such as the one proposed for South Dakota.

California and Washington use top-two primaries (with party labels included) in races other than presidential contests, while Nebraska uses a nonpartisan primary for state legislative races as part of its unicameral system.

But Kirby points out that South Dakota's primary system is the least accessible for non-affiliated voters among the neighboring states.

"Iowa and Wyoming allow independents to vote in either major party primary," he said. "And in Minnesota, North Dakota and Montana, voters don't designate a party when they register. They choose which party primary they want to vote in when they arrive at the polls. Independent voters in all our neighboring states have a meaningful voice in their primary elections. Not so in South Dakota."

*This story was produced by South Dakota News Watch, an independent, 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)*



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Man in photo Noem used as alleged proof of cartels says it's hindered his right to a fair trial

**Image used by governor is three years old, he said**

**BY: JOHN HULT - JUNE 12, 2024 3:19 PM**

A Native American man said Gov. Kristi Noem hindered his ability to receive a fair trial when she displayed a photo of him recently as alleged proof of cartel activity on reservations.

Noem flashed three photos during a May 17 press conference while talking about the Mexican drug cartel activity she said is happening in tribal communities. She did not provide any names with the photos at that press conference, but Noem's office had previously shared the photo with South Dakota Searchlight.

The images were sent to Searchlight in late April when the outlet asked for proof of the governor's repeated allegations of cartel activity on reservations, and for proof of Noem's claim that tribal leaders are personally benefiting from a cartel presence on their lands. Tribal leaders have denied those allegations.

Searchlight has independently determined and verified that the most identifiable image — a close-up of a man's face — is a picture of Charles Cain Merrival, 32, a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe.

South Dakota Searchlight is not publishing the photo used by Gov. Noem. The photos in the story were offered by Merrival's family members.

Merrival has been in custody at the Pennington County Jail in Rapid City since January 2022 and for all but a few months since 2020. He wore an ankle monitor during his release and was restricted from traveling more than 25 miles from Rapid City.

He is currently being held on federal charges for methamphetamine distribution stemming from separate incidents in July 2021 and January 2022. He's also being held on state charges for a robbery alleged to have taken place in 2020.

"Kristi Noem herself falsely labeled me a gang member that is affiliated with Mexican drug cartels and the commission of murders," Merrival said in a phone interview. "Because of Kristi Noem's decision to personally intervene, any presumption of innocence that I had is gone forever."

Merrival said he's never been the target of a murder investigation, cartel-related or otherwise. An internet search for Merrival's name does turn up a 2021 homicide case, but that involved a different Charles Merrival. That man, whose middle name is Joe, was released from federal prison last summer after serving time for involuntary manslaughter.

Charles Cain Merrival's mother, Darla Merrival, said she feels that her son was targeted because he's Native American. She's taking care of one of Merrival's children at the moment and said she's been able



**Charles Merrival, front, pictured during a 2019 march in Rapid City.** (courtesy

Charles Merrival family)



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 17 of 84

to shield the girl from anything about her father, his charges or the press conference that used him to make a point about drug cartels.

But she was "shocked and appalled" by Noem's actions.

"I don't think she even knows what's going on herself, you know what I mean?" Darla Merrival said. "It just fit her narrative."

Noem's office did not respond to an email asking about the use of Merrival's photo.

## 'Ghost Dance' club connection

Noem has repeatedly asserted since a Jan. 31 speech that President Joe Biden's border policies have made tribal communities vulnerable to infiltration by Mexican drug cartels.

"Murders are being committed by cartel members on the Pine Ridge Reservation and in Rapid City, and a gang called the Ghost Dancers are affiliated with these cartels," Noem said.

Tensions between Noem and tribal leaders flared after that speech, with some expressing concern about her use of the phrase "ghost dancers." It was originally applied to participants in a Native American spiritual ceremony that grew in popularity prior to the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890. At a press conference the day after her January speech, Noem responded that "I didn't name" the gang.

Merrival said the Ghost Dancers "ceased to exist as a club" in July 2021.

"There's no way it's possible that a motorcycle club that no longer exists is currently responsible for anything, let alone associations with cartels," Merrival said.

When asked if the Ghost Dancers club is still active in the state, a spokesman for Attorney General Marty Jackley said the office cannot comment on pending criminal cases.

All three of the biker pictures displayed by Noem show men in leather biker jackets bearing the words "Ghost Dance" and "support your local Bandidos."

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration linked members of Bandidos motorcycle gangs in New York and Texas to cartel drug trafficking in its 2018 National Threat Assessment. The 2024 assessment does not mention outlaw motorcycle clubs.

During her press conference, Noem not only flashed the biker photos but also shared some video clips, quotes from tribal leaders and anonymous tribal members, and referenced the Pine Ridge-area kidnapping of an FBI victim specialist by men from El Salvador and Guatemala.

Ace Crawford, a spokesperson for the U.S. attorney's office, told South Dakota Searchlight that the kidnapping had "no clear connection" to cartels.

## Legal motion: Pending case impacted by press conference

Merrival had a jury trial for his federal drug charges in September, but it ended in a mistrial. His new trial is scheduled to begin on July 9, despite his recent efforts to delay it.

Noem's use of his photo has complicated the federal case, according to documents filed by Merrival's lawyer, John Rusch of Rapid City. Rusch declined to comment on the case while it's pending.

The Monday after Noem's Friday press conference, Rusch filed a motion for a continuance because "Governor Kristi Noem has publicly made statements that the Defendant and Ghost Dance which Defendant is a member of, are part of the cartel operating in South Dakota."

"This information was published in a wide variety of news sources and included pictures of the Defendant," Rusch wrote. "The Defendant is asking for time to address these new allegations and counteract the negative and untrue statements being made about him in the press. The Defendant has requested discovery from Law Enforcement provided to the Governor that these claims are based upon."

Judge Karen Schreier denied the motion three days later, writing that the case has been pending for years.

"Defendant's attorney was not appointed to respond to allegations in the press, only to represent defendant with regard to the criminal charges that have been brought against him in the indictment," the judge wrote.

Darla Merrival, Charles' mother, is concerned that Noem's choice to connect him to cartels in such a

public fashion taints not only potential jurors but feeds into an inaccurate public perception of anyone who chooses to be a part of a motorcycle gang.

"I have friends that are members of motorcycle clubs, but that doesn't mean that they're all involved in illegal activities," she said. "But their whole agenda is to fit him in with the Bandidos, so it looks like he was definitely doing what they think he's doing."

Steven Bell, special agent in charge for the Drug Enforcement Administration office in Omaha, did not comment on Merrival's case and told South Dakota Searchlight it would be "way outside our lane" to comment on biker gangs and connections to drug cartels.

He did, however, say that membership in a biker gang or the presence of a Bandidos patch on a leather jacket alone doesn't signal illegal activity.

"You'd be talking about profiling," Bell said. "And we don't profile."

*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.*

## The wait begins for Leonard Peltier

**Indigenous activists and supporters wait to hear a parole committee's decision on Leonard Peltier's potential release**

**BY: AMELIA SCHAFFER, RAPID CITY JOURNAL/ICT - JUNE 12, 2024 12:44 PM**

RAPID CITY, S.D. — By July 1, a decision will be made regarding what could be Anishinaabe AIM activist and now elder Leonard Peltier's last shot at freedom.

The Turtle Mountain Band of Chipewewa Indians citizen's parole hearing lasted about seven hours on June 10. This was Peltier's first parole hearing in over a decade. His last hearing in 2009 ended in rejection, as did a 2017 request to President Barack Obama for clemency.

Peltier is currently serving two consecutive life sentences at Coleman Maximum Security in Florida after being convicted of aiding and abetting in the murder of two FBI agents on June 26, 1975, at the Jumping Bull Ranch in South Dakota.

Peltier is 79 years old and has been struggling with health concerns for years. He's had trouble managing his diabetes while incarcerated, experienced the loss of vision in one eye, had open heart surgery, an aortic aneurysm, and is dealing with the lingering effects of contracting COVID-19.

Often referred to as a political prisoner, Peltier was the only one out of three AIM members charged in the murders of the two FBI agents who was not acquitted of the charges. Two other AIM members who were present, Robert Robideau and Dino Butler, were both acquitted following a trial in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

After fleeing to Canada and being extradited back to the United States, Peltier was tried in Fargo, North



**Hundreds of demonstrators took to the White House in Washington, D.C. for the Free Leonard Peltier 79th Birthday Action on September 12, 2023.** (Jourdan Bennett-Begaye, ICT)

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 19 of 84

Dakota, and found guilty of both murders. Federal prosecutors later changed his charges to aiding and abetting in the two murders.

Peltier has already served a longer sentence than most principals in murder convictions.

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

A long list of people, tribes, and organizations that have called for Peltier's freedom including the former prosecutor in the case, members of Congress, Amnesty International USA, Pope John Francis, the Dalai Lama, the National Congress of American Indians and dozens of tribal nations, Peltier's own tribe, the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians has also called for his release.

On June 7, FBI Director Christopher Wray released a letter he penned to Patricia Cushwa, acting chair of the U.S. Parole Commission in opposition of paroling Peliter.

"Over the past 45 years, no fewer than 22 federal judges have evaluated the evidence and considered Peltier's legal arguments," Wray said in the letter. "Each has reached the same conclusion: Peltier's claims are meritless, and his convictions and sentence must stand. Despite the overwhelming and consistent court rulings, Peltier has refused to accept any responsibility for his violent crimes and persists in advancing spurious claims that judges have repeatedly examined and exposed as false."

The FBI Agents Association, which represents active agents, also sent a letter to the parole commission claiming that paroling Peltier would be "a cruel act of betrayal."

Prayers nationwide

Across the United States and beyond, Indigenous activists held prayer ceremonies for Peltier's release.

Jean Roach, a Mnicouju Lakota woman who was 14 during the Jumping Bull Ranch shootout, remembers the day vividly.

"You know how prairie is, there was nothing, so some of those bullets came pretty close to us," Roach said. "At one moment I froze up running up the hills, I threw myself to the ground because the bullets they were all around me. I looked up and I saw Dino Butler and he waved for me to go."

Hundreds of rounds of ammunition had been fired during the shootout. In that time, Roach said she jumped up and ran as fast as she could away from the area until she got somewhere that she and her brother could hide.

By the time the shootout ended three men were dead – FBI Agents Ronald Arthur Williams and Jack Ross Coler and 23-year-old AIM member Joseph Bedell Schultz, a citizen of the Couer d'Alene Tribe. Williams and Coler were dead within the first 10 minutes of the shootout.

"There were 11 of us that escaped," Roach said. "When we ran from the wooded area where we were camped at by the sweat lodge we had to go maybe a mile to the tree tops of the pines to get out of the area they were surrounding. We hid in the trees along lakeside road and we were watching the cops fly by. They had no idea we were up there in those trees watching them until after they left."

Roach, who now works with the International Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, said she held a prayer ceremony on June 10 in Phoenix with the Phoenix AIM division. While she said she's holding out hope for Peltier's release, she worries nothing will change.

"We're holding prayer that he will be released because anybody that's been in prison really has a hard time dealing with it," Roach said. "I can't imagine being in prison for 49 years, not being able to see your loved ones, your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He's been suffering for a long time."

In South Dakota, Oglala Lakota elder Norma Rendon's nonprofit organization Where All Women Are Honored held a ceremony at Bear Butte State Park, a sacred site.

"Bear Butte was an excellent place to have the prayer vigil because of the ancestors there," Rendon said. "We prayed that they watch over him and guide the hearts and minds of the people making the decisions."

During the event, longtime AIM leader Bill Means spoke about Leonard and the struggles he's faced while incarcerated.

"He (Peltier) is a political prisoner," Rendon said. "There's been so much evidence that he did not commit those murders. He should have never been charged for that."

Rendon said over 30 individuals came to Bear Butte on the afternoon of June 10 for prayer and a meal. If parole is granted, Peltier will begin the process for release. If denied, he could file an appeal to a federal district court.

The commission has until July 1 to make a decision.

*Amelia Schafer covers Indigenous communities in the South Dakota area as part of a partnership between the Rapid City Journal and ICT, an independent, nonprofit news enterprise that covers Indigenous peoples.*

## Noem's 'banish the cartels' obscures statewide drug problem, tribal leaders say

**History of mistrust, laser focus on tribes blunts attempts to address public safety in Indian Country**

**BY: JOHN HULT - JUNE 12, 2024 8:30 AM**



**A tribal police car drives past a boarded up apartment complex on Main Street of Eagle Butte, South Dakota on the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation.** (Makenzie Huber, South

Dakota Searchlight)

For months, Gov. Kristi Noem has stoked controversy by calling on tribal leaders to "banish the cartels."

But Noem has never mentioned 18-pound methamphetamine shipments from Arizona to Trent, population 218, by way of Mexico.

She hasn't publicly spoken about the Mexican nationals convicted recently for their roles in a locally led, Sioux Falls-based drug ring, or in a similar, larger ring investigated in Rapid City.

Nor has she talked about the California prison inmate who used an illegal cell phone to orchestrate the sale of more than 200 pounds of meth and 80,000 fentanyl pills – all cartel-sourced – in South Dakota.

"Nobody is safe," said Ron Parsons, who served as U.S. attorney for the District of South Dakota under former President Donald Trump. "The cartels are everywhere. They have distribution networks everywhere, and the end distributors are not from Mexico. They're usually from the local communities. It's in Sioux Falls, it's in Rapid City, it's in Aberdeen, it's in the rural areas, and it's in the tribal areas."

Save a handful of mentions of cartel narcotics as a statewide issue, Noem has focused her comments about drug cartels on tribal areas, painting the state's reservations as lawless safe havens for criminals, made so by federal inaction at the U.S.-Mexico border and tribal corruption.

Tribal leaders have described feeling targeted and scapegoated for a statewide problem, and the monthslong episode scratched a generational wound. Tribes have struggled for decades to secure public safety dollars but remain underfunded, their leaders say, even as treaties obligate the federal government to provide adequate resources.

Tribal areas do have vulnerabilities other parts of the state do not, such as fewer law enforcement officers, jurisdictional challenges that can stop tribal police from arresting non-Natives, and high rates of poverty and drug abuse.

But Noem's comments, including those accusing tribal leadership of "personally benefiting" from cartels,

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 21 of 84

have soured relations with the state's nine Native nations. Leaders from all nine have voted to ban Noem from their lands.

Tribal leaders have rejected allegations that tribal council members are benefitting from cartel activity. Lower Brule Tribal Chair Clyde Estes told South Dakota Searchlight that if there's evidence of collusion between drug dealers and tribal leaders, that evidence ought to be given to law enforcement so those leaders can be held accountable.

Other leaders have called out the governor for using stereotypes to build a narrative for political purposes.

Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Chairwoman Janet Alkire, in an April press release, called Noem's remarks "a sad reflection of her fear-based politics that do nothing to bring people together and solve problems."

Rosebud Sioux Tribal Chairman Scott Herman said in a March statement that Noem's remarks "were made from ignorance and with the intention to fuel a racially based and discriminatory narrative towards the Native people of South Dakota."

## **Crow Creek leader: 'My people are targeted'**

Some tribal leaders have long acknowledged a flow of drugs from cartels or affiliates to their communities and have decried a dearth of federal funding for tribal police. They've pointed out that the drugs come to reservations from larger cities.

Others have denied any direct cartel presence, though they acknowledge the impact of illegal narcotics.

Peter Lengkeek, chairman of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, said Noem's comments carry a real-world impact for Native Americans, as they paint tribal citizens who already face racism as agents of crime based solely on their address.

"She's really created a dangerous environment for us by putting that out there, because now my people are targeted when we leave the reservation," Lengkeek said. "Targeted by police, targeted by Trumpers, and targeted by South Dakotans who are blaming us now for the fentanyl issue here in the state of South Dakota."

For Chase Iron Eyes, director of the Lakota People's Law Project, the trouble with the governor's focus on tribes isn't about whether communities like his are at risk.

It's about whether pointing fingers hinders the kind of cooperation necessary to address the problem.

"I agree in substance with what Kristi Noem is saying," Iron Eyes said. "We do have to address this violence and the capacity of the cartels. But when she says things that truly hurt my children or piss my wife off, it becomes a standoff."

Noem has continued to press for cooperation amid the backlash and has taken a handful of tangible steps. Her office pushed for a tribal law enforcement training course in Pierre to help tribal recruits sidestep what would otherwise be a 13-week course in New Mexico. The Pierre training started this month. She also appointed Algin Young, former police chief for the Oglala Sioux Tribe, as tribal law enforcement liaison.

Most recently, she announced a Tribal Public Safety Crisis Summit and said she'd invited leaders from tribal governments and law enforcement agencies to the event, although it's unclear how many of the invited leaders will attend. It's set for June 24, the day after the 32nd annual reenactment of the Battle of Little Bighorn in Montana, an event that's often attended by South Dakota tribal representatives. Attorney General Marty Jackley, among the invitees, has a previous engagement.

## **Audits over funding**

Ross Garelick Bell has lobbied in Pierre and Washington, D.C., for the Yankton Sioux and Rosebud Sioux tribes, often with the goal of boosting law enforcement funding.

Every year, he said, there are calls to fully fund law enforcement. Tribal leaders from across the U.S. again testified about their needs to the House Appropriations Interior Subcommittee on May 8.

Acting Oglala Sioux Tribal Police Chief John Pettigrew said his department is funded at about 15% of its needs. He asked for enough money to bring his officers' pay and benefits on par with their federal and state counterparts.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 22 of 84

"To be real, I know this will never happen," Pettigrew said.

Noem sent a letter to the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs in February, asking the federal government to improve law enforcement funding and address wage disparities.

While in Congress, Garelick Bell said, Noem also talked about the policing needs of reservation communities. But then, as now, that talk was coupled with calls for audits, which he said leave tribes in the lurch as crime proliferates.

"Her motto in Congress a lot of the time was, 'let's audit, audit, audit' instead of fund," Garelick Bell said. "And that's a delay tactic. You can audit while also funding."

He called Noem's comments about tribes and cartels "absurd."

"It just didn't make sense," he said. "And if you're saying that the tribes are the gateway cities, that's every city in the country. Because if you're talking about cartels, they run the drug business. You can't say it's one area, not the other."

## **Tribal officers: More staff, coordination needed**

Bob Ecoffey of Rapid City retired as the police chief of the Oglala Sioux Tribe in 2021 after more than four decades in tribal policing. Prior to his most recent stint as OST police chief, he'd been a U.S. marshal and a Bureau of Indian Affairs supervisor.

Ecoffey draws a line between cartels and the drugs trafficked by individuals on tribal land.

"I truly don't believe there's any cartels on any of the reservations," Ecoffey said. "I think there's drugs that are coming in, probably from the cartels, from the bigger cities, Denver, Minneapolis, on through Rapid here down to the reservations."

Staffing for police agencies and jurisdictional challenges have been and remain the largest barriers to combating the drug epidemic, he said. Tribal police can't hold a non-tribal member, which has always "created issues when we'd catch someone."

Tribal members, meanwhile, can evade tribal authorities by leaving reservations.

"People would be running back and forth on to the rez, either bringing drugs or taking drugs off, and coordination between tribal law enforcement and state was somewhat questionable," he said.

Gary Gaikowski has an even greater need for coordination. He's served as Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate police chief in northeastern South Dakota since 1997, and is currently a member of the state's Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Training Commission.

Gaikowski's reservation is "checkerboarded," meaning private, state and tribal lands intermingle across hundreds of thousands of acres in South Dakota, Minnesota and North Dakota. The same is true in South Dakota of the Flandreau Santee and Yankton Sioux tribes.

"Working together needs to happen around here," Gaikowski said.

Cartels have had a presence in his area for a while, Gaikowski said. Ten years ago, he recalls drug activity around the region's dairy farms. That activity continues, he said, with his officers mostly dealing with "foot soldiers" who sell to undercover officers.

Dealers don't admit connections to larger networks, he said, but "we know who they're working for."

"It's no secret. They're around," he said. "They've got their foothold in places, not just Indian Country, but also in South Dakota."

Gaikowski's glad the issue is getting attention. But as far as tribal officials protecting dealers, Gaikowski said, he doesn't see that from his own tribal council.

"Our tribal people hold their feet to the fire very well," Gaikowski said. "They really can't get away with too much around here."

Lengkeek, the Crow Creek Tribal chairman, got so fed up with long response times and low staffing from the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs – Crow Creek relies on the BIA for law enforcement – that he pushed to set up an ad hoc security task force of tribal citizens to respond to public safety incidents. The tribal council ratified the task force last summer after a shooting in Fort Thompson.

The group responds to incidents and works to de-escalate situations, but its members do not carry

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 23 of 84

firearms or have the ability to arrest people. They've received training in self-defense, mental health response and first aid.

"Our task force has the tools to address those things in the middle of the night. Whatever they come across, they can handle it," Lengkeek said.

## **Tribes: Congress fails to act**

Talk of cartel influence from tribal leaders at hearings in Washington, D.C., has emerged amid criticism of federal funding for law enforcement in Indian Country – or the lack thereof.

"If we cannot stop the flow of drugs and the movement of the cartel on federal land under federal jurisdiction, something is very wrong with our current system," Oglala Sioux Tribal President Frank Star Comes Out told the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs in December.

The Oglala Sioux Tribe has twice sued the federal government for its alleged failure to adequately fund policing within the borders of its reservation, which encompasses a land area larger than Rhode Island and Delaware combined.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs uses what the tribe says are outdated population statistics to calculate its law enforcement needs, with a goal of placing 2.8 officers for every 1,000 reservation residents.

The tribe says it has more than 53,000 residents. The BIA uses a figure closer to 40,000, but still misses its officer coverage target.

At the BIA's lower population tally, the tribe should have 112 officers.

"The United States currently only provides enough funding to employ 33 police officers and 8 criminal investigators," one of the tribe's lawsuits states.

## **Solutions: Band-Aids vs. reform**

U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, R-South Dakota, has pushed for the placement of a permanent BIA academy in South Dakota.

Rounds has seen the issue from the perspective of a governor and U.S. senator. As with discussions of problems in the Indian Health Service (IHS), Rounds said, there's a lack of political will to tackle the problem.

"This isn't a new issue," Rounds said in a statement to South Dakota Searchlight. "For decades, we've made the case that the tribes are underfunded and suffer from bureaucratic roadblocks whether that's IHS, roads or public safety. This challenge dates back to the start of the treaties — and it doesn't matter which party is having lunch in the White House."

U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, pushed for the BIA to help out with this summer's new law enforcement training course in Pierre for tribal recruits. Johnson has also co-sponsored bills to boost funding and benefits for tribes, including the Tribal COPS Act and the Invest to Protect Act.

Both those bills were submitted in the fall of 2022. Neither has made it to the House floor.

The bills help make the case for appropriations, he argued, but support is difficult to come by "when you're \$34 trillion in debt."

At a minimum, Johnson said, he'd like to set up a congressional field hearing so elected officials can see the sheer size of South Dakota's tribal areas.

The BIA, he said "needs to do a better job" of prioritizing large-area tribes like Oglala and Rosebud.

"We do need to make the size of the whole pie bigger," Johnson said. "But I also think we need to acknowledge that South Dakota tribes are not getting a fair share of the existing pie."

Garelick Bell isn't surprised about how difficult it's been to secure funding. Tribal areas simply don't have the representation in Congress to secure support.

The state training academy news was welcome, he said, inasmuch as it's a win in an arena where tribes usually lose.

"New York City issues may be more priority than South Dakota tribes," he said. "That's where it gets difficult to push for an increase."

Ecoffey said Congress could do a world of good "with the stroke of a pen" for large land-area tribes.

"If you wrote an act that would say, 'OK, any tribe that has over 500,000 acres, we're going to double their budget for law enforcement,'" he said, "that would have a huge impact."

As for state and tribal cooperation, Iron Eyes said it will take a lot of bridge-building to reestablish good relations between the Noem administration and tribes.

It will be difficult, he said, but not impossible.

"I think everyone's redeemable," Iron Eyes said. "We have to be willing to forgive each other and engage each other. Otherwise, things just stay the same."

*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.*

## Republican IVF bill fails in U.S. Senate

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JUNE 12, 2024 5:29 PM

WASHINGTON — Alabama Republican Sen. Katie Britt's efforts to pass legislation that would block Medicaid funding from going to states that ban in vitro fertilization were unsuccessful Wednesday when Democrats blocked the bill from advancing.

Britt, who introduced the legislation earlier this year alongside Texas Republican Sen. Ted Cruz, said during brief debate the bill would assuage concerns about couples losing access to IVF, though Democrats said the measure fell short of providing real protections.

Debate took place shortly after the Southern Baptist Convention, the United States' largest Protestant religious organization and one with significant influence in conservative politics, voted to condemn IVF.

It also came one day before the entire U.S. Senate is set to vote on a bill from Democrats that would provide nationwide protections for IVF. That measure also lacks the bipartisan backing needed to advance to final passage.

"For the millions of Americans who face infertility every year, IVF provides the hope of a pathway to parenthood," Britt said on the floor. "We all have loved ones — whether they're family members or friends — who have become parents or grandparents through IVF."

Britt said that ensuring access to IVF is "fundamentally pro-family" and that the legislation should provide couples with "certainty and peace of mind that IVF will remain legal and available in every single state."

Washington Democratic Sen. Patty Murray said the Britt-Cruz bill would still allow states to "enact burdensome and unnecessary" regulations on IVF that could lead to the kind of "legal uncertainty and risk" that forced IVF clinics in Alabama to close temporarily earlier this year.

"Even though it is an inherent part of the IVF process that families will make more embryos than they need," Murray said. "This bill does absolutely nothing — not a single thing — to ensure families who use



**Washington Democratic U.S. Sen. Patty Murray speaks during a press conference on in vitro fertilization outside the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday, June 12, 2024. Also pictured are supporters of Senate Democrats' IVF access bill as well as New Jersey Democratic Sen. Cory Booker and Illinois Democratic Sen. Tammy Duckworth.** (Photo by Jennifer Shutt/States Newsroom)



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 25 of 84

IVF can have their clinics dispose of unused embryos without facing legal threats for a standard medical procedure.”

Murray said GOP senators were completely ignoring the issue of what happens to frozen embryos and using the bill as a “PR tool.”

“The stone-cold reality is that you cannot protect IVF and champion fetal personhood,” Murray said.

## State access

The Britt-Cruz legislation would prevent a state from receiving Medicaid funding if it barred access to IVF, though the bill didn’t say anything about states that define life as beginning at fertilization.

The Alabama state Supreme Court ruling earlier this year that frozen embryos constituted children didn’t explicitly ban IVF, but all of the state’s clinics stopped operating until the legislature provided civil and criminal protections.

Cruz sought to pass the bill using the unanimous consent process, where any one senator can ask for approval and any one senator can block that legislation from moving forward. Murray blocked Cruz’s request.

Unanimous consent requests don’t include a recorded vote.

The legislation had three additional co-sponsors — Cynthia Lummis of Wyoming, Roger Wicker of Mississippi and Roger Marshall of Kansas.

## Democrat bill

The Senate is set to take a procedural vote as soon as Thursday on legislation from Democrats that would bolster protections for IVF, though that bill isn’t expected to get the GOP support needed to move forward.

That bill is more detailed and broader than the Britt-Cruz bill, which has received criticism from Democrats as being insufficient.

New Jersey Democratic Sen. Cory Booker said Wednesday during a press conference that access to IVF shouldn’t be turned into a political issue and called on GOP senators to back the bill.

“We can’t make this seem like a left-right issue. It’s absolutely not,” Booker said. “This is an issue that’s overwhelmingly supported in America by Republican families, Democratic families and independent families. And so trying to make this into some kind of typical political debate in Washington is just wrong.”

Booker said protecting access to IVF is, instead, “about protecting fundamental rights, expanding opportunity, taking care of our military families.”

Illinois Democratic Sen. Tammy Duckworth, the bill’s lead co-sponsor who has been open about using IVF to have her two daughters, threw cool water on working with Republicans on a bipartisan bill when asked about the possibility during the press conference.

“Well, they’re welcome to join ours and make it bipartisan. We’ve got 47 co-sponsors thus far and it’s a very simple piece of legislation,” Duckworth said. “I can’t see why they wouldn’t join it.”

“In contrast, 90% of Republicans have not signed on to Senator Britt’s bill,” Duckworth added.

## Southern Baptists’ resolution

Senate debate on in vitro fertilization is taking place the same week the Southern Baptist Convention meets in Indiana for its annual convention.

During that two-day gathering more than 10,000 Baptists, called messengers, voted on official policies of the SBC, which included objecting to how IVF is practiced now.

The SBC wrote in its resolution that IVF “most often engages in the destruction of embryonic human life and increasingly engages in dehumanizing methods for determining suitability for life and genetic sorting, based on notions of genetic fitness and parental preferences.”

The resolution on IVF “resolved” that members of the SBC should “only utilize reproductive technologies consistent with that affirmation” as well as several other affirmations within the document.

The resolution was titled, “On the Ethical Realities of Reproductive Technologies and the Dignity of the Human Embryo.”

# Groton Daily Independent

**Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 26 of 84**

Kristen Ferguson, from 11th Street Baptist Church in Upland, California, who announced the resolution before the vote, opposed an amendment that would have made several changes to the text.

Ferguson said during a brief debate the committee that wrote the resolutions for the SBC to vote on wanted to make sure it addressed IVF "with the utmost sensitivity."

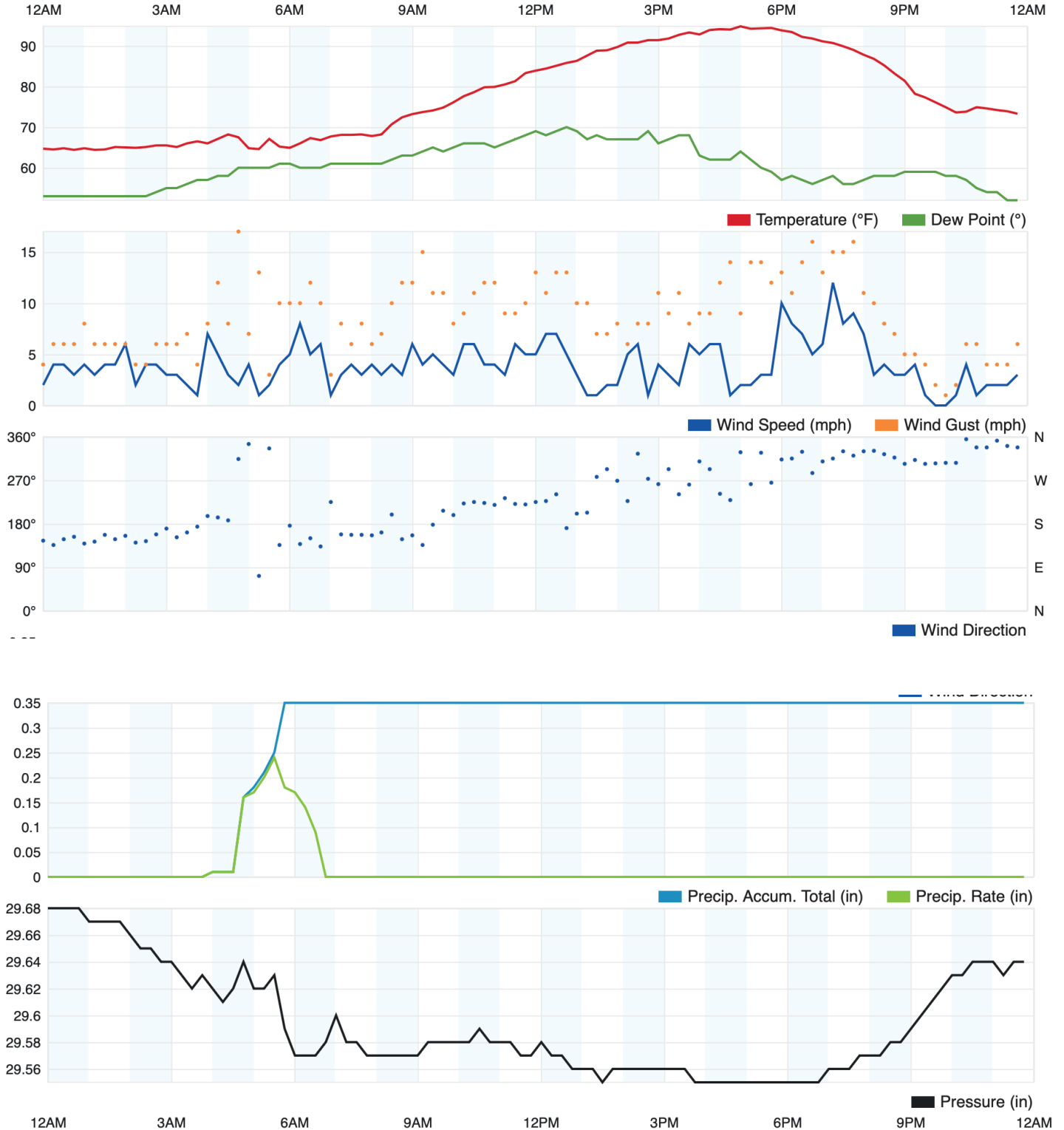
She added that members of the resolutions committee did "not take this topic lightly and we want to make sure that we're speaking carefully about it."

*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.*

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 27 of 84

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 28 of 84

Thursday



High: 85 °F

Slight Chance  
T-storms then  
Sunny

Thursday  
Night



Low: 51 °F

Clear

Friday



High: 84 °F

Increasing  
Clouds

Friday Night



Low: 62 °F

Chance  
Showers then  
Chance  
T-storms

Saturday



High: 81 °F

Chance  
Showers



## End of the Work Week Forecast

June 13, 2024  
4:00 AM

Today



A few showers and  
storms this morning,  
dry weather this  
afternoon

Highs:  
78-86°

Tonight



Dry conditions

Lows:  
50-57°

Friday



There is a 20-35%  
chance of storms,  
mainly west of the  
James River Valley

Highs:  
79-87°

An upper-level disturbance crossing the area this morning will produce showers and thunderstorms. The system will exit around mid-morning, bringing a brief period of dry conditions until Friday. Another system will bring a 20-35% of storms west of the James River on Friday afternoon.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 29 of 84

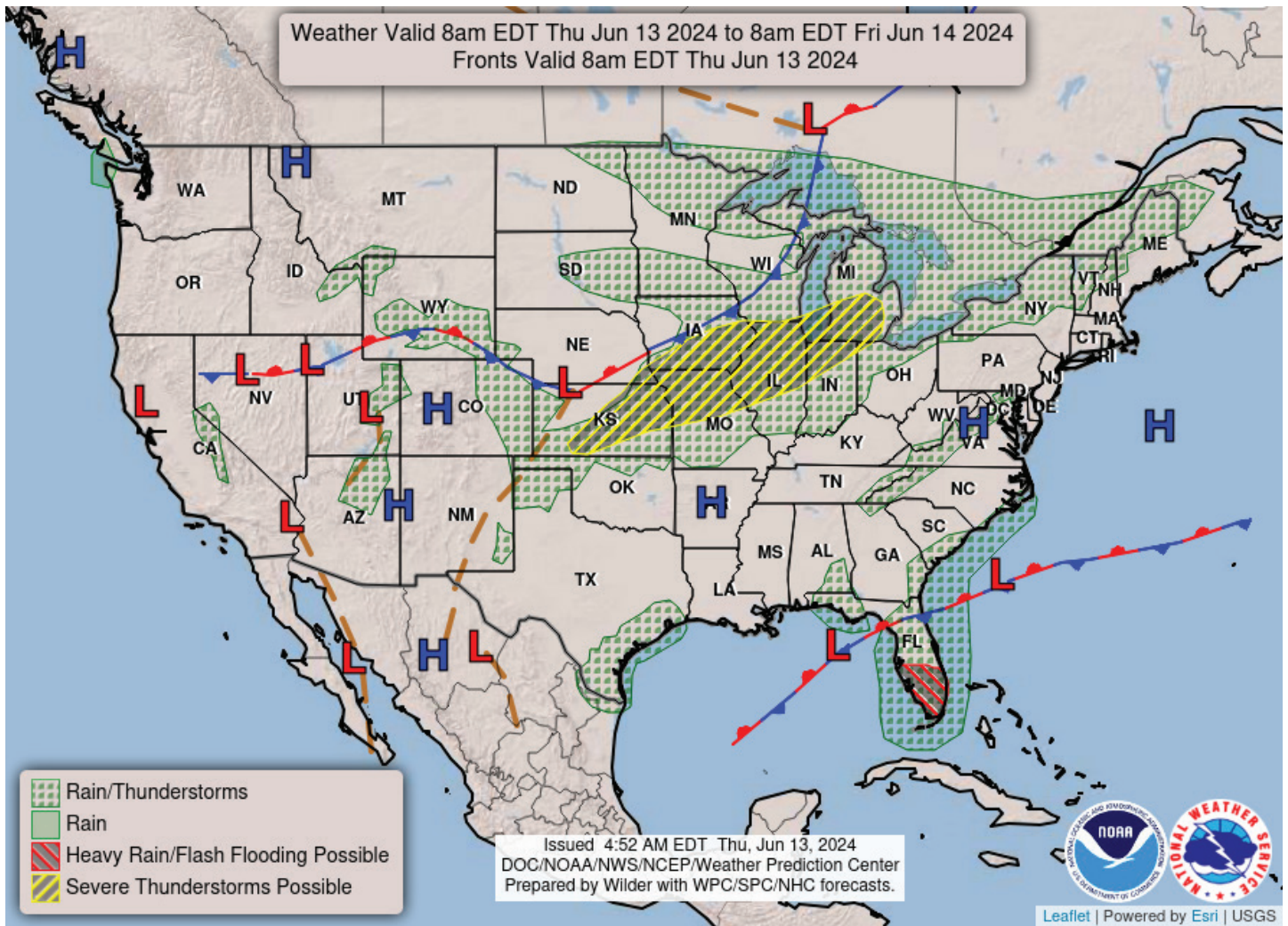
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 95 °F at 5:04 PM**  
**Low Temp: 64 °F at 12:47 AM**  
**Wind: 18 mph at 6:50 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.35**

## Today's Info

Record High: 102 in 1936  
Record Low: 36 in 1942  
Average High: 80  
Average Low: 55  
Average Precip in June.: 1.53  
Precip to date in June: 0.47  
Average Precip to date: 8.78  
Precip Year to Date: 7.54  
Sunset Tonight: 9:23:50 pm  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:41:25 am

Day length: 15 hours, 42 minutes



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 30 of 84

## Today in Weather History

June 13, 1943: An estimated F2 tornado moved ENE, destroying a home on the southeastern edge of Highmore in Hyde County. A mother and her five children seeking shelter in the home were injured. Barns and outbuildings were damaged on a dozen farms. This tornado was estimated to be on the ground for about 8 miles and caused about \$10,000 in damage.

June 13, 1991: A small F1 tornado remained on the ground for 4 miles as it moved westerly from 10 miles west of Roscoe to 6 miles west of Roscoe, in Edmunds County. The path of the tornado continued for another 5 miles but was not consistently on the ground. It dissipated one mile west of Roscoe. Although the tornado had a long path, its width was 10 yards and traveled through open fields and cause little to no damage.

1889 - Forest fires in northern Wisconsin and northeast Minnesota were in the process of destroying millions of dollars of board feet of timber. (David Ludlum)

1907 - The temperature at Tamarack, CA, dipped to 2 degrees above zero, the lowest reading of record for June for the U.S. The high that day was 30 degrees. Tamarack received 42 inches of snow between the 10th and the 13th. On the 13th the snow depth was 130 inches. (The Weather Channel)

1972: Severe weather conditions over the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico begin to converge and form a tropical depression that would become Hurricane Agnes over the next two weeks. This hurricane affected most of the eastern United States with the Northeast being the hardest hit area with heavy rainfall.

1976: A deadly tornado moved across parts of the southwestern Chicago, Illinois suburbs killing three people and injured 23 others. The tornado, with winds over 200 mph moved from Lemont to Downers Grove causing \$13 million in damage when 87 homes were destroyed, and another 90 were damaged. The tornado passed over the Argonne National Laboratory, peeling part of a roof of the building housing a nuclear reactor. The tornadoes movement was somewhat erratic moving southeast to the north and finally turning northwest.

1984 - Severe thunderstorms struck Denver deluging the city with five inches of rain, and leaving up to six feet of water in some places. Softball size hail smashed windshields and ripped through metal cars. Snow plows had to be called out. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Fifteen cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including International Falls, MN, with a reading of 92 degrees. Mason City IA and Waterloo IA reported record highs of 100 degrees. Thunderstorms in the northeastern U.S. produced golf ball size hail around Hamilton Square NJ, along with high winds which tore the roof off a hospital causing a million dollars damage. Averill Park NY was deluged with 1.64 inches of rain in fifteen minutes. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Afternoon thunderstorms produced severe weather in the Southern and Central Plains Region. Forrest NM was deluged with 5.5 inches of rain in ninety minutes. Temperatures soared into the 90s across much of the eastern half of the nation, including New England. Northern Illinois reported a record twenty straight days of dry weather. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Southern Plains Region to the Carolinas during the day and night, and continued to drench parts of Texas and Oklahoma with heavy rain. Oklahoma City reported 13.41 inches of rain for the first thirteen days of the month, and Fort Worth TX reported 29.56 inches for the year, a total more than 13 inches above normal. Severe drought continued to rage across South Texas. (The National Weather Summary)

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 31 of 84

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### GUIDELINES

While counseling an anxious young college student recently, he said, "I need your guidance. I know that you are very successful so I know that any advice you give me would be very worthwhile. Can you give me a few words that can guide me through life?"

"Yes," I replied. "But first you must know that they come from the Bible and that I have found them most reliable."

The first word is anything. Be willing to do any work or task that God places before you. Accept all of His assignments with confidence because He has never planned for anyone to fail.

The second word is anywhere. Be ready to follow Him wherever He leads you. The will of God won't lead you where the grace of God can't protect you or His power provide for your every need.

Finally, any cost. Nothing is too precious to give up for the Lord. And whatever you give up for Him will be given back to you many, many times over. And above all remember this: Give up everything for Him but do not give Him up for anything.

Jesus said, "Take up your cross and follow me!" To be one of His disciples means carrying a cross. Carrying a cross as He did means we are willing to submit and surrender our lives to Him and do what He asks us to do.

Prayer: Father, may we realize that being Your disciples carries with it a supreme sacrifice - carrying a cross as You did. Help us to be willing to pay the price. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. Mark 8:34



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

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 32 of 84

## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

### Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White ..... \$48.99/year
- Colored ..... \$79.88/year
- Colored ..... \$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly\* ..... \$31.95/year

\* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to [paperpaul@grotonsd.net](mailto:paperpaul@grotonsd.net)

## Groton Daily Independent

[www.397news.com](http://www.397news.com)

### Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month ..... \$15.98
- 3 Months ..... \$26.63
- 6 Months ..... \$31.95
- 9 Months ..... \$42.60
- 12 Months ..... \$53.25

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Password \_\_\_\_\_

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

[paypal.me/paperpaul](https://paypal.me/paperpaul)





# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 33 of 84



## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.11.24

1 5 7 22 24 8

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$47,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 54 Mins 14 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.12.24

3 11 16 30 44 8

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$3,140,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 9 Mins 14 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.12.24

3 12 15 19 34 6

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 24 Mins 14 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.12.24

5 6 10 17 21

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$20,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 24 Mins 15 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.12.24

12 13 59 68 69 13

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 53 Mins 15 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.12.24

19 30 31 61 62 21

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$34,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 53 Mins 14 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### One of several South Dakota baseball players charged in rape case pleads guilty to lesser felony

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — One of the several former players on an American Legion baseball team in South Dakota charged last year with rape has pleaded guilty to a lesser felony.

The 19-year-old former Mitchell player pleaded guilty to one count of accessory to a felony, according to court documents cited by KELO-TV on Tuesday. Sentencing is in August and as part of a plea agreement, the former player agreed to testify against other defendants.

The American Legion sponsors summer baseball leagues for high school-aged players throughout the U.S. In August, six players were indicted by a grand jury for second-degree rape and aiding and abetting second-degree rape. Three others were charged in juvenile court. The indictments said the victims were 16 when they were assaulted during a tournament in Rapid City, South Dakota, in June 2023.

The other players charged in the case are scheduled to be in court for a status hearing July 1.

### Editorial Roundup: South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined  
Yankton Press & Dakotan. June 11, 2024.

Editorial: A Nazi March And An Old Reminder

On Thursday, June 6, we turned our attentions to Normandy in France as several world leaders honored the 80th anniversary of the D-Day invasion of occupied Europe during World War II, a pivotal moment in that war and in the course of human history. The moment pleaded to us to not forget the cost of confronting fascism and hate. While so few of the soldiers who were part of that invasion now remain, last week's message seemed to ring out even from the graves of the dead ...

Two days later, South Dakotans were given another reminder of what that fight was all about, and why that resolve can never rest.

On Saturday, members of the neo-Nazi group Blood Tribe staged public demonstrations in both Pierre and Deadwood. The event in Pierre was held on the steps of the state capitol, with about 15 demonstrators, clad in red and black and hiding behind masks, posing next to a large red flag emblazoned with a swastika while, in social media photos, the seat of our state government loomed in the background.

According to the Department of Public Safety, the Highway Patrol dispersed the demonstrators because they did not have a permit for their rally. However, a purported member of Blood Tribe said on social media that the group left of their own accord and were not shooed away by state authorities.

Either way, what was left behind was a disturbing visual, which was one of the points of the effort.

Although the neo-Nazis didn't have a permit for the protest, they do broadly have the right to free expression as guaranteed by the First Amendment.

In response, we have the right to look upon these people and what they stand for and to see them for what they are.

It also demands that we understand that the fight against fascism (which, by the way, is what "antifa," or anti-fascism, is) did not end with victory in World War II.

The battle goes on. The fight is never-ending.

Hate groups like Blood Tribe and its overt protests make the threat easy to see, impossible to miss.

But it's the more understated, subversive forms that must be understood and also confronted ... and that's what makes the battle difficult but all the more essential.

For now, we understand the stakes.

On Saturday night, Gov. Kristi Noem posted on X/Twitter, "Today, Nazis attempted to rally at the SD Capitol without a permit and were escorted away by Highway Patrol officers. Nazis are not welcome here

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 35 of 84

in South Dakota. We stand on the shoulders of generations of Americans who have fought for the freedom of all — here and abroad. We stand for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We reject all hatred and Nazis. Full stop.”

The Spink County Democrats responded on social media to the incident by beseeching South Dakotans to “stand against what these people represent,” then posted the names of veterans from that county who died during World War II, closing with the declaration, “(Expletive) Nazis.”

Besides other state officials, national groups also weighed in. The Council on American-Islamic Relations on Monday declared, “We join in the condemnation of this display of hatred and bigotry, which targets every minority community and must be repudiated by all Americans.”

The lessons from the past few days are simple, clear and vital: Remember what was won at a terrible price, and do not delude yourself into thinking that the fight is ever finished.

## **G7 summit opens with deal to use Russian assets for Ukraine as EU’s traditional powers recalibrate**

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

BARI, Italy (AP) — A Group of Seven summit is opening Thursday with agreement on a U.S. proposal to back a \$50 billion loan to Ukraine using frozen Russian assets as collateral, giving Kyiv a strong show of support even as Europe’s political chessboard shifts to the right.

Diplomats confirmed that an agreement had been reached on the deal before the leaders even landed in southern Italy for the three-day summit. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is on hand and is expected to sign a separate bilateral security agreement with U.S. President Joe Biden.

Beyond the the war in Ukraine, Pope Francis will become the first pope to address a G7 summit, adding a dash of celebrity and moral authority to the annual gathering that is being held this year in Italy’s sun-drenched Puglia region. He’ll be speaking Friday about the promises and perils of artificial intelligence, but is expected to also renew his appeal for a peaceful end to Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

The G7 includes Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States. Italy, which is hosting the summit, has invited several African leaders — Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, Kenyan President William Ruto and Tunisian President Kais Saied — to press Italy’s development and migration initiatives on the continent.

Other guests include Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, fresh off his own election, and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

With Biden, U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and now French President Emmanuel Macron facing elections in the coming months, pressure was on the G7 to get done what it can while the status quo lasts.

Frozen Russian assets to support UkraineThe U.S. proposal involves engineering a \$50 billion loan to help Ukraine in its fight against Russia that would use interest earned on profits from Russia’s frozen central bank assets, most of them held in the European Union, as collateral.

A French official, briefing reporters Wednesday, said a political decision by the leaders had been reached but that technical and legal details of the mechanism to tap into the assets still had to be worked out. The issue is complicated because if the Russian assets one day are unfrozen — say if the war ends — then the windfall profits will no longer be able to be used to pay off the loan, requiring a burden-sharing arrangement with other countries.

In addition to the deal, Sunak announced up to 242 million pounds (286 million euros or \$310 million) in nonmilitary aid to Ukraine for humanitarian, energy and stabilization needs. Washington also sent strong signals of support, with widened sanctions against Russia to target Chinese companies that are helping its war machine.

Europe’s new political chessboardItalian Premier Giorgia Meloni goes into the meeting fortified at home and abroad after her far-right party had an even stronger showing in the European Parliament election than the national general election in 2022 that made her Italy’s first female premier. Known for its revolving-door

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 36 of 84

governments, Italy is now in the unusual position of being the most stable power in the EU.

The leaders of the G7's two other EU members, Germany and France, didn't fare nearly as well, rattled after hard-right parties made strong showings in the vote. Macron called a snap election and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz saw his Social Democrats finish behind mainstream conservatives and the far-right Alternative for Germany.

As a result, Meloni is likely to be able to steer the three-day meeting to her key priority items as she further cements her role on the world stage, analysts said. One sign of her flexed far-right muscles: Meloni's office denied media reports that Italy was trying to water down language about access to abortion in the final communique.

A French official, speaking anonymously in line with Macron's office customary practices, said there were diverging views with Italian negotiators on some topics, including on sexual and reproductive health and vaccines.

Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani confirmed abortion was being discussed, but said discussions were continuing.

"While it's unlikely the recent results will radically shift the focus of the upcoming G7 Summit, this electoral win offers Premier Meloni additional leverage to frame this as an essentially 'Mediterranean Summit,'" said Nick O'Connell, deputy director of the Atlantic Council.

That includes pushing her migration agenda as Meloni seeks to leverage her program for a nonexploitative relationship with Africa to boost development while curbing illegal migration to Europe.

The pope and artificial intelligencePope Francis has called for an international treaty to ensure AI is developed and used ethically, acknowledging the promise it offers but emphasizing the grave and existential threats it poses.

He'll bring that campaign to the world's industrialized countries as wars are raging across multiple fronts. One of his greatest concerns has been on the use of AI in the armaments sector, which has been a frequent focus of the Jesuit pope who has called even traditional weapons makers "merchants of death."

But Francis is also concerned about what AI means for the poorest and weakest: technology that could determine the reliability of an applicant for a mortgage, the right of a migrant to receive political asylum or the chance of reoffending by someone previously convicted of a crime.

It's happening where?The G7 summit is taking place in a sprawling luxury resort that's something of a theater set, a faux town made to resemble one of Puglia's medieval white-washed hamlets but that actually only dates from 2010.

Located next to an actual archaeological park, Borgo Egnazia features narrow streets, villas, restaurants and a town square complete with a clocktower. A favorite of celebrities, it will be sealed off to outsiders for the duration of the summit.

No such five-star accommodations await the 2,000-plus police and Carabinieri forces who have been brought in to provide security. Authorities on Wednesday sequestered the decommissioned cruise ship that had been housing them in Brindisi's port, after the police union complained about unacceptable hygienic conditions on board.

As with any G7, an assortment of anti-global, anti-war and climate activists are staging protests around the summit venue, but far from where the leaders are meeting. One group is staging a "dinner for the poor" on Friday night calling for "peace, the rights of peoples and against the Big 7 who claim to decide the destiny of the world and our planet."

## **The Latest: Italy hosts the Group of Seven summit with global conflicts on the agenda**

BORGO EGNAZIA, Italy (AP) — Italy is hosting the summit of the Group of Seven leading industrialized nations in the wake of the European Parliament election, which saw a surge in support for the far right in places like G7 members France and Germany.

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni also leads a far-right party but continues to hew to the center, particularly

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 37 of 84

on foreign policy, which has made her a reassuring transatlantic partner amid Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

The G7 summit through Saturday is focusing on global conflicts, the spread of artificial intelligence and on Africa issues, with a view in particular to Italy's longstanding concern about uncontrolled migration to Europe and human traffickers. Perennial issues such as climate change and China also will be discussed.

The G7 is an informal forum with an annual summit to discuss economic policy and security issues. The members are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Currently:

- Italy's Meloni will welcome the G7 summit fortified by an EU vote that shook French, German leaders
- In Italy's Puglia region, women take the lead in challenging the local mafia at great personal risk
- US pushes for Ukraine aid, united front against China's trade practices at G7 finance meeting

Here's the latest:

Opinions differ about including abortion rights, other issues in final G7 statementBARI, Italy - Abortion rights are among a number of issues about which opinions vary on whether to include them in the Group of Seven summit's final statement.

Italian Deputy Premier Antonio Tajani on Thursday rejected reports that Italy had sought to remove a reference relating to abortion, saying the issue was still being discussed.

Summit host Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, whose far-right party was buoyed by a strong showing in weekend European Parliament elections, has insisted she won't roll back a 1978 law allowing abortion in Italy. But she has also prioritized encouraging women to have children to reverse Italy's demographic crisis.

A French official, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with the French president's office customary practices, said there were diverging views with Italian negotiators on some topics.

The official spoke of "debates on sexual and reproductive health and on the issue of vaccines, which were not taken into account as much as we would have liked by the Italian Presidency." But the official praised the overall result of the G7 negotiations as "very good."

An Italian official, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with Italian policy, said that "no state has asked to eliminate the reference to issues relating to abortion from the draft conclusions of the G7 summit," and noted that "the negotiation dynamics are still ongoing."

Italy's Meloni greets arriving G7 leaders at summit dominated by aid pledges to UkraineBORGOGNAZIA, Italy — Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni is greeting leaders of the Group of Seven as they arrive for a summit dominated by pledges of new assistance to help Ukraine in its war with Russia.

Standing in front of one of Puglia's famed olive trees and under a canopy to guard against the sun, Meloni welcomed first British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and then German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Ahead of the summit, negotiators reached a deal to back a \$50 billion loan to Ukraine using frozen Russian assets held in the European Union as collateral.

The venue for the summit is Borgo Egnazai, a new luxury resort built to look like one of Puglia's medieval white-washed towns, complete with narrow streets, villas and a central piazza.

G7 leaders agree to lend Ukraine \$50 billion using frozen Russian assets as collateralBARI, Italy — Officials say the world's seven wealthiest democracies have agreed on lending Ukraine up to \$50 billion using frozen Russian assets as collateral.

Diplomats confirmed the agreement, which was struck before Thursday's start of the three-day G7 summit that brings together Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

U.S. President Joe Biden and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will also sign a bilateral security agreement during the summit.

European officials have resisted confiscating the assets, citing legal and financial stability concerns. But the plan would use the interest earned on the assets to help Ukraine's war effort.

The U.S. proposal involves using profits from the roughly \$260 billion in frozen Russian central bank assets, most of them held in the European Union, to help Ukraine.

The U.S. would issue Ukraine the \$50 billion loan using windfall profits from the immobilized funds as

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 38 of 84

collateral.

United Kingdom pledges \$310 million in nonmilitary aid to Ukraine LONDON — U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is announcing up to 242 million pounds (286 million euros or \$310 million) in nonmilitary aid to Ukraine as Group of Seven leaders gather for a summit overshadowed by war.

Sunak is taking time out from the U.K. election campaign to attend Thursday's gathering in southern Italy. The U.K. government says the money will go towards "immediate humanitarian, energy and stabilization needs" in Ukraine. Sunak has also thrown his support behind a plan to use interest from seized Russian assets to help Ukraine rebuild.

Sunak said the war is at a "critical moment" and Ukraine's allies "must move from 'as long as it takes' to 'whatever it takes' if we are to end this illegal war."

The U.K. has pledged 12.5 billion pounds to Ukraine since Russia launched its full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022. That includes 7.6 billion pounds worth of military assistance.

Sunak is battling to keep his job after the U.K. election on July 4, with opinion polls putting his Conservatives far behind the opposition Labour Party. Labour leader Keir Starmer says he will keep up the United Kingdom's strong support for Ukraine if he becomes prime minister.

Town hosting G7 summit also a faux medieval venue for Hollywood elite BORGIO EGNAZIA, Italy — Madonna and the Beckhams have reportedly stayed there, and Jessica Biel and Justin Timberlake got married there.

Borgio Egnazia in Italy's southern Puglia region has certainly had its share of star power and on Thursday hosts another set of VIP guests: the leaders of the world's industrialized democracies.

But the venue for the Group of Seven summit is also something of a theater set, a faux town made to resemble one of Puglia's medieval white-washed hamlets but that actually only dates from 2010.

Located next to an actual archaeological park, Borgio Egnazia features narrow streets, villas, restaurants and a town square complete with a clocktower.

## After rare flash flood emergency, Florida prepares for more heavy rainfall in coming days

By CURT ANDERSON Associated Press

A tropical disturbance has brought a rare flash flood emergency to much of southern Florida as residents prepared to weather more heavy rainfall on Thursday and Friday.

Wednesday's downpours and subsequent flooding blocked roads, floated vehicles and delayed the Florida Panthers on their way to Stanley Cup games in Canada against the Edmonton Oilers.

The disorganized storm system was pushing across Florida from the Gulf of Mexico at roughly the same time as the early June start of hurricane season, which this year is forecast to be among the most active in recent memory amid concerns that climate change is increasing storm intensity.

The disturbance has not reached cyclone status and was given only a slight chance to form into a tropical system once it emerges into the Atlantic Ocean after crossing Florida, according to the National Hurricane Center.

"Regardless of development, heavy rainfall is forecast to continue across portions of the Florida peninsula during the next few days," the hurricane center posted on its website Wednesday.

Numerous roads were flooded and impassable for vehicles. On major artery Interstate 95 in Broward County, southbound traffic was being diverted around a flooded section and contractors were on their way to pump the drainage system, the Florida Highway Patrol said in an email. The interstate wouldn't reopen until after water is drained, the agency said.

The Miami weather service office issued increasingly dire warnings.

"Life-threatening flooding is now ongoing," the service said on the social platform X. "Please stay off the roadways and get to higher ground."

Mayors in Fort Lauderdale and Hollywood declared a state of emergency for their cities on Wednesday

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 39 of 84

afternoon. Later Wednesday, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis also declared a state of emergency for five counties — Broward and Miami-Dade on Florida's Atlantic coast and Collier, Lee and Sarasota counties on the state's west coast.

Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava also issued a local state of emergency.

In nearby Hollywood, Mike Viesel was driving home Wednesday afternoon with his dog Humi when he was caught in deep floodwater along a low-lying street, he told the Miami Herald.

As he slowed down and stopped, Viesel said other cars drove past him, sending even more water into his vehicle. His engine stalled.

"I'd walk out of my car," he told the Herald, but his dog "has a problem with water."

In Miami's Edgewater neighborhood, the lobby of the building that Alfredo Rodriguez moved into a year ago already had water puddles inside on Wednesday morning. He told the Herald the building has flooded five times since he moved in.

"This is horrible. I can't pull my car around," he said of the flooded streets.

Dozens of flights were delayed or canceled at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport. The NHL's Florida Panthers were delayed more than three hours from departing Fort Lauderdale for their nearly six-hour flight to Edmonton for Games 3 and 4 of the Stanley Cup Final.

Farther north, the National Weather Service in Melbourne confirmed that an EF-1 tornado hit Hobe Sound on Florida's Atlantic Coast north of West Palm Beach on Wednesday morning.

The winds knocked down multiple banyan trees and caused some damage to a store, Martin County Fire Rescue officials said. No injuries were reported, but access to wealthy Jupiter Island was cut off by debris on the road.

It's already been a wet and blustery week in Florida. In Miami, about 6 inches (15 centimeters) of rain fell Tuesday and 7 inches (17 centimeters) in Miami Beach, according to the National Weather Service. Hollywood got about 5 inches (12 centimeters).

Bryan McNoldy, a senior research associate at the University of Miami Rosenstiel School, noted on X that some 9 inches (23 centimeters) had fallen on parts of South Florida from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Wednesday in addition to the rain that fell on Tuesday.

"We are in trouble," McNoldy wrote.

More rain was forecast for the rest of the week, leading the weather service office in Miami to extend a flash flood watch through Thursday. Some places could see another 6 inches (15 centimeters) of rain.

The western side of the state, much of which has been in a prolonged drought, also got some major rainfall. Nearly 6.5 inches (16.5 centimeters) of rain fell Tuesday at Sarasota Bradenton International Airport, the weather service says, and flash flood warnings were in effect in those areas as well.

Forecasts predict an unusually busy hurricane season.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration estimates there is an 85% chance that the Atlantic hurricane season will be above average, predicting between 17 and 25 named storms in the coming months including up to 13 hurricanes and four major hurricanes. An average season has 14 named storms.

## The Latest | US national security adviser says Israel stands behind cease-fire proposal

By The Associated Press undefined

U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan on Thursday pushed back against assertions that Israel isn't fully committed to the cease-fire proposal with Hamas that President Joe Biden outlined in late May at the White House.

"Israel has supplied this proposal. It has been sitting on the table for some time. Israel has not contradicted or walked that back," Sullivan said Thursday in Italy, where Biden was set to attend the annual Group of Seven leaders' summit. "To this day they stand behind the proposal."

"I don't think that there is a contradiction in the Israeli position," Sullivan added.

Sullivan reiterated that Hamas had responded by offering an amended proposal and he said the goal is

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 40 of 84

“to figure out how we work to bridge the remaining gaps and get to a deal.”

“The goal is to try to bring this to a conclusion as rapidly as possible,” he told reporters.

On Wednesday, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that mediators are trying to close the deal for an elusive cease-fire and hostage release in Gaza. Hamas has requested numerous changes to a U.S.-backed proposal — some of which Blinken said were “workable” and some not.

Hamas says its “amendments” aim to guarantee a permanent cease-fire and complete Israeli troop withdrawal from Gaza. The cease-fire proposal announced by Biden includes those provisions, but Hamas has expressed wariness whether Israel will implement the terms.

Israel’s war against Hamas in Gaza has killed more than 37,100 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.

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

Currently:

- What are the main sticking points in the cease-fire talks between Israel and Hamas?
- Report by UN-backed experts cites crimes by Israeli forces and Palestinian militants starting Oct. 7.
- Hezbollah vows to intensify attacks against Israel after an airstrike kills a senior commander.
- Blinken says some of Hamas’ proposed changes to a cease-fire plan in Gaza are workable and some are not.

— Yemen’s Houthi rebels launch boat-borne bomb attack against Greek-owned ship in Red Sea.

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

Here’s the latest:

Iraq’s top diplomat says he is concerned Israel might escalate military action in Lebanon BAGHDAD — Iraq’s top diplomat expressed concerns Thursday that Israel might escalate its military operations in Lebanon with ripple effects that could reach his country.

“There are dangerous signs that there may be an attack on southern Lebanon and if this attack happens, it will affect the region and not just Lebanon,” Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein said after a meeting with acting Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani in his first visit to Baghdad since taking the post. The two officials called for a cease-fire in Gaza.

Kani replaced former Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, who died in a helicopter crash on May 19 along with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and a delegation of other officials.

Iranian-backed militias in Iraq have launched drone attacks on targets in Israel and on bases in Iraq and Syria housing U.S. troops since the outbreak of the war in Gaza, where Israeli forces are fighting against the Palestinian militant group Hamas. However, the most intense fighting outside of Gaza has been on the Lebanon-Israel border, where the Iranian-backed Lebanese militant group Hezbollah has been clashing with Israeli forces almost daily for more than eight months.

In recent weeks, those clashes have intensified, with fears of a further escalation. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said earlier this month that Israel is “prepared for very intense action” along its northern border with Lebanon. Should a wider conflict break out in Lebanon, the Iraqi militias are widely expected to join their ally, Hezbollah, in the fight.

US national security adviser says Israel stands behind cease-fire proposal FASANO, Italy — U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan on Thursday pushed back against assertions that Israel isn’t fully committed to the cease-fire proposal with Hamas that President Joe Biden outlined in late May at the White House.

“Israel has supplied this proposal. It has been sitting on the table for some time. Israel has not contradicted or walked that back,” Sullivan said Thursday in Italy, where Biden was set to attend the annual Group of Seven leaders’ summit. “To this day they stand behind the proposal.”

“I don’t think that there is a contradiction in the Israeli position,” Sullivan added.

Sullivan reiterated that Hamas had responded by offering an amended proposal and he said the goal is



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 41 of 84

"to figure out how we work to bridge the remaining gaps and get to a deal."

"The goal is to try to bring this to a conclusion as rapidly as possible," he told reporters.

Voices of displaced Palestinians in Gaza: jaded hopes for a cease-fire despite war's bloody toll DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — Weary after eight months of war, frustrated Palestinians displaced from their homes in Gaza said Wednesday they are cautiously hoping for a cease-fire.

Some are more skeptical than others, as previous moments of optimism have been dashed by differences between Israel and Hamas.

"We are psychologically tired," said Etaf Abdel Bari, a displaced woman living in central Gaza's Deir al-Balah. "They negotiated a lot, to no avail? We are not a toy in their hands. Our sons, daughters, and families killed without a reason. For what?"

More than 1 million people have fled Israel's invasion of the southern Gaza city Rafah, scattering across southern and central Gaza into new tent camps or crowding into schools and homes.

"Every day there is a truce, there is no truce. We want a solution. We want to return to our homes," said a displaced man, Salama Abu al-Qumbuz. "We are tired of this life, sleeping in the street, transporting water. Our lives have become very boring."

The United Nations says over one million people in Gaza face desperate hunger and don't have enough clean drinking water.

Other residents of Deir al-Balah took a more cynical view of the back-and-forth truce talks.

"I expect the war to continue. There are no negotiations," said Abu Jamil al-Maqadma. "The negotiations are false."

Blinken says some of Hamas' proposed changes to a cease-fire plan in Gaza are workable and some not DOHA, Qatar — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Wednesday that mediators would keep trying to close an elusive cease-fire deal after Hamas proposed numerous changes to a U.S.-backed plan, some of which he said were "workable" and some not.

The back-and-forth laid bare frustration over the difficulty of reaching an accord that can bring an end to eight months of war that has decimated Gaza, killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and left scores of Israeli hostages still languishing in militant captivity. Previous moments of optimism have been repeatedly dashed by the differences between the two sides.

The cease-fire proposal has global support but has not been fully embraced by Israel or Hamas. Blinken did not spell out what changes Hamas was seeking but he said the mediators — Qatar, Egypt and the U.S. — will keep trying to "close this deal." He put the onus on Hamas, accusing it of changing its demands.

"Hamas has proposed numerous changes to the proposal that was on the table. ... Some of the changes are workable. Some are not," Blinken told reporters in Qatar. "I believe that they (the differences) are bridgeable, but that doesn't mean they will be bridged because ultimately Hamas has to decide."

The Palestinian militant group says the "amendments" aim to guarantee a permanent cease-fire and complete Israeli troop withdrawal from Gaza.

Those provisions are included in the proposal announced by U.S. President Joe Biden, but Hamas has expressed wariness whether Israel will implement the terms. And although the U.S. says Israel has accepted the proposal, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has given conflicting statements, saying Israel is still intent on its goal of destroying Hamas.

The proposal's three-phase plan would begin with a 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. Aid distribution would also increase.

At the same time, negotiations would start over the second phase, which is to bring "a permanent end to hostilities" and "full withdrawal" of Israeli troops from Gaza in exchange for the release of all remaining hostages.

A major hitch for both sides appears to be the negotiations for the second phase. Phase three would see the launch of a reconstruction plan for Gaza and the return of remains of deceased hostages.

## President Joe Biden faces first lawsuit over new asylum crackdown at the border

By SEUNG MIN KIM and REBECCA SANTANA The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A coalition of immigrant advocacy groups sued the Biden administration on Wednesday over President Joe Biden's recent directive that effectively halts asylum claims at the southern border, saying it differs little from a similar move by the Trump administration that was blocked by the courts.

The lawsuit — filed by the American Civil Liberties Union and others on behalf of Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center and the Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services, or RAICES — is the first test of the legality of Biden's sweeping crackdown on the border, which came after months of internal White House deliberations and is designed in part to deflect political attacks against the president on his handling of immigration.

"By enacting an asylum ban that is legally indistinguishable from the Trump ban we successfully blocked, we were left with no choice but to file this lawsuit," said Lee Gelernt, an attorney for the ACLU.

The order Biden issued last week would limit asylum processing once encounters with migrants between ports of entry reach 2,500 per day. It went into effect immediately because the latest figures were far higher, at about 4,000 daily.

The restrictions would be in effect until two weeks after those daily encounter numbers are at or below 1,500 per day, under a seven-day average. But it's far from clear when the numbers would dip that low; the last time was in July 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The order went into effect June 5, and Biden administration officials have said they expected record levels of deportations.

But advocates argue that suspending asylum for migrants who don't arrive at a designated port of entry — which the Biden administration is trying to push migrants to do — violates existing federal immigration law, among other concerns.

"The United States has long sheltered refugees seeking a haven from persecution. The 1980 Refugee Act enshrined that national commitment in law. While Congress has placed some limitations on the right to seek asylum over the years, it has never permitted the Executive Branch to categorically ban asylum based on where a noncitizen enters the country," the groups wrote in the complaint filed Wednesday.

Biden invoked the same legal authority used by the Trump administration for its asylum ban, which comes under Section 212(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. That provision allows a president to limit entries for certain migrants if their entry is deemed "detrimental" to the national interest.

As he campaigns, Biden has repeatedly criticized former President Donald Trump's immigration policies, and his administration argues that his directive is different because it includes several exemptions for humanitarian reasons. For example, victims of human trafficking, unaccompanied minors and those with severe medical emergencies would not be subject to the limits.

A spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security declined to comment on the lawsuit but said: "The Securing the Border rule is lawful, is critical to strengthening border security, and is already having an impact. The challenged actions remain in effect, and we will continue to implement them."

In the lawsuit, the immigrant advocacy groups argue that exceptions are "extremely limited."

The White House referred questions about the lawsuit to the Justice Department, which declined to comment. White House spokesperson Angelo Fernández Hernández defended Biden's order, saying in a statement it was necessary after congressional Republicans blocked a bipartisan agreement that "would have provided critical resources, statutory changes, and additional personnel to the border."

Under Biden's directive, migrants who arrive at the border but do not express a fear of returning to their home countries will be subject to immediate removal from the United States, within a matter of days or even hours. Those migrants could face punishments that could include a five-year bar from reentering the U.S. or even criminal prosecution.

Advocates argued in the lawsuit that requiring migrants to express fear — often called manifesting fear

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 43 of 84

— puts the onus on the migrants.

"In practice, noncitizens who have just crossed the border, and may be hungry, exhausted, ill, or traumatized after fleeing persecution in their home countries and danger in Mexico, are likely to be intimidated by armed, uniformed Border Patrol officers, and are thus unlikely to 'manifest' their fear of return," the lawsuit reads.

Meanwhile, those who express fear or an intention to seek asylum will be screened by a U.S. asylum officer but at a higher standard than currently used. If they pass the screening, they can pursue more limited forms of humanitarian protection, including the U.N. Convention Against Torture, which prohibits returning people to a country where they're likely to face torture.

Migrants who use an app called CBP One while they're in Mexico to schedule an appointment to present themselves at an official border crossing point to seek entry are exempt from these newer, tougher asylum restrictions. The app is part of the administration's efforts to encourage migrants to use its preferred pathways to try to enter the country, instead of simply crossing the border and finding a Border Patrol agent and turning themselves in.

But in the lawsuit, advocates detailed a list of complaints about the app. For example, many migrants don't have a cellular data plan or the Wi-Fi access needed to use it. Some migrants don't speak one of the languages the app supports, while other migrants are illiterate. And there's only a limited number of slots available every day compared with the number of migrants who want to come into the country.

"As a result, countless asylum seekers have been forced to wait indefinitely under precarious conditions in Mexico in the hope of obtaining scarce appointments," the lawsuit reads.

The other groups bringing the lawsuit alongside the ACLU were the National Immigrant Justice Center, Center for Gender & Refugee Studies, Jenner & Block LLP, ACLU of the District of Columbia, and Texas Civil Rights Project.

## Florida's 2024 hurricane season arrives with a rainy deluge

By CURT ANDERSON Associated Press

Dangerous flooding from a tropical disturbance inundated much of southern Florida on Wednesday, blocking roads, floating vehicles and delaying the Florida Panthers on their way to Stanley Cup games in Canada against the Edmonton Oilers.

The disorganized storm system was pushing across Florida from the Gulf of Mexico at roughly the same time as the early June start of hurricane season, which this year is forecast to be among the most active in recent memory amid concerns that climate change is increasing storm intensity.

The disturbance has not reached cyclone status and was given only a slight chance to form into a tropical system once it emerges into the Atlantic Ocean after crossing Florida, according to the National Hurricane Center.

"Regardless of development, heavy rainfall is forecast to continue across portions of the Florida peninsula during the next few days," the hurricane center posted on its website Wednesday.

Numerous roads were flooded and impassable for vehicles. On major artery Interstate 95 in Broward County, southbound traffic was being diverted around a flooded section and contractors were on their way to pump the drainage system, the Florida Highway Patrol said in an email. The interstate wouldn't reopen until after water is drained, the agency said.

The Miami weather service office issued increasingly dire warnings.

"Life-threatening flooding is now ongoing," the service said on the X social media platform. "Please stay off the roadways and get to higher ground."

Mayors in Fort Lauderdale and Hollywood declared a state of emergency for their cities on Wednesday afternoon. Later Wednesday, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis also declared a state of emergency for five counties — Broward and Miami-Dade on Florida's Atlantic coast and Collier, Lee and Sarasota counties on the state's west coast.

Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava also issued a local state of emergency.

# Fort Lauderdale Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 44 of 84

"Due to ongoing heavy rainfall, several roadways throughout the City of Fort Lauderdale, including major thoroughfares like Broward Boulevard and Federal Highway near downtown are experiencing high water levels," Fort Lauderdale Mayor Dean Trantalis said on X.

In nearby Hollywood, Mike Viesel was driving home Wednesday afternoon with his dog Humi when he was caught in deep floodwater along a low-lying street, he told the Miami Herald.

As he slowed down and stopped, Viesel said other cars drove past him, sending even more water into his vehicle. His engine stalled.

"I'd walk out of my car," he told the Herald, but his dog "has a problem with water."

In Miami's Edgewater neighborhood, the lobby of the building that Alfredo Rodriguez moved into a year ago already had water puddles inside on Wednesday morning. He told the Miami Herald the building has flooded five times since he moved in.

"It was a surprise to me. I want to leave this place in the next three months. This is horrible. I can't pull my car around," he said of the flooded streets.

Dozens of flights were delayed or canceled at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport. The NHL's Florida Panthers were delayed more than three hours from departing Fort Lauderdale for their nearly six-hour flight to Edmonton for Games 3 and 4 of the Stanley Cup Final.

Further north, the National Weather Service in Melbourne confirmed that an EF-1 tornado hit Hobe Sound on Florida's Atlantic Coast north of West Palm Beach on Wednesday morning.

The winds knocked down multiple banyan trees and caused some damage to a store, Martin County Fire Rescue officials said. No injuries were reported, but access to wealthy Jupiter Island was cut off by debris on the road.

It's already been a wet and blustery week in Florida. In Miami, about 6 inches (15 centimeters) of rain fell Tuesday and 7 inches (17 centimeters) in Miami Beach, according to the National Weather Service. Hollywood got about 5 inches (12 centimeters).

Bryan McNoldy, a senior research associate at the University of Miami Rosenstiel School, noted on X that some 9 inches (23 centimeters) had fallen on parts of South Florida from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Wednesday in addition to the rain that fell on Tuesday.

"We are in trouble," McNoldy wrote.

More rain was forecast for the rest of the week, leading the weather service office in Miami to extend a flash flood watch through Thursday. Some places could see another 6 inches (15 centimeters) of rain.

The western side of the state, much of which has been in a prolonged drought, also got some major rainfall. Nearly 6.5 inches of rain fell Tuesday at Sarasota Bradenton International Airport, the weather service says, and flash flood warnings were in effect in those areas as well.

Forecasts predict an unusually busy hurricane season.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration estimates there is an 85% chance that the Atlantic hurricane season will be above average, predicting between 17 and 25 named storms in the coming months including up to 13 hurricanes and four major hurricanes. An average season has 14 named storms.

Fort Lauderdale was hit hard in April 2023 with record rainfall totals ranging from 15 inches (38 centimeters) to 26 inches (66 centimeters). Many homes and businesses were flooded.

## One year later, migrants who survived wreck off Greece seek justice and struggle to cope with life

By NICHOLAS PAPHITIS Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Desperate hands clutched at Ali Elwan's arms, legs and neck, and screams misted his ears, as he spat out saltwater and fought for three hours to keep afloat in the night, dozens of miles from land.

Although a poor swimmer, he lived — one of just 104 survivors from the wreck of a dilapidated old metal fishing boat smuggling up to 750 migrants from North Africa to Europe.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 45 of 84

"I was so, so lucky," the 30-year-old Egyptian told The Associated Press in Athens, Greece, where he works odd jobs while he waits to hear the outcome of his asylum application. "I have two babies. Maybe I stay(ed) in this life for them."

Thousands have died in Mediterranean Sea shipwrecks in recent years as migrants from the Middle East, Asia and Africa seek a better life in the affluent European Union.

But the sinking of the *Adriana* a year ago Friday in international waters 75 kilometers (45 miles) off Pylos in southern Greece was one of the worst. Only 82 bodies were recovered, so that hundreds of families still lack even the grim certitude that their relatives are dead.

Elwan, a cook whose wife and children are in Cairo, says he still gets phone calls from Egypt from mothers, brothers and wives of the missing.

"We (left) home to get best life for family and until now (their families) know nothing about them," he said.

And after a year there are only hazy answers as to why so many lives were lost, what caused the shipwreck and who can be held answerable.

Migrant charities and human rights groups have strongly criticized Greece's handling of the sinking and its aftermath.

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International said Thursday "a credible process for accountability" was needed.

"It is unconscionable that one year since this horrific tragedy, the investigation into the potential liability of (Greece's) Coast Guard has barely progressed," HRW official Judith Sunderland said in the groups' joint statement.

The Greek coast guard, migration ministry and other officials did not respond to AP requests for comment ahead of the anniversary.

Authorities had a coast guard boat on the scene and merchant ships in the vicinity during the trawler's last hours. They blame smugglers who crammed hundreds of people into an unseaworthy vessel — most in an airless hold designed to store a catch of fish — for a nightmare voyage from Libya to Italy.

They also say the *Adriana* capsized when its passengers — some of whom wanted to press on for Italy after five dreadful days at sea, others to seek safety in Greece — suddenly surged to one side, causing it to lurch and turn turtle. And they insist that offers to take the migrants off the ship were rebuffed by people set on reaching Italy.

Elwan — who says he was on deck with a clear view of what happened — and other survivors say the lurching followed a botched coast guard attempt to tow the trawler. He claimed the coast guard hurriedly cut the towline when it became evident the *Adriana* would sink and drag their boat down with it.

"If you find the ship (at the bottom of the sea), you will find this rope" still attached to it, he said.

But the logistics make such a feat nigh-on impossible, Greek authorities say, as the ship rests some 5 kilometers (more than 3 miles) down, at one of the Mediterranean's deepest points.

The coast guard has denied any towing attempt, and allegations that its vessel tried to shift the trawler into neighboring Italy's area of responsibility.

A naval court began investigating last June, but has released no information on its progress or findings.

Separately, in November Greece's state ombudsman started an independent probe into authorities' handling of the tragedy, bemoaning the coast guard's "express denial" to initiate a disciplinary investigation.

Last month, a Greek court dropped charges against nine Egyptians accused of crewing the *Adriana* and causing the shipwreck. Without examining evidence for or against them, it determined that Greece lacked jurisdiction as the wreck occurred in international waters.

Effie Doussi, one of the Egyptians' defense lawyers, argued that the ruling was "politically convenient" for Greek authorities.

"It saved the Greek state from being exposed over how the coast guard acted, given their responsibility for rescue," she said.

Doussi said a full hearing would have included testimony from survivors and other witnesses, and let defense lawyers seek additional evidence from the coast guard, such as potential mobile phone data.

Zeeshan Sarwar, a 28-year-old Pakistani survivor, said he's still waiting for justice, "but apparently there

is nothing.”

“I may be looking fine right now, but I am broken from the inside. We are not getting justice,” he told the AP. “We are not receiving any information about the people of coast guard ... that the court has found them guilty or not.”

Elwan, the Egyptian, said he can still only sleep for three or four hours a night.

“I remember every second that happened to me,” he said. “I can’t forget anything because (I) lost friends in this ship.”

The journey that preceded the wreck was also horrendous.

Survivors said Pakistanis were confined in the hold and beaten by the crew if they tried to stir. But Arabic-speaking Egyptians and Syrians enjoyed the relative luxury of the deck. For many, that spelled the difference between life and death when the ship capsized.

“Our condition was very bad on the first day because it was the first time in our life that we were traveling on the sea,” Sarwar said.

“If a person ... tried to vomit, then they used to say that you have to do it right here on your lap, you can’t get (outside),” he said. “On the fifth day, people were fainting because of hunger and thirst. One man died.”

Elwan said he left for Europe secretly, telling his wife he would be away for months, working at an Egyptian Red Sea resort.

He’s upset that he’s still to be granted asylum, unlike many Syrian survivors who, he said, have moved on to western Europe.

“Only people from Egypt can’t get papers,” he said. “I’ve been working for 10 months to send money for my family ... If someone says come and move rubbish, I will go and move this rubbish, no problem for me.”

If he gets residence papers, Elwan wants to work in Greece and bring his family over.

Otherwise, “I will go to Italy, maybe Germany. I don’t know.”

## Milei’s radical overhaul advances in Argentina’s Senate as protesters clash with police

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Argentina’s Senate began what’s likely to be an all-night voting marathon on the details of President Javier Milei’s sweeping proposals to slash spending and boost his own powers early Thursday, shortly after giving the plan overall approval in a narrow vote as thousands of protesters clashed with police outside.

Senators voted 37 to 36 late Wednesday to give provisional approval to the two bills after a daylong heated debate while thousands of protesters poured into the streets, burning cars and throwing Molotov cocktails as hundreds of federal security forces pushed back with rounds of tear gas and water cannons.

The vote — decided by a tiebreaking vote from Vice President Victoria Villarruel — delivered a major boost to Milei, whose efforts to overhaul the government and economy have run into tough resistance in Argentina’s opposition-dominated Congress.

“Tonight is a triumph for the Argentine people and the first step toward the recovery of our greatness,” Milei posted on X, calling his bills “the most most ambitious legislative reform of the last 40 years.”

But critical elements of the wide-ranging legislation still have to survive an article-by-article vote in the Senate. After that, the bill heads back to the lower house, where lawmakers must okay any modifications before Milei can officially claim his first legislative victory.

Right-wing and left-wing lawmakers have clashed over various parts of the 238-article state reform bill, including the declaration of a one-year state of emergency and delegation of broad powers to the president in energy, pensions, security and other matters until the end of Milei’s term in 2027.

Other controversial measures include an incentive scheme that would give investors lucrative tax breaks for 30 years.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 47 of 84

Milei is a political outsider with just two years' experience as a lawmaker, and his 3-year-old party, Liberty Advances, holds just 15% of seats in the lower house and 10% of the Senate.

He has been unable to pass a single piece of legislation in his six months of presidency, raising questions about whether he can execute his ambitious project to trim the deficit and spur growth. Instead, he's used executive powers to slash subsidies, fire thousands of public employees, devalue the currency and deregulate parts of the Argentine economy.

The spending cuts and currency devaluation that Milei has delivered have — at least in the short term — deepened a recession, increased poverty to 55% and sent annual inflation surging toward 300%.

"If this law passes, we are going to lose so many of our labor and pension rights," said 54-year-old teacher Miriam Rajovitcher, protesting ahead of the vote alongside colleagues who say they've had to reconfigure their lives since Milei slashed school budgets and devalued the currency. "I am so much worse off."

Analysts say the promised benefits of Milei's reforms — a stable currency, tamer inflation, fresh foreign investment — won't materialize without a political consensus to convince foreign investors that his changes are here to stay. Milei's administration has said it wants to strike a new deal with the International Monetary Fund, to which Argentina already owes \$44 billion.

"Everyone is in a wait-and-see mode," said Marcelo J. García, Americas director at geopolitical risk firm Horizon Engage. "Investors say, 'Yes, we love what you're saying, but we need to see that this is sustainable.'"

Milei's allies said they had made tough concessions Wednesday. His party, Liberty Advances, agreed not to sell off the country's post office, flagship airline Aerolíneas Argentinas, or the public radio service, leaving just a handful of state-owned firms, including Argentina's nuclear power company, on the block for possible privatization.

Milei's original pitch late last year to privatize more than 40 state-owned Argentine companies prompted an uproar from the country's powerful Peronist-dominated labor movement.

That was audible ahead of the Senate vote Wednesday in downtown Buenos Aires, as bankers, teachers, truckers and thousands of union members and activists converged around Congress. They chanted: "Our country is not for sale!"

## **Tatum, Brown help Celtics hold off huge Dallas rally for 106-99 win, 3-0 lead in NBA Finals**

By SCHUYLER DIXON AP Sports Writer

DALLAS (AP) — Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown shared a long hug after helping Boston avoid the biggest collapse in an NBA Finals game since at least 1997.

The reward? The Celtics stars are on the brink of joining the litany of big-name predecessors to put a banner above the parquet floor back home.

Tatum scored 31 points, Brown had 30 and the Celtics held off a furious Dallas rally to move to the verge of a record 18th championship with a 106-99 victory over the Mavericks on Wednesday night for a 3-0 lead.

Brown finished with eight rebounds and eight assists as the Celtics extended their franchise record with a 10th consecutive playoff victory and moved to 7-0 on the road this postseason. They can win the series and break a tie with the Lakers for most NBA championships with a victory Friday in Dallas.

And Boston can forget about nearly blowing a 21-point lead with 11 minutes to go.

"Not really trying to look too much into it," Tatum said. "The game of basketball is about runs. It's never going to go like you expected. If you want to be a champion, you have to be resilient in those situations, and we did that tonight."

Boston also improved to 10-1 in these playoffs without Kristaps Porzingis after the 7-foot-2 Latvian was ruled out before the game because of a rare tendon injury in his lower left leg sustained in Game 2.

The status of Porzingis for the rest of the series appears in doubt, but it might not matter. None of the previous 156 teams to face a 3-0 deficit has rallied to win an NBA playoff series.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 48 of 84

The Mavs almost pulled off a crazy comeback to avoid the big hole — 13 years after Dallas had the biggest fourth-quarter rally in the play-by-play era of the NBA Finals (since 1997) when a 15-point comeback in Game 2 started its run to the franchise's only title against Miami.

Boston led 91-70 at the end of a 20-5 run early in the fourth quarter before Dallas answered with a 22-2 spurt to get within a point with 3 1/2 minutes remaining.

Problem was, Luka Doncic picked up his sixth foul with 4:12 remaining when a challenge was unsuccessful before Kyrie Irving, who scored 35 points, hit a jumper to get Dallas within one.

Tatum and Brown saved the Celtics from there, with some help from Derrick White, who scored 16. Those three combined for the remaining 13 Boston points to get the Celtics within a victory of their first title since 2008, and just the second since 1986.

The Celtics have led 3-0 in the NBA Finals only once, finishing off the Lakers in a sweep in 1959.

The first step for Dallas is trying to avoid getting swept in a seven-game series for just the second time in franchise history.

"We just got to make history," rookie Mavs center Dereck Lively II said. "We got to go out there and we just got to play like our lives are on the line."

In a game that seemed over early in the fourth, the score was stuck on 93-90 for more than three minutes. That included when Doncic was called for a blocking foul on a driving Brown.

The Mavs had nothing to lose with the challenge, since it meant trying to save their superstar from disqualification.

Without Doncic, P.J. Washington Jr., Irving and Tim Hardaway Jr. each missed a 3-pointer in the final minute as Irving's personal losing streak against his former team reached 13 games.

"We had a good chance," Doncic said. "We were close. Just didn't get it. I wish I was out there."

An energized Dallas crowd was ready for its first finals game in 13 years, with Super Bowl-winning quarterback and Mavs fan Patrick Mahomes of the Kansas City Chiefs frequently getting out of his seat near midcourt.

The Mavs used the needed boost coming off two losses in Boston, taking their biggest lead of the series while running out to a 22-9 lead. Doncic and Irving drove for buckets while also hitting a 3 apiece.

The Celtics answered with a 21-9 finish to the first quarter. Sam Hauser hit two of his first-half 3s — on three attempts — to help wrap up a run that started with four points from Brown and a 3 from Tatum.

Defense dominated the start of the second quarter, Boston holding a 5-2 edge nearly six minutes in before Irving and Tatum traded 3s to start a scoring burst.

"They came out swinging," Tatum said. "That was to be expected. They were at home, the crowd was behind them. We expected their first punch."

Once they withstood it, it appeared the Celtics would coast after outscoring the Mavs 35-19 in the third quarter, before the Mavs' late rally. And the answer from Tatum and Brown.

"We've been in those moments a lot," Brown said. "And we've been in those positions, and we've lost. It was great to overcome that with my brother, Jayson, and with our team. That was special."

After it was over, pockets of Celtics fans screamed with delight in a mostly empty arena, seemingly starting the celebration of the inevitable.

To everyone but the Celtics.

"You've got to understand we are just as vulnerable if not more vulnerable than they are," coach Joe Mazzulla said. "When you understand that you're vulnerable and your back's against the wall, you've got to fight. And so that's the mindset that we have to have."

## **G7 leaders agree to lend Ukraine billions backed by Russia's frozen assets. Here's how it will work**

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Leaders of the Group of Seven wealthy democracies have agreed to engineer a \$50 billion loan to help Ukraine in its fight for survival that would use interest earned on profits from



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 49 of 84

Russia's frozen central bank assets as collateral.

Details of the deal were still being hashed out as G7 leaders gathered for a summit in Italy, but the money could reach Kyiv before the end of the year. That's according to a French official who confirmed the agreement Wednesday ahead of a formal announcement at the summit. Here's how the plan would work:

Where would the money come from? Most of the money would be provided in the form of a loan from the U.S. government that would be backed by windfall profits being earned on roughly \$300 billion in immobilized Russian assets. The vast majority of the money is being held in European Union nations.

A French official said that while the loan would be mostly U.S.-guaranteed, it could be "topped up" with European money or other national contributions.

Why not just give Ukraine the frozen assets? That's much harder to do.

For more than a year, officials from multiple countries have debated the legality of confiscating the money and sending it to Ukraine.

The U.S. and its allies immediately froze whatever Russian central bank assets they had access to when Moscow invaded Ukraine in 2022 — basically, money being held in banks outside Russia.

The assets are immobilized and can't be accessed by Moscow — but they still belong to Russia.

While governments can generally freeze property or funds without difficulty, turning them into forfeited assets that can be used for the benefit of Ukraine requires an extra layer of judicial procedure, including a legal basis and adjudication in a court.

So the European Union instead has set aside the windfall profits being generated by the frozen assets. That pot of money is easier to access.

Separately, the U.S. earlier this year passed a law called the REPO Act — short for the Rebuilding Economic Prosperity and Opportunity for Ukrainians Act — that allows the Biden administration to seize \$5 billion in Russian state assets located in the U.S. and use them for the benefit of Kyiv. That arrangement is still being worked out.

How could the loan be used — and how soon? It will be up to technical experts to work through the details.

But U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan said Wednesday that the goal is "to provide the necessary resources to Ukraine now for its economic energy and other needs so that it's capable of having the resilience necessary to withstand Russia's continuing aggression."

Another goal is to get the money to Ukraine fast.

The French official, who was not authorized to be publicly named according to French presidential policy, said the details could be worked out "very quickly and in any case, the \$50 billion will be disbursed before the end of 2024."

Beyond the costs of the war, the needs are great. The World Bank's latest damage assessment of Ukraine, released in February, estimates that costs for reconstruction and recovery of the nation stand at \$486 billion over the next 10 years.

The move to unlock Russia's assets comes after there was a long delay by the U.S. Congress in approving military aid for Ukraine.

At an Atlantic Council event previewing the G7 summit, former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine John Herbst said "the fact that American funding is not quite reliable is a very important additional reason to go that route."

Who would be on the hook in the case of a default? If Russia regained control of its frozen assets or if the immobilized funds weren't generating enough interest to pay back the loan, "then the question of burden-sharing arises," according to the French official.

Who would shoulder the burden is still to be worked out, the official said.

Max Bergmann, director of the Europe, Russia and Eurasia Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said last week that there were worries among European finance ministers that their countries "will be left holding the bag if Ukraine defaults."

## **Fired SpaceX employees sue the company for wrongfully terminating critics of CEO Elon Musk**

By The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — Eight former employees sued SpaceX and its CEO Elon Musk, alleging that Musk ordered them fired after they challenged what they called rampant sexual harassment and a hostile “Animal House”-style work environment at the company.

The employees, who filed suit in a California state court, detailed their complaints in a 2022 open letter to management they shared via a company intranet. The next day, four of the plaintiffs were fired, they alleged; others were terminated later after an internal investigation.

In January, the federal National Labor Relations Board filed its own complaint against SpaceX based on issues raised by nine fired employees.

Among other workplace concerns, the open letter called on executives to condemn Musk’s public behavior on X — the platform then known as Twitter — and to hold all employees accountable for unacceptable conduct. Musk’s actions included making light of sexual harassment allegations against him — charges that the billionaire denied.

“As our CEO and most prominent spokesperson, Elon is seen as the face of SpaceX — every tweet that Elon sends is a de facto public statement by the company,” the open letter said at the time. The letter also referred to Musk’s actions as a “frequent source of distraction and embarrassment.”

The plaintiffs are seeking unspecified monetary damages.

The complaint drew connections between Musk’s behavior — in particular, his often lewd posts on Twitter — and the working environment at SpaceX. It states that one of the plaintiffs, Yaman Abdulhak, noted that many of the inappropriate examples cited in a 2021 “appropriate behavior” employee training “closely resembled the contents of Musk’s tweets.” Abdulhak sent examples of those tweets to the SpaceX human resources director, who took no action, the complaint stated.

SpaceX did not immediately reply to an emailed request for comment.

## **Yemen’s Houthi rebels launch boat-borne bomb attack against Greek-owned ship in Red Sea**

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

ABOARD THE USS LABOON IN THE RED SEA (AP) — Yemen’s Houthi rebels launched a boat-borne bomb attack against a commercial ship in the Red Sea on Wednesday, authorities said, the latest escalation despite a U.S.-led campaign trying to protect the vital waterway.

The use of a boat loaded with explosives raised the specter of 2000’s USS Cole attack, a suicide assault by al-Qaida on the warship when it was at port in Aden, killing 17 on board. Associated Press journalists saw the Cole in the Red Sea on Wednesday, now taking part in the U.S. campaign while visiting one of her sister ships, the USS Laboon.

Yemen’s military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree claimed responsibility for the attack, identifying the vessel targeted as the Liberian-flagged, Greek-owned bulk carrier Tutor. He described the attack as using a “drone boat,” as well as drones and ballistic missiles.

In a warning to shippers, the British military’s United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center described the vessel as being hit in its stern by a small white craft southwest of the Houthi-controlled port city of Hodeida.

The captain “reports the vessel is taking on water, and not under command of the crew,” the UKMTO said. He also “reports the vessel was hit for a second time by an unknown airborne projectile.”

The U.S. military’s Central Command also acknowledged the attack, saying the Tutor “most recently docked in Russia.”

“The impact of the (drone boat) caused severe flooding and damage to the engine room,” it added.

The U.S. military separately destroyed three anti-ship cruise missile launchers in Houthi-held Yemen, as

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 51 of 84

well as one rebel drone over the Red Sea. The Houthis launched two anti-ship ballistic missiles over the Red Sea, but they caused no damage, Central Command said.

The Houthis, who seized Yemen's capital nearly a decade ago and have been fighting a Saudi-led coalition since shortly after, have been targeting shipping throughout the Red Sea corridor over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

They say the attacks are aimed at stopping the war and supporting the Palestinians, though the attacks often target vessels that have nothing to do with the conflict.

The war in Gaza has killed more than 36,000 Palestinians there, while hundreds of others have been killed in Israeli operations in the West Bank. It began after Hamas-led militants attacked Israel on Oct. 7, killing about 1,200 people and taking around 250 hostage.

The Houthis have launched more than 50 attacks on shipping, killed three sailors, seized one vessel and sunk another since November, according to the U.S. Maritime Administration. A U.S.-led airstrike campaign has targeted the Houthis since January, with a series of strikes May 30 killing at least 16 people and wounding 42 others, the rebels say.

Associated Press journalists on an embark with the U.S. Navy were interviewing Cmdr. Eric Blomberg, the commanding officer of the Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer Laboon, when the alert came in on the attack. Blomberg took multiple calls from sailors on board the vessel, giving updates on the apparent attack.

The Laboon is one of the destroyers accompanying the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower aircraft carrier and both has shot down Houthi fire and escorted vessels through the region. Though Blomberg and others stressed they were still investigating the attack, he said it appeared the vessel targeted had nothing to do with the Israel-Hamas war.

The Houthis "hit ships that are completely not associated or tied to the U.S. or Israel at all," Blomberg said. "These are just innocent merchant sailors carrying goods through the Red Sea, trying to get it through the least-expensive route, and they're paying for it," he said.

## **In initial win for Argentine President Milei, senators approve his key bills after violent protests**

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Argentina's Senate narrowly approved key state overhaul and tax bills proposed by President Javier Milei, delivering an initial legislative victory to the libertarian leader in his efforts to enact his promises of radical change.

Senators voted 37 to 36 late Wednesday to give their overall approval to the overhaul bill after 11 hours of heated debate while protesters — urging lawmakers to reject Milei's harsh austerity plan — clashed with police outside Congress. The Senators still must approve individual measures in an article-by-article vote set to stretch throughout the night.

In a reflection of the fierce backlash to the legislation and deep polarization gripping Argentina's Congress, Vice President and head of the Senate Victoria Villarruel cast the tiebreaking vote in favor of Milei's agenda.

The legislation delegates broad powers to the president in energy, pensions, security and other areas and includes several measures seen as controversial, including a generous incentive scheme for foreign investors, tax amnesty for those with undeclared assets and plans to privatize some of Argentina's state-owned firms.

If the Senate approves the articles with modifications, the lower house still has to okay them before Milei can claim his first legislative win since entering office last December.

As Senators pored over the bills, protesters in downtown Buenos Aires hurled sticks, stones and Molotov cocktails at police who sprayed water cannons, pepper spray and tear gas to disperse the huge crowds. Demonstrators poured gasoline on two cars and set them alight, turning the central square into a smoke-filled battlefield. Authorities reported least 20 police officers injured and more than a dozen protesters arrested over the violence.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 52 of 84

Milei rose to power on promises he would resolve Argentina's worst economic crisis in two decades. But his political party of relative novices holds just a tiny minority of seats in Congress and he has struggled to strike deals with the opposition.

"We have the weakest president we've ever seen who is trying to pass the biggest bill we've ever seen," said Ana Iparraguirre, an Argentina-based analyst at Washington strategy firm GBAO. "That's the contradiction."

Senators approved two bills late Wednesday, a tax package and a 238-article state reform bill that passed the lower house of Congress in late April. Months of negotiations watered down the initial far-ranging proposal, which had over 600 articles.

Unlike previous Argentine leaders since the return of democracy in 1983, Milei has failed to pass a single piece of legislation during his first six months in office. Instead, the populist outsider has relied on executive powers to slash state spending and sweep away economic restrictions.

"Today, it's almost more important for Milei to demonstrate that he can pass laws in Congress than what he passes," said Lucas Romero, director of Synopsis consultancy.

That desperation was clear in some of the Senators' closing speeches.

"How can I not give a president a tool that he needs in order to function?" said Luis Juez, senator from the right-wing PRO party, a loose ally of Milei's. "We voted so that this doesn't fail, because if things go badly for Milei, they go badly for everyone."

Milei's legislation has faced the stiffest pushback from the left-leaning Peronist movement loyal to former president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, which has dominated Argentine politics for the last two decades and holds sway over the country's powerful trade unions.

Bankers, teachers, truckers and thousands of workers from other unions converged around Congress throughout the day, banging drums, blasting trumpets and chanting, "Our country is not for sale!" and "We will defend the state!"

"If this law passes, we are going to lose so many of our labor and pension rights," said 54-year-old teacher Miriam Rajovitcher protesting ahead of the vote alongside her colleagues, middle-class Argentines who say they've had to reconfigure their lives since Milei slashed their school budgets and devalued the currency, driving inflation toward 300%. "I am so much worse off."

The presidency condemned protesters as "terrorists" and accused them of "attempting to carry out a coup d'état" by disrupting the Congress session.

The Peronist bloc controls 33 out of 72 seats in the Senate while Milei's party, Freedom Advances, holds just seven seats. The bill needed 37 votes from the 72 total legislators in the Senate to get a majority and ended up producing a 36-36 tie.

Analysts say that foreign investors and the International Monetary Fund, to which Argentina owes a staggering \$44 billion, have been closely watching Wednesday's vote to see whether Milei can build consensus with his opponents.

"Everyone is in a wait-and-see mode. Investors say, 'Yes, we love what you're saying, but we need to see that this is sustainable,'" said Marcelo J. García, Americas director at geopolitical risk firm Horizon Engage.

Wednesday's article-by-article vote will stretch for hours, with analysts expecting lawmakers to further weaken the most divisive sections of the bills.

One of the most contested measures is an incentive program that offers foreign investors lucrative tax breaks for 30 years, no import tariffs on machinery and other perks for big corporations that critics say go too far in neglecting local industry.

"What this law is hurting most are the pockets of workers, not the big companies that are just going to get richer," said 36-year-old Juan Barreto, a bank employee jostling amid crowds of his fellow union members.

Argentina's unions have also voiced vehement opposition to measures that would make it easier for companies to fire employees as well as plans to privatize some state-owned firms.

Backlash to the tax bill in particular has centered on an amnesty that would allow Argentines to register undeclared assets at home and abroad without paying hefty taxes, as well as a lower income tax threshold that would force more workers to pay taxes.

Frustrated by legislative resistance, Milei has increasingly moderated his previous all-or-nothing approach. Earlier this month, in a bid to break the impasse, Milei fired his inexperienced Cabinet chief and replaced him with Interior Minister Guillermo Francos, a career politician skilled at congressional wheeling and dealing.

Over the past month, political tensions have mounted, casting doubt over Milei's governability and injecting uncertainty into the Argentine economy.

Sovereign bonds have tumbled. The country's currency, the peso, has depreciated as well, widening the gap between the official and black market exchange rate to nearly 40%. The peso was trading at 1,255 per greenback on the informal market Wednesday, a rate far lower than earlier this year.

Even as the IMF has praised the libertarian's agenda and released tranches of frozen loans, the fund has held back from handing Argentina fresh cash that Milei says he needs to lift currency controls.

Meanwhile, Milei has been in Silicon Valley rubbing shoulders with billionaire tech executives Elon Musk, Tim Cook and Mark Zuckerberg. The meetings however, have not produced any announcements of substantial investments.

"What you're seeing in the last three weeks is the market and investors getting a little nervous," said García. "The market is saying, 'Show me that you can govern.'"

## **Blinken says some of Hamas' proposed changes to a cease-fire plan in Gaza are workable and some not**

By BASSEM MROUE and JACK JEFFERY Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Wednesday that mediators would keep trying to close an elusive cease-fire deal for Gaza after Hamas proposed changes to a U.S.-backed plan, some of which he said were "workable" and some not.

The back-and-forth laid bare frustration over the difficulty of reaching an accord that could end eight months of war that has decimated the territory, killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and left scores of Israeli hostages still languishing in militant captivity. Previous moments of optimism have been repeatedly dashed by the differences between the two sides.

The cease-fire proposal has global support but has not been fully embraced by Israel or Hamas. Blinken did not spell out what changes Hamas sought, but he said the mediators — Qatar, Egypt and the U.S. — will keep trying to "close this deal." He put the onus on Hamas, accusing it of changing its demands.

"Hamas has proposed numerous changes to the proposal that was on the table. ... Some of the changes are workable. Some are not," Blinken told reporters in Qatar. "I believe that they (the differences) are bridgeable, but that doesn't mean they will be bridged because ultimately Hamas has to decide."

Blinken's comments came as Lebanon's Hezbollah fired a massive barrage of rockets into northern Israel to avenge the killing of a top commander, further escalating regional tensions.

Hezbollah, an Iran-backed ally of Hamas, has traded fire with Israel nearly every day since the Israel-Hamas war began and says it will stop only if there is a truce in Gaza. That has raised fears of an even more devastating regional conflagration.

Air-raid sirens sounded across northern Israel, and the military said about 215 projectiles were fired from southern Lebanon, making it one of the largest attacks since the fighting began. There were no immediate reports of casualties as some rockets were intercepted while others ignited brush fires.

Hamas asks for changes Hamas conveyed its official reply to the proposal to mediators on Tuesday. Hamas spokesman Jihad Taha told the Lebanese news outlet Elnashra that the "amendments" requested by the group aim to guarantee a permanent cease-fire and complete Israeli troop withdrawal from Gaza.

The proposal announced by U.S. President Joe Biden includes those provisions, but Hamas has expressed wariness about whether Israel will implement the terms. While the U.S. says Israel has accepted the proposal, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has given conflicting statements, saying Israel is still intent on its goal of destroying Hamas.

Blinken, on his eighth visit to the region since the start of the war, said the deal on the table was "virtu-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 54 of 84

ally identical" to one Hamas put forth on May 6. The U.N. Security Council voted overwhelmingly in favor of the plan on Monday.

"At some point in a negotiation, and this has gone back and forth for a long time, you get to a point where if one side continues to change its demands, including making demands and insisting on changes for things that it already accepted, you have to question whether they're proceeding in good faith or not," he said.

Speaking alongside Blinken, Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani said there had been "counterproductive" actions by both sides.

The proposal's three-phase plan would begin with a 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. Aid distribution would also increase.

At the same time, negotiations would start over the second phase, which is to bring "a permanent end to hostilities" and "full withdrawal" of Israeli troops from Gaza in exchange for the release of all remaining hostages.

Phase three would see the launch of a reconstruction plan for Gaza and the return of remains of deceased hostages.

A major hitch for both sides appears to be the negotiations for the second phase.

Israel's ambassador to the U.N., Gilad Erdan, said Israel will demand that Hamas be removed from power as part of any agreement on that phase.

"One of our conditions is not only the release of the hostages, it's also the future of Gaza," Erdan told CNN's "The Source" on Monday. "We cannot agree to Hamas continuing to be the rulers of Gaza because then Gaza will continue to pose a threat to Israel."

He also said Israel opposes a provision extending the initial cease-fire as long as talks are going on, saying it would allow Hamas to "continue with endless and meaningless negotiations."

Hamas, in turn, appears to want stronger guarantees up front that the talks will lead to the permanent cease-fire and withdrawal.

Netanyahu's far-right coalition allies have rejected the proposal and threaten to bring down his government if he ends the war leaving Hamas intact. 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.

Israel's bombardment and ground offensives in Gaza have killed over 37,000 Palestinians, according to Palestinian health officials, who do not give the breakdown of civilians and fighters. The war has also driven some 80% of the population of 2.3 million from their homes, and Israeli restrictions and ongoing fighting have hindered efforts to bring in humanitarian aid, fueling widespread hunger.

Israel launched its campaign after 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. Hamas is believed to be holding around 80 hostages and the remains of another 40.

Revenge for slain commander Netanyahu's office said he was conducting a security assessment in light of Hezbollah's barrage in the north and what it called Hamas' "negative response" to the proposal.

Hezbollah said it fired missiles and rockets at two military bases in retaliation for the killing of Taleb Sami Abdullah, 55. Known within Hezbollah as Hajj Abu Taleb, he is the most senior commander killed since the fighting began eight months ago. The Israeli strike late Tuesday destroyed a house where Abdullah and three other officials were meeting, about 10 kilometers (6 miles) from the border.

A Hezbollah official told The Associated Press that Abdullah was in charge of a large part of the Lebanon-Israel front, including the area facing the Israeli town of Kiryat Shmona, which Hezbollah has repeatedly attacked in recent days, causing fires in the area.

The official, who was not authorized to speak to media and spoke on condition of anonymity, said Abdullah had joined Hezbollah decades ago and took part in attacks against Israeli forces during their 18-year

occupation of southern Lebanon that ended in May 2000.

Israeli airstrikes on Lebanon have killed over 400 people, most of them Hezbollah members, but the dead also include more than 70 civilians and noncombatants. On the Israeli side, 15 soldiers and 10 civilians have been killed since the war in Gaza began.

Other groups allied with Iran, including powerful militias in Iraq and Syria, and the Houthi rebels in Yemen, have also attacked Israeli, U.S. and other targets since the start of the war, often drawing Western retaliation. In April, Israel and Iran traded fire directly for the first time.

## **He rambled to reporters after a downtown Atlanta shooting. Then, police say, he hijacked a bus**

By JEFF AMY and KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — As police responded to reports of multiple people shot at a downtown Atlanta food court, Joseph Grier was on the sidewalk outside, rambling to reporters about his mental health, criminal record and banking history.

"I'm bipolar, I'm gonna tell you all that, and I'm off my medication for like two weeks," Grier said Tuesday afternoon, appearing agitated and adding that he felt like a "snitch" for describing what he had seen.

Just a short while later, police said, he hijacked a commuter bus, ordering the driver at gunpoint to hit the gas and panicking the passengers. By the time the bus rolled to a stop some 40 minutes later, authorities said, Grier had fatally shot one passenger and led officers on a dramatic chase through three counties.

The food court shooting and the bus hijacking — only two hours and a few blocks apart — created a sense of chaos in Atlanta. In the aftermath, city leaders decried the prevalence of guns on the streets but were quick to reassure residents and tout statistics that show Atlanta's violent crime declining.

Authorities said Grier boarded a bus bound for a suburban Gwinnett County park-and-ride lot 26 miles (42 kilometers) away and got into a fight with passenger Ernest Byrd Jr. When the 58-year-old Byrd pulled a gun, according to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Grier took the gun and fatally shot Byrd. Grier then threatened to shoot the driver if he stopped.

Despite Grier's warnings not to use phones, at least one passenger called 911 and left the line open, according to Atlanta Police Chief Darin Schierbaum. That allowed police to better understand the delicate situation onboard, Schierbaum said, as the bus careened down an interstate and through side streets, sometimes ramming vehicles in its path. The Georgia Bureau of Investigation said police flattened tires on the bus, but it kept rolling until a state trooper fired his rifle into the engine, causing it to stop running.

"You have an individual saying, 'If you stop this bus, I'm going to kill the driver,' which then means that the whole bus could overturn, could run over a ditch or run over a bridge and everyone could die," Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens said. "But you also have a man that we know was shot. So he has a limited amount of time."

The chief said police would examine what they could have done to stop the bus more quickly but added that no one can foresee every scenario.

"Sometimes there's not a game plan, and you have to craft a way right then," Schierbaum said. "And we saw that yesterday."

Grier, 39, was led from the bus in handcuffs and booked into the Fulton County Jail on more than two dozen charges, including murder. He was being held without bail Wednesday, and online records didn't list an attorney who could comment on the charges.

Schierbaum said investigators have found no connection between Grier and Jeremy Malone, 34, who is accused of shooting three people at the food court in the Peachtree Center complex.

In his interview with reporters outside the food court, Grier said he was in "extreme mode" when he saw the shooter. Grier talked about the importance of protecting himself, pulling a box cutter out of his pocket and repeatedly saying he couldn't get a gun because of his felony criminal record.

Schierbaum and Dickens said they believe Grier's actions were linked to mental illness — though studies show that the vast majority of people with mental illnesses are not violent.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 56 of 84

"Was he having a mental episode for that brief moment triggered by police sirens, triggered by activity that he's hearing, or was he already that day having a mental episode (and) he was just in that area?" Dickens said. "All of that will play into our investigation."

In his interview with reporters seeking witnesses of the food court shooting — including one from The Associated Press — Grier rambled for more than three minutes, saying he had seen a man he believed to be the shooter confront a woman outside the food court. Grier said that after the shooting, he ran.

"I protect myself. I can't get a gun, you know what I'm saying?" he said. "So my thing is protect yourself like you're in chain gang. I did prison time."

At a news conference Wednesday on the city's "summer safety plan" — scheduled before Tuesday's shooting and hijacking — Schierbaum told reporters that investigators believe Grier didn't have a gun when he boarded the bus.

Schierbaum said 17 people were on the bus, including the driver. Byrd was taken to a hospital, where he died.

Byrd's family said he was a building engineer who lived much of his life in New York City and Marlton, New Jersey, before moving to Georgia about a decade ago. A lover of travel, his Masonic lodge and family, Byrd was engaged to be remarried, they said.

"He was a man known for his unwavering dedication to resolving conflicts and protecting others," relatives said in a statement.

Tonya Pendleton, a relative of Byrd's ex-wife, said family members were still trying to understand what happened. She said Byrd left behind four children, as well as a child and relatives of his ex-wife that he helped raise. Pendleton said funeral arrangements were incomplete Wednesday.

Dickens said both of Tuesday's shootings were the "result of too many people having guns in their hands." He noted that both suspects have lengthy criminal records — Malone had 11 prior arrests, and Grier had 19 — and were ineligible to own guns because of prior felony convictions.

Dickens said city officials want to have "a conversation about what is the proper way to sentence someone that has committed that many crimes, some of them with guns, some of them that have hurt people or taken property."

Schierbaum also called for action on repeat offenders: "They either need assistance through court-mandated programming around drug addiction and mental health, or they need to be out of society's circulation. And judges have to be part of this conversation."

Grier is charged with one count of murder, one count of hijacking a motor vehicle, 13 counts of aggravated assault, 14 counts of kidnapping, one count of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon and one count of possession of a firearm or knife during the commission of a crime.

Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis on Wednesday asked state officials to appoint a special prosecutor in Grier's case, saying an employee of her office was a victim or witness without explaining further. Willis is best known for her prosecutions of former President Donald Trump and rapper Young Thug.

Malone's charges in the food court shooting include aggravated assault and reckless conduct. He was held without bail in the Fulton County Jail, and no lawyer who could comment on charges was listed in online court records. Schierbaum said Malone and the three food court victims are all expected to survive.

## **Jerry West, a 3-time Hall of Fame selection and the inspiration for the NBA logo, dies at 86**

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

The NBA has never confirmed the worst-kept secret in basketball, that Jerry West is the player whose silhouette is depicted in the league's logo.

There's probably a reason for that: West never wanted to be the logo.

"I'm just part of the game," West said in a 2021 interview. "I never wanted to be any more than that. I'm extremely fortunate to have had the life that I've had, and that's enough for me."

His was a life like few others: an NBA and Olympic champion as a player, a champion as an executive



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 57 of 84

and someone selected to be enshrined by the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame not once, not twice, but three times. West died on Wednesday at age 86, the Los Angeles Clippers announced.

"We can only hope there is someone we meet during a crucial time in our lives that will change you in ways you could dream about," said Miami Heat President Pat Riley, who played with and worked with West during their time together as Los Angeles Lakers. "Jerry was that person for me."

West, nicknamed "Mr. Clutch" for his late-game exploits as a player, went into the Hall of Fame as a player in 1980 and again as a member of the gold medal-winning 1960 U.S. Olympic Team in 2010. He will be enshrined for a third time later this year as a contributor, and NBA Commissioner Adam Silver called West "one of the greatest executives in sports history."

"He helped build eight championship teams during his tenure in the NBA — a legacy of achievement that mirrors his on-court excellence," Silver said. "And he will be enshrined this October into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame as a contributor, becoming the first person ever inducted as both a player and a contributor. I valued my friendship with Jerry and the knowledge he shared with me over many years about basketball and life."

West was "the personification of basketball excellence and a friend to all who knew him," the Clippers said in announcing his death. West's wife, Karen, was by his side when he died, the Clippers said. West worked for the Clippers as a consultant for the last seven years.

He was an All-Star in all 14 of his NBA seasons, a 12-time All-NBA selection, part of the 1972 Lakers team that won a championship, an NBA Finals MVP when the Lakers lost to the Boston Celtics in 1969 — the first year that award was given out, and still the only time it went to a player on the losing team — and was selected as part of the NBA's 75th anniversary team.

"He was absolutely my basketball sage: wise, loyal and so much fun," Clippers owner Steve Ballmer said. "If you were in his presence, you felt his competitiveness and his drive. He cared about everything and everyone. From the first day I met Jerry seven years ago, he inspired me with his intellect, honesty and enthusiasm. He never stopped."

West was general manager of championship teams with the Lakers, helping build the "Showtime" dynasty. He also worked in the front offices of the Memphis Grizzlies, the Golden State Warriors and the Clippers. Among his many highlights as an executive with the Lakers: He drafted Magic Johnson and James Worthy, then brought in Kobe Bryant and Shaquille O'Neal to form a powerhouse title-winning duo.

His basketball life bridged generations: West played with Elgin Baylor, whom he called "the most supportive and the greatest player of that era," and Wilt Chamberlain. As a coach and executive, he worked with a who's-who of NBA stars from the last 40 years: Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Johnson, Worthy, O'Neal, Bryant, Stephen Curry, Klay Thompson, Kevin Durant, Kawhi Leonard and Paul George among them.

"I marvel at them, at the joy they brought basketball fans all over the world," West said in 2019.

Even in the final years of his life, West was considered basketball royalty. He routinely sat courtside at Summer League games in Las Vegas, often watching many games in a day while greeting long lines of players — LeBron James among them — who would approach to shake his hand.

"The game transcends many things," West said while attending Summer League last year. "The players change, the style of play may change, but the respect that you learn in this game never changes."

James, on social media, offered his condolences: "Will truly miss our convos my dear friend! My thoughts and prayers goes out to your wonderful family! Forever love Jerry! Rest in Paradise my guy!" the NBA's all-time scoring leader wrote Wednesday.

West is 25th on the NBA's all-time scoring list. He knew he was the model for the league's logo — a player dribbling a ball, set against a red-and-blue background — but suggested in recent years that he wouldn't mind if the league changed it.

"While it's never been officially declared that the logo is Jerry West," Silver said in 2021, "it sure looks a lot like him."

West is still the NBA Finals' all-time leader in total points, along with field goals made and attempted as well as free throws made and attempted. He played in the title series nine times with the Lakers; his

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 58 of 84

teams went 1-2 against the New York Knicks, and 0-6 against the Celtics.

"Those damn Celtics," he often said.

West also hit one of the most famed shots in finals history, a 60-footer at the buzzer of Game 3 of the 1970 series between the Knicks and Lakers to force overtime.

Tributes from across the sports world flowed freely Wednesday. The Los Angeles Dodgers released a statement calling West "an indelible figure on the Los Angeles sports landscape for more than 60 years," and the NBA quickly organized a pregame tribute to West that was held before Game 3 of the NBA Finals between the Celtics and Dallas Mavericks on Wednesday night.

West is survived by sons David, Mark and Michael from his first marriage to Martha Jane Kane, which ended in divorce. He and second wife Karen had two sons, Ryan and Jonnie, who is married to former LPGA Tour star Michelle Wie.

Riley recalled times where, after a Lakers shootaround practice, he and West would head to a nearby drugstore "to eat the best burgers, drink milkshakes and savor a great custard pudding with fresh whipped cream" before going home to nap and get ready for that night's game.

Evidently, burgers, milkshakes and custard worked wonders for West.

"Jerry would kick (butt) in a way that was so skilled and relentless," Riley said. "I was so proud to be there in his presence. I watched, I learned. He made me believe. Being in that aura of greatness was mesmerizing."

Michael Jordan said he considered West "a friend and mentor — like an older brother to me."

"I valued his friendship and knowledge," Jordan said. "I always wished I could have played against him as a competitor, but the more I came to know him, I wish I had been his teammate. I admired his basketball insights and he and I shared many similarities to how we approached the game."

A native of Chelyan, West Virginia, West was known as a tenacious player who was rarely satisfied with his performance. He grew up shooting at a basket nailed to the side of a shed and often shot until his fingers bled. He became the first high school player in state history to score more than 900 points in a season, averaging 32.2 points in leading East Bank High to a state title.

Basketball, he would later reveal, was his therapy.

In his 2011 memoir, "West by West: My Charmed, Tormented Life," West chronicled a lifelong battle with depression. He wrote that his childhood was devoid of love and filled with anger as a result of an abusive father. He often felt worthless, and to combat that, he said he put his energy into playing the game.

West led West Virginia University — where he is still the all-time leader in scoring average — to the NCAA final in 1959, when the Mountaineers lost by one point to California.

"Today is one of the saddest days ever for West Virginia University and the state of West Virginia," Mountaineers athletic director Wren Baker said. "Mountaineer hearts all over the world are broken with the passing of the great Jerry West."

A year after he won Olympic gold in Rome, West joined the Lakers, where he spent his entire pro playing career. He was honored as one of the league's 50 greatest players in 1996 and when the league expanded the polling to 75 players to commemorate its 75th anniversary in 2021, West was selected again.

"You know, it never ceases to amaze me the places you can go in this world chasing a bouncing ball," West said in 2019, when he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom — the nation's highest civilian honor — by then-President Donald Trump. "My chase began in Chelyan, West Virginia, where I strung a wire basket with no net to the side of a bridge. If your shot didn't go in, the ball rolled down a long bank and you would be chasing it forever. So, you better make it.

"I was a dreamer. My family didn't have much, but we had a clear view of the Appalachian Mountains, and I'd sit alone on our front porch and wonder, 'If I ever make it to the top of that mountain, what will I see on the other side?' Well, I did make it to the other side, and my dreams have come true. I've been able to see the sides, thanks to that bouncing ball."

## House votes to hold Attorney General Merrick Garland in contempt for withholding Biden audio

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House voted Wednesday to hold Attorney General Merrick Garland in contempt of Congress for refusing to turn over audio of President Joe Biden's interview in his classified documents case, Republicans' latest and strongest rebuke of the Justice Department as partisan conflict over the rule of law animates the 2024 presidential campaign.

The 216-207 vote fell along party lines, with Republicans coalescing behind the contempt effort despite reservations among some of the party's more centrist members. Only one Republican — Rep. David Joyce of Ohio — voted against it.

Garland said in a statement late Wednesday, "It is deeply disappointing that this House of Representatives has turned a serious congressional authority into a partisan weapon. Today's vote disregards the constitutional separation of powers, the Justice Department's need to protect its investigations, and the substantial amount of information we have provided to the Committees."

He added, "I will always stand up for this Department, its employees, and its vital mission to defend our democracy."

Garland is now the third attorney general to be held in contempt of Congress. Yet it is unlikely that the Justice Department — which Garland oversees — will prosecute him. The White House's decision to exert executive privilege over the audio recording, shielding it from Congress, would make it exceedingly difficult to make a criminal case against Garland.

Nonetheless, Speaker Mike Johnson defended the decision to push ahead with what is now a mostly symbolic effort.

"Look, we did our job on the contempt, and I think it sends an important message," the Louisiana Republican said following the vote. "We'll see what happens next, but, I mean, the House has to do its work and I'm pleased with the outcome today."

The White House and congressional Democrats have slammed Republicans' motives for pursuing contempt and dismissed their efforts to obtain the audio as purely political. They also pointed out that Rep. Jim Jordan, the GOP chair of the House Judiciary Committee, defied his own congressional subpoena last session.

"This contempt resolution will do very little, other than smear the reputation of Merrick Garland, who will remain a good and decent public servant no matter what Republicans say about him today," New York Rep. Jerry Nadler, the top Democrat on Judiciary Committee, said during floor debate.

Garland has defended the Justice Department, saying officials have gone to extraordinary lengths to provide information to the committees about Special Counsel Robert Hur's classified documents investigation, including a transcript of Biden's interview with him.

"There have been a series of unprecedented and frankly unfounded attacks on the Justice Department," Garland said in a press conference last month. "This request, this effort to use contempt as a method of obtaining our sensitive law enforcement files is just most recent."

Republicans were incensed when Hur declined to prosecute Biden over his handling of classified documents and quickly opened an investigation. GOP lawmakers — led by Jordan and Rep. James Comer — sent a subpoena for audio of Hur's interviews with Biden during the spring. But the Justice Department only turned over some of the records, leaving out audio of the interview with the president.

On the last day to comply with the Republicans' subpoena for the audio, the White House blocked the release by invoking executive privilege. It said that Republicans in Congress only wanted the recordings "to chop them up" and use them for political purposes.

Executive privilege gives presidents the right to keep information from the courts, Congress and the public to protect the confidentiality of decision-making, though it can be challenged in court.

Administrations of both political parties have long held the position that officials who assert a president's claim of executive privilege can't be prosecuted for contempt of Congress, a Justice Department official

told Republicans last month.

Assistant Attorney General Carlos Felipe Uriarte cited a committee's decision in 2008 to back down from a contempt effort after President George W. Bush asserted executive privilege to keep Congress from getting records involving Vice President Dick Cheney.

Before Garland, the last attorney general held in contempt was Bill Barr in 2019. That was when the Democratically controlled House voted to issue a referral against Barr after he refused to turn over documents related to a special counsel investigation into Trump.

Years before that, then-Attorney General Eric Holder was held in contempt related to the gun-running operation known as Operation Fast and Furious. In each of those instances, the Justice Department took no action against the attorney general.

The special counsel in Biden's case, Hur, spent a year investigating the president's improper retention of classified documents, from his time as a senator and as vice president. The result was a 345-page report that questioned Biden's age and mental competence but recommended no criminal charges for the 81-year-old. Hur said he found insufficient evidence to successfully prosecute a case in court.

In March, Hur stood by his no-prosecution assessment in testimony before the Judiciary Committee, where he was grilled for more than four hours by both Democratic and Republican lawmakers.

His defense did not satisfy Republicans, who insist that there is a politically motivated double standard at the Justice Department, which is prosecuting former President Donald Trump over his retention of classified documents at his Florida club after he left the White House.

But there are major differences between the two probes. Biden's team returned the documents after they were discovered, and the president cooperated with the investigation by voluntarily sitting for an interview and consenting to searches of his homes.

Trump, by contrast, is accused of enlisting the help of aides and lawyers to conceal the documents from the government and of seeking to have potentially incriminating evidence destroyed.

## **Thefts of charging cables pose yet another obstacle to appeal of electric vehicles**

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — Just before 2 a.m. on a chilly April night in Seattle, a Chevrolet Silverado pickup stopped at an electric vehicle charging station on the edge of a shopping center parking lot.

Two men, one with a light strapped to his head, got out. A security camera recorded them pulling out bolt cutters. One man snipped several charging cables; the other loaded them into the truck. In under 2½ minutes, they were gone.

The scene that night has become part of a troubling pattern across the country: Thieves have been targeting EV charging stations, intent on stealing the cables, which contain copper wiring. The price of copper is near a record high on global markets, which means criminals stand to collect rising sums of cash from selling the material.

The stolen cables often disable entire stations, forcing EV owners on the road to search desperately for a working charger. For the owners, the predicament can be exasperating and stressful.

Broken-down chargers have emerged as the latest obstacle for U.S. automakers in their strenuous effort to convert more Americans to EVs despite widespread public anxiety about a scarcity of charging stations. About 4 in 10 U.S. adults say they believe EVs take too long to charge or don't know of any charging stations nearby.

If even finding a charging station doesn't necessarily mean finding functioning cables, it becomes one more reason for skeptical buyers to stick with traditional gasoline-fueled or hybrid vehicles, at least for now.

America's major automakers have made heavy financial bets that buyers will shift away from combustion engines and embrace EVs as the world faces the worsening consequences of climate change. Accordingly, the companies have poured billions into EVs.

Stellantis envisions 50% of its passenger cars being EVs by the end of 2030. Ford set a target of pro-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 61 of 84

ducing 2 million EVs per year by 2026 — about 45% of its global sales — though it has since suspended that goal. General Motors, the most ambitious of the three, has pledged to sell only EV passenger cars by the end of 2035.

Any such timetables, of course, hinge on whether the companies can convince more would-be EV buyers that a charge will always be available when they travel. The rise in cable thefts isn't likely to strengthen the automakers' case.

Two years ago, according to Electrify America, which runs the nation's second-largest network of direct-current fast chargers, a cable might be cut perhaps every six months at one of its 968 charging stations, with 4,400 plugs nationwide. Through May this year, the figure reached 129 — four more than in all of 2023. At one Seattle station, cables were cut six times in the past year, said Anthony Lambkin, Electrify America's vice president of operations.

"We're enabling people to get to work, to take their kids to school, get to medical appointments," Lambkin said. "So to have an entire station that's offline is pretty impactful to our customers."

Two other leading EV charging companies — Flo and EVgo — also have reported a rise in thefts. Charging stations in the Seattle area have been a frequent target. Sites in Nevada, California, Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas and Pennsylvania have been hit, too.

Stations run by Tesla, which operates the nation's largest fast-charging network, have been struck in Seattle, Oakland and Houston. So far this year, Seattle police have reported seven cases of cable thefts from charging stations, matching the number for all of 2023. Thieves hit Tesla stations four times this year compared with just once last year, the Seattle police said.

"Vandalism of public charging infrastructure in the Seattle metro area has unfortunately been increasing in frequency," EVgo said.

The company said law enforcement officials are investigating the thefts while it tries to repair inoperable stations and considers a longer-term solution.

The problem isn't confined to urban areas. In rural Sumner, Washington, south of Seattle, thieves cut cables twice at a Puget Sound Energy charging station. The company is working with police and the property owner to protect the station.

Until a month ago, police in Houston knew of no cable thefts. Then one was stolen from a charger at a gas station. The city has now recorded eight or nine such thefts, said Sgt. Robert Carson, who leads a police metal-theft unit.

In one case, thieves swiped 18 of 19 cords at a Tesla station. That day, Carson visited the station to inspect the damage. In the first five minutes that he was there, Carson said, about 10 EVs that needed charging had to be turned away.

In very large cities like Houston, charging stations typically contain an especially large number of plugs and cables, so thefts can be particularly damaging.

"They're not just taking one," Carson said. "When they're hit, they're hit pretty hard."

Roy Manuel, an Uber driver who normally recharges his Tesla at the Houston station hit by thieves, said he fears being unable to do so because of stolen cables.

"If my battery was really low, I'd have quite an issue with operating my vehicle," he said. "If it was so low that I couldn't get to another charger, I might be in trouble. Might even need a tow truck."

The charging companies say it's become clear that the thieves are after the copper that the cables contain. In late May, copper hit a record high of nearly \$5.20 a pound, a result, in part, of rising demand resulting from efforts to cut carbon emissions with EVs that use more copper wiring. The price is up about 25% from a year ago, and many analysts envision further increases.

Charging companies say there isn't actually very much copper in the cables, and what copper is there is difficult to extract. Carson estimates that criminals can get \$15 to \$20 per cable at a scrap yard.

"They're not making a significant amount of money," he said. "They're not going to be sailing on a yacht anywhere."

Still, the more cables the thieves can steal, the more they can cash in. At \$20 a cable, 20 stolen cables could fetch \$400.

The problem for the charging companies is that it's much costlier to replace cables. In Minneapolis, where cables have been clipped at city-owned charging stations, it costs about \$1,000 to replace just one cable, said Joe Laurin, project manager in the Department of Public Works.

The charging companies are trying to fight back. Electrify America is installing more security cameras. In Houston, police are visiting recycling centers to look for stolen metal.

But it's often hard for the scrap yards to determine conclusively whether metal came from a charging cable. Thieves often burn off the insulation and just sell strands of metal.

The Recycled Materials Association, which represents 1,700 members, is issuing scrap-theft alerts from law enforcement officials so that members can be on the lookout for suspects and stolen goods.

Because charging stations are often situated in remote corners of parking lots, Carson suggested that many more security cameras are needed.

In the meantime, Electrify America said Seattle police are trying to track down the thieves in the video. And Carson said the Houston police are pursuing leads in the Tesla theft.

"We'd like to get them stopped," he said, "and then let the court system do what they're supposed to do."

## Republicans stick to attacking criminal justice system, echoing Trump, after Hunter Biden conviction

By JONATHAN J. COOPER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Republicans are responding to Hunter Biden's conviction on federal gun charges with some version of, "That's it?"

Loyal to Donald Trump, they largely echoed the former president's claim that the Justice Department has treated President Joe Biden's son with kid gloves while zealously prosecuting Trump. Using the attention given to Hunter Biden's conviction for charges related to buying a gun while addicted to drugs, they pressed unsubstantiated or debunked allegations that Joe Biden — while vice president — acted to advance his family members' foreign business interests.

The GOP's argument that Joe Biden is ordering prosecutors to target political opponents has been hurt by the Biden-led Justice Department prosecuting the president's son — with Biden declining to stop the investigation or pardon Hunter Biden. But in making that case, Republicans may be trying to deflect from Trump's own stated intentions to wield the criminal justice system against opponents if he returns to the White House.

While president, Trump tried to undercut the Justice Department investigation into his campaign's alleged ties to Russia and issued pardons to a raft of former campaign aides, friends and donors. And on the campaign trail, Trump has repeatedly declared he is the victim of a "rigged" system and promised to appoint a special prosecutor to target Biden and his family.

House Republicans voted Wednesday to hold Attorney General Merrick Garland in contempt of Congress, further escalating their battle with the Justice Department.

And Trump sent a fundraising email with the subject line, "Haul out the Guillotine!" The email claimed Trump's critics have a "Sick Dream" to see him beheaded, the latest example of Trump's inflammatory rhetoric since his hush money conviction.

In a deal with prosecutors last year, Hunter Biden was supposed to plead guilty to misdemeanor tax offenses and avoid prosecution in the gun case if he stayed out of trouble for two years. But the deal fell apart after the judge, who was nominated by Trump, questioned unusual aspects of the proposed agreement, and the lawyers could not resolve the matter.

He was convicted Tuesday and faces a potential 25 years in prison, though as a first-time offender he is likely to get far less time or avoid prison entirely.

He still faces a trial in September in California on charges of failing to pay \$1.4 million in taxes, and congressional Republicans have signaled they will keep going after him in their stalled impeachment effort into the president. The president has not been accused or charged with any wrongdoing by prosecutors investigating his son.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 63 of 84

Biden definitively ruled out pardoning his son during an ABC News interview last week. White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre on Wednesday did not rule out the president issuing a potential commutation that might reduce or erase a sentence while leaving the conviction intact.

Hunter Biden's conviction came weeks after a New York jury found Trump guilty of 34 counts related to a hush money payment to a porn actor during the 2016 campaign. Trump falsely claims the verdict was "rigged." Biden said he accepted his son's verdict.

Trump's campaign issued a statement calling the Hunter Biden verdict "nothing more than a distraction from the real crimes of the Biden Crime Family." Several of his allies followed.

"Remember this was Joe Biden's corrupt DOJ that tried to negotiate outside immunity unrelated to this case," said Rep. Elise Stefanik, a New York Republican and a contender to be Trump's vice presidential running mate. "Today is the first step in delivering accountability for the Biden Crime Family."

Sen. J.D. Vance, an Ohio Republican and another vice presidential contender, shared a post by Ohio Republican Senate candidate Bernie Moreno saying the gun charges were meant to "insulate and protect" the president.

Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson said the guilty verdict was "appropriate" and didn't undercut his own criticism of a two-tiered system of justice for Trump and the Bidens.

"Every case is different," Johnson said. "And clearly the evidence was overwhelming here. I don't think that's the case in the Trump trial, and all the charges that have been brought against him have been obviously brought for political purposes. Hunter Biden is a separate incident."

Democrats did not attack the Justice Department or the courts. Said Rep. Pete Aguilar, D-Calif., the No. 3 House Democrat: "Hunter Biden sat before a jury of his peers, a verdict was rendered and House Democrats believe in the rule of law, and so we respect that ruling."

As president, Trump repeatedly sought to shape the criminal inquiry into whether his 2016 presidential campaign had conspired with Russia.

He fired the FBI director who led the investigation, berated the attorney general he appointed for recusing himself from overseeing the probe and directed his White House counsel to seek the termination of special counsel Robert Mueller. Those acts, and others, contributed to an investigation into whether he had illegally sought to obstruct the Russia inquiry; Mueller did find evidence of obstruction but declined to make a finding about whether Trump had broken the law.

More recently, Trump and allies have suggested that if elected he might advocate the imprisonment of political opponents, something he championed even before he became president.

In a Fox & Friends interview this month, he falsely asserted that he had not used the words "lock her up" in reference to Hillary Clinton and his 2016 opponent's use of a private email server to transmit sensitive information as secretary of state. He said he could've sought to have her jailed but that it "would have been a terrible thing."

He suggested things are different now that he faces four felony indictments, including the New York case that resulted in a conviction.

"And then this happened to me, and so I may feel differently about it," he said.

The charges against Hunter Biden stem from a dark period in his life, during which he acknowledges a spiraling descent following the death of his brother, Beau Biden, to cancer in 2015. Jurors found him guilty of lying to a federally licensed gun dealer when he bought a revolver in 2018, making a false claim on the application by saying he was not a drug user and illegally having the gun for 11 days.

Many in Trump's Republican Party are staunchly against gun control and some of his supporters have questioned whether Hunter Biden should have been tried on the gun charges.

Rep. Matt Gaetz, a Florida Republican and high-profile Trump supporter, posted on X, "The Hunter Biden gun conviction is kinda dumb."

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., told reporters at the Capitol that the gun charge was a "waste of time," though he said other accusations related to Hunter Biden's taxes were "serious."

"I just think he's being punished," Graham said, adding the average person would be "put in drug diversion or something."

Rep. Thomas Massie, R-Ky., made similar comments.

"Hunter might deserve to be in jail for something, but purchasing a gun is not it," Massie posted on X. "There are millions of marijuana users who own guns in this country, and none of them should be in jail for purchasing or possessing a firearm against current laws."

## **Southern Baptists narrowly reject formal ban on churches with any women pastors**

By PETER SMITH and HOLLY MEYER Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Southern Baptists narrowly rejected a proposal Wednesday to enshrine a ban on churches with women pastors in their constitution after opponents argued it was unnecessary because the denomination already has a way of ousting such churches.

The measure received support from 61% of the delegates, but it failed to get the required two-thirds supermajority. The action reversed a preliminary vote last year in favor of the official ban.

But it still leaves the Southern Baptist Convention with its official doctrinal statement saying the office of pastor is limited to men. Even the opponents of the ban said they favored that doctrinal statement but didn't think it was necessary to reinforce it in the constitution.

Opponents noted that the SBC already can oust churches that assert women can serve as pastors — as it did last year and again Tuesday night.

The vote was perhaps the most highly anticipated of the annual meeting, reflecting years of debate in the United States' largest Protestant denomination. It was the final day of the SBC's two-day annual meeting in Indianapolis where Southern Baptists have also elected a new convention president and approved a nonbinding resolution, cautioning couples about using in vitro fertilization.

In the resolution, messengers urged couples to "consider the ethical implications" of reproductive technologies like IVF. It has become a prominent issue in the wake of a IVF controversy in Alabama, which shielded IVF providers from prosecution and civil lawsuits after a state Supreme Court ruling said frozen embryos are children.

The SBC resolution agrees that embryos are children, regardless of location in or outside the womb. The resolution expressed alarm over the fact that IVF treatment commonly produces surplus embryos that are frozen, with "most unquestionably destined for eventual destruction."

While not outright opposing IVF, the resolution also denounces medical experimentation on frozen embryos as well as any use of "dehumanizing methods for determining suitability for life and genetic sorting."

It expresses sympathy with couples struggling with infertility but urges them to weigh the issues. It also encourages couples to adopt frozen embryos.

Some messengers gave impassioned defenses of the technology, saying it helped couples bring children into the world, but others said the destruction of frozen embryos outweighs any benefits from IVF.

"Right now we're trying to open the conversation, remind Southern Baptists of our long-held beliefs of the sanctity of human life," said Kristen Ferguson, chair of the committee on resolutions. "So in the future, we fully anticipate that you may see much stronger language ... but we are not speaking to that at this time, because Southern Baptists aren't ready to speak to that yet"

Earlier in the day, the much-watched proposed amendment, which received preliminary approval last year, would have formally excluded churches that have women in any pastoral positions, from lead pastor to associates, or even affirms them in that role. Supporters believe it is biblically necessary, estimating hundreds of Southern Baptist churches have women in those roles.

Since 2000, the SBC's nonbinding statement of faith has declared that only men are qualified for the role of pastor. It's interpreted differently across the denomination, with some believing it doesn't apply to associate pastors so long as the senior pastor is male.

The rejected amendment would have said any church deemed in "friendly cooperation" — the official term for SBC affiliation — must be one that "affirms, appoints, or employs only men as any kind of pastor or elder as qualified by Scripture."



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 65 of 84

Opponents argued the convention already has the power to remove churches over this issue, and the amendment will have unintended consequences, including disproportionately affecting Black Southern Baptist congregations, which tend to have women on their pastoral staffs.

But the motion went swiftly to a vote after only brief debate.

Ryan Fullerton, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, said the measure is "not about preventing women from exercising their gifts" in the church, in roles on church staff such as "children's ministers." But he said the Bible is clear that the office of pastor is for men.

Spence Shelton, pastor of Mercy Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, argued the measure was unnecessary.

He noted that the convention voted to affirm the ouster of a historic Virginia church Tuesday and two other churches last year, including the California megachurch Saddleback, which all have women pastors and affirmed they could hold top pastoral positions.

The stated citation for ousting those churches was an existing part of the constitution — that they don't have a faith and practice that "closely identifies" with the Baptist Faith and Message, the document approved in 2000 that includes the affirmation that the pastoral position is reserved for men.

"Y'all, we have shown the mechanisms we currently have are sufficient to deal with this question," Shelton said.

Mike Law, pastor of Arlington Baptist Church in Virginia and author of the amendment, cited a report that there are about 1,800 women pastors working in the denomination. He cited Bible verses limiting the pastoral office to men while saying women can serve in other roles.

"Our culture may see this prohibition as harsh, but our God is all wise, and wrote this word for the flourishing of both men and women," he said.

Law said in a statement afterward that while the result is disappointing, he took heart that supporters were in the majority, "and that is something we can build on."

Dwight McKissic, a Black pastor from Arlington, Texas, who supports women in ministry under a male pastor's leadership, applauded the rejection of the amendment.

In a post on X, formerly Twitter, he said that God loves women "too much to allow unbiblical restrictions, that violates local church autonomy, to disallow women from receiving and deploying spiritual gifts. ... Male supremacy didn't rule the order of the day."

The denomination can't tell its independent churches what to do or whom to appoint as a pastor. But they can say which churches are in and which are out.

Last year, Southern Baptists refused to take back Saddleback, one of the convention's largest congregations, and a small Kentucky church after the denomination's Executive Committee ousted them over the issue.

Both churches, which had women in top pastoral positions, appealed their ouster to the 2023 annual meeting and were overwhelmingly rejected by the delegates. A similar scenario played out in Indianapolis on Tuesday, when messengers voted overwhelmingly to kick out First Baptist Church of Alexandria in Virginia, which has a woman in an associate position and also asserted that women can hold the top job.

Delegates also elected a North Carolina pastor and longtime denominational statesman to be the next president of their convention in a contest between six candidates that went into two run-off votes.

Clint Pressley, who is senior pastor of Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte, will be the next Southern Baptist Convention president after winning 56% of votes in the final run-off race.

The SBC president — one of the most prominent faces of the conservative evangelical network of churches — presides over the annual meeting and appoints members to the denomination's committees.

Pressley earned a master of divinity from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisiana, one of the SBC's official seminaries. He has led Hickory Grove since 2011 after pastoring churches in Alabama and Mississippi. Pressley was first vice president of the SBC in 2014-15 and served on numerous other denominational boards.

## **Biden and Zelenskyy will sign a security deal, as G7 leaders agree to use Russian cash to help Kyiv**

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, COLLEEN LONG, ZEKE MILLER and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press BRINDISI, Italy (AP) — President Joe Biden and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will sign a bilateral security agreement between the U.S. and Ukraine on Thursday when they meet on the sidelines of the Group of Seven summit in Italy.

Negotiators for the group have also reached an agreement on how to provide Ukraine with up to \$50 billion backed by frozen Russian assets.

The international group of wealthy democracies has been discussing ways of using the more than \$260 billion in frozen Russian assets, most of which are outside the country, to help Ukraine fight Russian President Vladimir Putin's war machine.

European officials have resisted confiscating the assets, citing legal and financial stability concerns, but the plan would use the interest earned on the assets to help Ukraine's war effort. An official with the French presidency confirmed the agreement Wednesday, saying most of the money would be flowing to Ukraine in the form of a loan from the U.S. government backed by the proceeds of the frozen Russian assets in the European Union. Two other people familiar with the matter confirmed the arrangement.

Final technical negotiations were underway ahead of the summit to finalize the legal terms of the deal.

The announcement of the agreement comes as Biden landed in Italy with an urgency to get big things done. Thursday's security arrangement was aimed to send a signal to Russia of American resolve in supporting Kyiv, the White House said.

National security adviser Jake Sullivan said the security agreement would not commit U.S. troops directly to Ukraine's defense against Russia's invasion — a red line drawn by Biden, who's fearful of being pulled into direct conflict between the nuclear-armed powers.

"We want to demonstrate that the U.S. supports the people of Ukraine, that we stand with them and that we'll continue to help address their security needs," Sullivan said, adding "this agreement will show our resolve."

Sullivan said aboard Air Force One that the goal of the financing plan was to have a loan that would "pull forward the windfall profits from the seized assets" of Russia, giving Ukraine a "substantial source of funding" to meet its immediate needs.

The national security adviser said he had a specific sum of money in mind, but declined to say if that figure was \$50 billion. He stressed the urgency of getting Ukraine financial resources as soon as possible and that multiple countries would back the agreement.

"It's to provide the necessary resources to Ukraine now for its economic energy and other needs, so that it's capable of having the resilience necessary to withstand Russia's continuing aggression," Sullivan said.

This year's meeting comes three years after Biden declared at his first such gathering that America was back as a global leader following the disruptions to Western alliances that occurred when Donald Trump was president. Now, there's a chance this gathering could be the final summit for Biden and other G7 leaders, depending on the results of elections this year.

Biden and his counterparts from Canada, Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Japan will use the summit to discuss challenges related to artificial intelligence, migration, the Russian military's resurgence and China's economic might, among other topics. Pope Francis, Zelenskyy and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan are joining the gathering at the Borgo Egnazia resort in the Puglia region of southern Italy.

The summit, which opened Thursday, will play out after far-right parties across the continent racked up gains of surprising scale in just-concluded European Union elections. Those victories — coupled with upcoming elections in the United Kingdom, France and the United States — have rattled the global political establishment and added weightiness to this year's summit.

"You hear this a lot when you talk to U.S. and European officials: If we can't get this done now, whether it's on China, whether it's on the assets, we may not have another chance," said Josh Lipsky, senior director of the Atlantic Council's GeoEconomics Center, an international affairs think tank. "We don't know

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 67 of 84

what the world will look like three months, six months, nine months from now.”

The G7 is an informal bloc of industrialized democracies that meets annually to discuss shared issues and concerns. This is Biden’s second trip outside the U.S. in as many weeks; the Democratic president was in France last week for a state visit in Paris and ceremonies in Normandy marking the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings in World War II.

While last week’s visit had a celebratory feel, this one will be dominated by pressing global issues, including how to keep financial support flowing to Ukraine as it fights Russia’s invasion. Biden’s trip comes days after his son Hunter was convicted on federal gun charges, a blow sure to weigh heavily on the president’s mind.

Despite pressing global challenges, White House national security spokesman John Kirby said there’s still a sense of relief among world leaders in 2024 that “America was back,” referencing Biden’s 2021 speech at the G7 in England.

“Biden’s message then was that democracies need to step up and show they can deliver for their people,” Kirby said. “That’s true now more than ever.”

Kirby said the U.S. was prepared to work with democratically elected officials in the EU no matter who they are, though some of those being elevated have expressed far less support for Ukraine than current leaders.

“We have every confidence that regardless of who fills the seats in the European Parliament, we’re going to continue to work closely with our EU partners on all the issues relative to our shared interests across the European continent,” Kirby said. “That includes supporting Ukraine.”

Biden and Zelenskyy, who met last week in Paris, are expected to hold a joint news conference while meeting at the G7 summit. Biden is also expected to meet with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, the pope and other leaders.

Biden, who’s been adamant “we will not walk away” from Ukraine, last week publicly apologized to Zelenskyy for a monthslong delay by Congress in authorizing additional American military assistance. The delay allowed Russia to make gains on the battlefield.

Sullivan called the security agreement a “bridge” to when Ukraine is invited to join the NATO alliance — a long-term priority of Zelenskyy’s that the allies have said will first require an end to the Russia-Ukraine war and that Putin has steadfastly opposed.

Biden’s back-to-back trips to France and Italy amount to a rare doubleheader of diplomacy in the midst of the presidential election. The president, however, will skip a Ukraine peace conference in Switzerland this weekend to jet to Los Angeles for a campaign fundraiser with big names from Hollywood. Vice President Kamala Harris will represent the U.S. at the conference.

Despite the delays in military aid, the Biden administration on Tuesday announced it would send Ukraine another Patriot missile system to help fend off Russian strikes, two U.S. officials told The Associated Press.

Earlier Wednesday, the U.S. also announced fresh sanctions targeting Chinese companies that help Russia pursue its war in Ukraine, as well as Russia’s financial infrastructure. Sullivan said, “These actions will ratchet up the risk that foreign financial institutions take by dealing with Russia’s war economy.”

Biden is also expected to discuss economic concerns brought on by Chinese manufacturing overcapacity, how to use artificial intelligence in a way that maximizes benefits but still manages national security risks, and global migration.

The U.S. and other G7 nations are struggling to manage large influxes of migrants arriving for complicated reasons that include war, climate change and drought. Migration, and how nations cope with the growing numbers at their borders, has been a factor driving the far-right rise in some of Europe.

## Alarmed by embryo destruction, Southern Baptists urge caution on IVF by couples and government

By PETER SMITH Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Southern Baptist delegates expressed alarm Wednesday over the way in vitro fertilization is routinely being practiced, approving a resolution lamenting that the creation of surplus frozen embryos often results in “destruction of embryonic human life.”

They urged members to carefully weigh the ethical implications of the technology while also expressing sympathy with couples “who experience the searing pain of infertility.”

The resolution — approved near the end of the Southern Baptist Convention’s two-day annual meeting — affirms that embryos are human beings from the moment of fertilization, whether in the womb or generated in the laboratory via IVF. That’s the same position held by the Alabama Supreme Court in ruling that frozen embryos have the full rights of people.

In the wake of that decision, Alabama passed a law shielding IVF providers from prosecution and lawsuits — reflecting that even in a state with strong anti-abortion sentiment, there is support for a technology used by many couples facing infertility.

The resolution also urged couples to adopt surplus frozen embryos that would otherwise be destroyed.

Did the resolution condemn IVF or call for its banning? Not in a blanket way. What it did was denounce the routine practice of creating multiple embryos, frozen for potential use but often with surplus embryos destroyed. It also denounced the use of embryos for experiments, as well as “dehumanizing methods for determining suitability for life and genetic sorting, based on notions of genetic fitness and parental preferences.”

Kristen Ferguson, chair of the committee on resolutions, said after the vote that the resolution amounts to the SBC’s first foray into a new ethical frontier but rooted in their longstanding belief in “the sanctity of the human embryo.”

IVF “is not respecting the sanctity of the human embryo ... in the way it is routinely practiced,” she said. “Right now we’re trying to open the conversation, remind Southern Baptists of our long-held beliefs of the sanctity of human life and allow them to begin to think through the ethical implications.”

She anticipated there may be resolutions with “much stronger language” and more specific applications in the future, such as how these issues relate to the medical community, she said.

“But we are not speaking to that at this time, because Southern Baptists aren’t ready to speak to that yet,” she said. “They wanted to say an affirmation of the human embryo and that it has implications for IVF.”

What is IVF? In vitro fertilization offers a possible solution when a woman has trouble getting pregnant. The procedure involves retrieving her eggs and combining them in a lab dish with a man’s sperm to create a fertilized embryo, which is then transferred into the woman’s uterus in an attempt to create a pregnancy.

IVF is done in cycles and may take more than one to create a successful pregnancy, according to The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. The procedure can use a couple’s eggs and sperm or those from a donor.

Why is this an important issue for Southern Baptists? Ever since the nation’s largest Protestant body took a conservative turn in the 1980s, it has made opposing abortion a top priority. With the overturning of the Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion, new issues have reached the forefront, including IVF.

This resolution makes clear that Southern Baptists’ belief that life begins at conception extends to embryos generated via IVF.

Do Southern Baptists and other conservative evangelicals have consensus on IVF? No. On the convention floor, some delegates gave impassioned testimony to how IVF enabled couples to have long-sought children. Others said that despite that laudable goal, the practice is ethically unacceptable.

Some believe it’s ethical to use IVF to create only the number of embryos intended for implantation.

Albert Mohler, a prominent SBC seminary president and conservative activist, made a hardline denunciation of IVF at a sideline event before the SBC meeting on Monday, calling IVF a “commodification of the embryo” that assaults human dignity. He also criticized it for enabling people to have children outside of

heterosexual marriage.

Did the resolution call for a government ban on IVF? No. It calls for government to “restrain actions inconsistent with the dignity of ... frozen embryonic human beings.” But it doesn’t prescribe specific measures.

“I think especially after the Alabama Supreme Court decision, there’s been a rush at state level as well as federal level to protect IVF or to even expand IVF access, often with very little thought to some of the other realities at stake,” said Jason Thacker, a Southern Baptist ethicist who advised the resolutions committee.

“We’re not naive enough to say that we can just ban this technology, full stop,” he said. “While that would be the goal, because that’s consistent with dignity of the human embryo in many ways,” he said he recognized that there are others who believe there are ethical ways to apply IVF technology.

What’s essential, he said, is laws that respect embryos’ human dignity.

## Russian warships reach Cuban waters ahead of military exercises in the Caribbean

By REGINA GARCIA CANO, GISELA SALOMON and ANDREA RODRÍGUEZ Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — A fleet of Russian warships reached Cuban waters on Wednesday ahead of planned military exercises in the Caribbean that some see as a projection of strength as tensions grow over Western support for Ukraine.

The fleet, made up of a frigate, a nuclear-powered submarine, an oil tanker and a rescue tug, crossed into Havana Bay after drills in the Atlantic Ocean. The flagship frigate, adorned with the Russian and Cuban flags, was greeted by a 21-cannon salute.

Russian sailors aboard the frigate stood in military formation as they approached the island. Some Cuban residents stopped to take pictures of the arriving ships.

U.S. officials expect the Russian ships to remain in the region through the summer and possibly also stop in Venezuela.

Russia is a longtime ally of Venezuela and Cuba, and its warships and aircraft have periodically made forays into the Caribbean. But this mission comes less than two weeks after President Joe Biden authorized Ukraine to use U.S.-provided weapons to strike inside Russia to protect Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second-largest city, prompting President Vladimir Putin to suggest his military could respond with “asymmetrical steps” elsewhere in the world.

“Most of all, the warships are a reminder to Washington that it is unpleasant when an adversary meddles in your near abroad,” said Benjamin Gedan, director of the Latin America Program at the Washington-based Wilson Center think tank, referring to the Western involvement in Russia’s war in Ukraine.

“It also reminds Russia’s friends in the region, including U.S. antagonists Cuba and Venezuela, that Moscow is on their side,” he said.

Although the fleet includes a nuclear-powered submarine, a senior U.S. administration official told The Associated Press that the intelligence community has determined no vessel is carrying nuclear weapons. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to provide details that had not been announced publicly, said Russia’s deployments “pose no direct threat to the United States.”

Russian ships have occasionally docked in Havana since 2008, when a group of Russian vessels entered Cuban waters in what state media described as the first such visit in almost two decades. In 2015, a reconnaissance and communications ship arrived unannounced in Havana a day before the start of discussions between U.S. and Cuban officials on the reopening of diplomatic relations.

A State Department spokesperson told the AP that Russia’s port calls in Cuba are “routine naval visits,” while acknowledging its military exercises “have ratcheted up because of U.S. support to Ukraine and exercise activity in support of our NATO allies.”

On Wednesday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov hosted his Cuban counterpart, Bruno Rodríguez, for talks in Moscow. Speaking to reporters after the talks, Lavrov thanked the Cuban authorities for their position on Ukraine.

“From the very beginning, Havana gave an assessment of what was happening outlining the absolutely

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 70 of 84

correct, true reasons for what was unfolding (in Ukraine), and what was being prepared by the West for many years," Lavrov said.

Russian military and defense doctrine holds Latin America and the Caribbean in an important position, with the sphere seen as under U.S. influence acting as a counterweight to Washington's activities in Europe, said Ryan Berg, director of the Americas Program at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"While this is likely little more than provocation from Moscow, it sends a message about Russia's ability to project power into the Western Hemisphere with the help of its allies, and it will certainly keep the U.S. military on high alert while they are in theater," Berg said.

The timing of this year's mission may serve Russia's purposes, but it is also raising questions of whether Venezuela's government may use it as an opportunity to shore up President Nicolás Maduro's bid for a third term in the July 28 election.

Venezuela's chief opposition coalition is threatening the ruling party's decadeslong grip on power, and engineering a crisis built on simmering tensions with Guyana is among the scenarios that analysts believe Maduro's government could use to delay or cancel the vote.

"It is almost unthinkable that Maduro will risk actually losing power," said Evan Ellis, Latin America research professor with the U.S. Army War College.

"The most obvious alternative, consistent with Venezuelan military's recent moves ... is to fabricate an international crisis that would provide an excuse for 'postponing' Venezuela's election," he continued. "The presence of Russian warships in the vicinity would greatly add to the escalation risk of any such crisis that Maduro would fabricate, which is possibly the point."

Venezuelan voters approved a referendum in December to claim sovereignty over the Essequibo territory, which accounts for two-thirds of Guyana and lies near big offshore oil deposits. Venezuela argues it was stolen when the border was drawn more than a century ago.

Guyana is awaiting a decision regarding Venezuela's claim from the International Court of Justice, but Maduro's government does not recognize its authority. The two countries squared off there on Tuesday, with Guyana strenuously objecting to a request from Venezuela for 12 more months to submit additional pleadings.

The U.S. supports Guyana in the ongoing dispute and assisted it with surveillance flights late last year when Venezuela had threatened to invade the country. Guyana's government last month gave permission for the U.S. military to fly two powerful F/A-18F Super Hornet jets over its capital in a demonstration of close cooperation.

Guyana's Vice President Bharrat Jagdeo on June 6 acknowledged that the Russian fleet does not represent "a direct threat."

"Nevertheless, we're vigilant, and we're keeping this issue firmly in our policy radar," Jagdeo said in a press conference.

## Federal Reserve sees some progress on inflation but envisions just one rate cut this year

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal Reserve officials said Wednesday that inflation has fallen further toward their target level in recent months but signaled that they expect to cut their benchmark interest rate just once this year.

The policymakers' forecast for one rate cut was down from their previous projection of three cuts, because inflation, despite having cooled in the past two months, remains persistently above their target level.

The scaled-back estimate for rate cuts came as something of a surprise, given that the government reported earlier Wednesday that consumer inflation eased in May more than most economists had expected. That report suggested that the Fed's high-rate policies are succeeding in taming inflation.

Financial markets took encouragement, though, from the policy statement the Fed issued after its lat-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 71 of 84

est meeting ended, which underscored that it sees progress in its fight against high inflation. Broad stock indexes rose sharply, and bond yields fell in response.

The policymakers, as expected, kept their key rate unchanged Wednesday at roughly 5.3%. The benchmark rate has remained at that level since July of last year, after the Fed raised it 11 times to try to slow borrowing and spending and cool inflation.

Whenever the Fed does begin to reduce its benchmark rate, now at a 23-year high, it would eventually lighten loan costs for consumers, who have faced punishingly high rates for mortgages, auto loans, credit cards and other forms of borrowing.

The central bank's rate policies over the next several months could also have consequences for the presidential race. Though the unemployment rate is a low 4%, hiring is robust and consumers continue to spend, voters have taken a generally sour view of the economy under President Joe Biden. In large part, that's because prices remain much higher than they were before the pandemic struck. High borrowing rates have imposed a further financial burden.

Speaking at a news conference after the Fed meeting ended, Chair Jerome Powell seemed to downplay the significance of the policymakers' collective forecast of just one rate cut in 2024. That forecast is derived from the individual predictions of 19 policymakers, and Powell noted that 15 of the officials projected either one or two rate cuts this year.

"I would look at all of them as plausible," he said.

"No one," the Fed chair added, "brings to this a really strong commitment to a particular rate path. It's just what they think in a given moment in time."

Economists say two rate cuts, with the first one coming as early as September, are still possible despite the central bank's prediction of just one.

"I don't think September's off the table," said Matthew Luzzetti, chief U.S. economist at Deutsche Bank. "To get there, you'd have to have a string of inflation reports like the one we got this morning."

At his news conference, though, Powell cautioned, "We'll need to see more good data to bolster our confidence that inflation is moving sustainably toward 2%."

He also underscored that with the economy still overall healthy, Fed officials feel little urgency to cut rates.

"What we've been getting is good progress on inflation, with growth at a good level and with a strong labor market," the Fed chair said. "Ultimately, we think rates will have to come down to continue to support that. But so far they haven't had to."

Uncertainty over when borrowing rates might come down is keeping some consumers on edge, especially those seeking to buy a home who face painfully high mortgage rates, now averaging around 7%.

David Goines, who owns a four-bedroom, two-bath mobile home in Lexington, Oklahoma, began looking for a new house last year but was put off by the elevated mortgage rates.

"Once we calculated what our payments would be for the house that we were looking at, it was just unfeasible," he said.

Goines, a 36-year-old information technology director, has been holding out hope that rates would ease this year. He's still waiting.

"We're pretty pessimistic of the rates even getting down to 5% in the next 12 months," he said. "Right now, we're just pretty much stuck."

On Wednesday morning, the government reported that inflation eased in May for a second straight month, a hopeful sign that an acceleration of prices that occurred early this year may have passed. Consumer prices excluding volatile food and energy costs — the closely watched "core" index — rose just 0.2% from April, the smallest rise since October. Measured from a year earlier, core prices climbed 3.4%, the mildest pace in three years.

"We welcome today's (inflation) reading and hope for more like that," Powell said.

Inflation has tumbled from a peak of 9.1% two years ago. The policymakers now face the delicate task of keeping rates high enough to slow spending and fully defeat high inflation without derailing the economy.

Measures of inflation had cooled steadily in the second half of last year, raising hopes that the Fed could achieve a rare "soft landing," whereby it would manage to conquer inflation through rate hikes without

causing a recession. But inflation came in unexpectedly high in the first three months of this year, delaying hoped-for Fed rate cuts and potentially imperiling a soft landing.

As part of the updated quarterly forecasts the policymakers issued Wednesday, they projected that the economy will grow 2.1% this year and 2% in 2025, the same as they had envisioned in March. They expect core inflation to be 2.8% by year's end, according to their preferred gauge, up from a previous forecast of 2.6%. And they project that unemployment will stay at its current 4% rate by the end of this year and edge up to 4.2% by the end of 2025.

The expectation that the unemployment rate will remain around those low levels indicates that the officials believe that while the job market will gradually slow, it will remain fundamentally healthy.

"By so many measures," Powell said, "the labor market was kind of overheated two years ago, and we've seen it move back into much better balance between supply and demand."

## Senators blast health and law enforcement officials over illegal e-cigarettes used by teens

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senators on Wednesday blasted top health and law enforcement officials for not doing more to combat the rise of illegal electronic cigarettes in the U.S., a multibillion-dollar business that has flourished amid haphazard enforcement.

Democrats and Republicans on the Senate Judiciary Committee expressed frustration and exasperation while questioning officials from the Food and Drug Administration and Justice Department about attempts to stay on top of the vaping industry, which has grown to include thousands of flavored, unauthorized e-cigarettes originating in China.

Those products, including brands like Elf Bar, have become the most popular choice among American teens who vape.

"I simply do not understand how FDA and DOJ have permitted thousands of products to remain on store shelves when their manufacturers have not received authorization, or, in some cases, even filed an application," said the committee's chairman, Dick Durbin.

The Illinois Democrat displayed a photo of a shelf stocked with brightly colored e-cigarettes, including ones in dragon fruit and watermelon bubblegum flavors, which he said a Senate staffer took at a vape shop near the FDA's Maryland campus.

"These illegal products, clearly designed for children by their flavors, are being sold in the shadow of FDA's building," Durbin said. "How is that allowed to happen?"

FDA's tobacco chief, Brian King, said the agency has been slowed by a backlog of applications submitted by vape companies seeking U.S. approval, which regulators are legally required to review.

"The sheer volume of this product landscape requires that we take the time to conduct scientifically and legally defensible reviews of the 27 million applications," King said.

The FDA has OK'd a handful of e-cigarettes as alternatives for adult smokers. All other products on the market, including major sellers like Juul, are pending review or considered illegal by regulators.

An industry lobbyist told the committee that the FDA has created an untenable marketplace by rejecting more than 99% of applications submitted by companies.

Lawmakers also heard from a high school senior who said she became addicted to nicotine after trying a "blueberry ice" vape in ninth grade.

"I thought I was just enjoying the flavors but soon my 14-year-old brain craved the nicotine more and more," said Josie Shapiro of Seattle. "I've tried to quit vaping over and over again, but it's really, really hard."

The FDA and DOJ have legally barred about a half-dozen vaping companies for selling products that can appeal to youngsters, but many more manufacturers continue launching new products, primarily disposable vapes that can't be refilled and are thrown in the trash.

Deputy Assistant Attorney General Arun Rao told senators that regulators at the Justice Department and other agencies have signaled that the vaping issue "is a priority across the executive branch."



"I'm against signals," Durbin said. "Do something!"

On Monday, the FDA and DOJ announced a new government task force, which will include the U.S. Postal Service and other agencies, to try and tackle the problem. That step was recommended in 2022 by an outside panel that reviewed longstanding complaints about the FDA's tobacco program.

Republican Senator Thom Tillis called the timing of the announcement "a political stunt," and criticized the absence of other federal agencies from the initiative, including Customs and Border Protection.

"If the timing of the task force formation wasn't evidence of how unserious the FDA is about tackling the flood of illicit e-cigarettes, FDA's exclusion of CBP from the task force makes it crystal clear," said Tillis, who represents North Carolina, the nation's leading tobacco producer. He urged officials to concentrate enforcement on Chinese brands, rather than large domestic manufacturers like Reynolds American.

The FDA can conduct investigations and recommend cases, but only the Justice Department can bring lawsuits. Federal prosecutors may decline to pursue cases for any number of reasons, including competing priorities, weaknesses in the case or the potential repercussions of losing in court.

Using its own authorities, the FDA has sent hundreds of warning letters to vape shops and e-cigarette manufacturers in recent years. But the letters have done little to dissuade companies from flouting FDA rules and introducing new vapes.

Industry analysts estimate disposable vapes make up 30% to 40% of the roughly \$7 billion-dollar vaping market. The two best-selling disposables — Breeze and Elf Bar — generated more than \$500 million in sales last year, according to Nielsen retail sales data analyzed by Goldman Sachs.

Both brands have been sanctioned by FDA regulators but remain widely available, in some cases with new names, logos and flavors. More than half of the 2.8 million U.S. teens and adolescents who vaped last year said they used Elf Bar.

King noted that products like Elf Bar cannot legally be sold in China because the government there has banned non-tobacco flavored e-cigarettes.

"You can't sell them in China but you can sell them in the United States?" Sen. John Cornyn of Texas responded. The Republican vowed to introduce legislation addressing what he called "an outrageous and unacceptable status quo."

Overall, teen vaping has fallen 60% since its all-time high in 2019, following the COVID-19 pandemic and new age restrictions and flavor bans on e-cigarettes and other tobacco products.

## Oklahoma Supreme Court dismisses lawsuit of last Tulsa Race Massacre survivors seeking reparations

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — The Oklahoma Supreme Court on Wednesday dismissed a lawsuit by survivors of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, dampening the hope of advocates for racial justice that the city would make financial amends for one of the worst single acts of violence against Black people in U.S. history that left as many as 300 people dead and a once-thriving district in smoldering ruins.

The nine-member court upheld the decision made by a district court judge in Tulsa last year, ruling that the plaintiff's grievances about the destruction of the Greenwood district, although legitimate, did not fall within the scope of the state's public nuisance statute.

"Plaintiffs do not point to any physical injury to property in Greenwood rendering it uninhabitable that could be resolved by way of injunction or other civil remedy," the court wrote in its decision. "Today we hold that relief is not possible under any set of facts that could be established consistent with plaintiff's allegations."

Messages left Wednesday with the survivors' attorney, Damario Solomon-Simmons, were not immediately returned.

The city said in a statement that it "respects the court's decision and affirms the significance of the work the City continues to do in the North Tulsa and Greenwood communities," adding that it remains committed "to working with residents and providing resources to support" the communities.

The suit was an attempt to force the city of Tulsa and others to make recompense for the destruction of the once-thriving Black district by a white mob. In 1921 — on May 31 and June 1 — the white mob, including some people hastily deputized by authorities, looted and burned the district, which was referred to as Black Wall Street.

As many as 300 Black Tulsans were killed, and thousands of survivors were forced for a time into internment camps overseen by the National Guard. Burned bricks and a fragment of a church basement are about all that survive today of the more than 30-block historically Black district.

The two survivors of the attack, Lessie Benningfield Randle and Viola Fletcher, who are both now over 100 years old, sued in 2020 with the hope of seeing what their attorney called “justice in their lifetime.” A third plaintiff, Hughes Van Ellis, died last year at age 102.

The court also determined the plaintiffs’ allegations did not sufficiently support a claim for unjust enrichment, which it said are typically limited to contractual relationships.

Other defendants in the case included the Tulsa Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Board of Tulsa County Commissioners, the Tulsa County Sheriff and the Oklahoma Military Department.

The lawsuit was brought under Oklahoma’s public nuisance law, arguing that the actions of the white mob continue to affect the city today. It contended that Tulsa’s long history of racial division and tension stemmed from the massacre.

The city and insurance companies never compensated victims for their losses, and the massacre ultimately resulted in racial and economic disparities that still exist today, the lawsuit argued. It sought a detailed accounting of the property and wealth lost or stolen in the massacre, the construction of a hospital in north Tulsa and the creation of a victims compensation fund, among other things.

Public nuisance claims are typically used to address local concerns like blighted homes, illegal drug-dealing or dangerous animals. Such claims were used in lawsuits that states brought against tobacco companies in the 1990s and against opioid drug makers, but many of those led to settlements rather than trials.

In 2019, Oklahoma’s attorney general used the public nuisance law to force opioid drug maker Johnson & Johnson to pay the state \$465 million in damages. The Oklahoma Supreme Court overturned that decision two years later.

## **A 98-year-old man’s liver was donated.**

### **He is believed to be the oldest American organ donor ever**

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Orville Allen lived a lifetime of service, and when he died at age 98 he had one last thing to give: his liver.

Allen, a veteran of both World War II and the Korean War and a longtime educator in rural southeastern Missouri, is the oldest American to ever donate an organ, transplant organizations said. He died on May 29 and his liver was successfully transplanted to a 72-year-old woman, according to Mid-America Transplant.

Allen was in robust health until he suffered a fall while picking up storm debris at his home in Poplar Bluff, Missouri, on May 27, his daughter, Linda Michelle said. He struck the back of his head and was flown to St. Francis Medical Center in Cape Girardeau.

Swelling around Allen’s brain couldn’t be healed. As the family was preparing to say goodbye, hospital staff had a question: Would they consider donating his liver?

Given Allen’s age, it was a question that caught the relatives by surprise. But surgeons had examined him and determined the organ was acceptable for transplant.

Knowing their dad’s nature — always the first to check in on people, always at the doorstep of a needy neighbor — the siblings didn’t hesitate.

“It turned it from being such a sad loss of our dad to having this little ray of joy because he was doing what he’d done all his life,” Michelle said. “He was giving one more gift.”

Previously, Cecil Lockhart of West Virginia was the oldest person to donate an organ upon death, according to the Center for Organ Recovery & Education, which coordinated recovery of his liver. He was 95

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 75 of 84

when he died in 2021, and his liver was successfully transplanted to a woman.

More people than ever are getting new organs, according to data from the United Network for Organ Sharing, or UNOS, a nonprofit organization that has run the transplant system under a government contract for nearly four decades. Last year was a record year for donations from the deceased — more than 16,000 — and for the number of organ transplants performed — more than 46,000 — according to UNOS. Liver transplants topped 10,000 for the first time ever.

Still, more than 100,000 people are on the nation's list for a new organ and many will die waiting. The need is so great that scientists are working on alternatives to ease the ongoing shortages. Earlier this year in Massachusetts, Richard "Rick" Slayman became the first recipient of a genetically modified pig kidney. He died two months after the transplant.

Increasingly, older adults can donate organs upon their death, said Kevin Lee, president and CEO of Mid-America Transplant.

"As we've seen advances in medical science, we have been educating over the past five years nurses and hospital staff not to think about age when they call in those referrals, but really allow our medical team and transplant physicians to evaluate the medical eligibility of each individual," Lee said.

Two years ago, a liver was procured from a 90-year-old donor in Mid-America's region, which includes eastern Missouri, southern Illinois and northeastern Arkansas, Lee said. Last fall, livers were donated by an 88-year-old and an 84-year-old.

The liver "is resilient. We see liver donations at all ages," Lee said.

About 12% of deceased organ donors in the first four months of this year were people age 65 or older, UNOS spokeswoman Anne Paschke said.

"Organ donation at advanced ages can be successful and provide life-saving benefits for the recipients," Dr. David Klassen, chief medical officer for UNOS, said in a statement. But the impact of aging varies by organ, he said. In fact, many transplant centers won't consider hearts from senior donors.

Allen was a lifelong resident of southeast Missouri. He was a pilot in the Army Air Corps in World War II, then served in artillery communications in the Army 1st Cavalry Division in the Korean War. After the wars, he spent 27 years in the Army Reserve, retiring as a lieutenant colonel.

He also farmed and taught vocational agriculture at Neelyville High School, near Poplar Bluff, for nearly four decades. He and his wife of 70 years, Geraldine, who died in 2019, had three children, three grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

He never got around to signing up to be an organ donor, but the family said they hope his story spurs more people to register.

In fact, they said, it already has.

"A whole bunch of people at the visitation and funeral who were former students and friends said, 'You know what? I'm going to put donor on my driver's license right now,'" Mitchelle said.

Greg Allen, one of Orville's sons, said the ability to donate their dad's organ was uplifting in an otherwise sad time.

"To me, it's just a wonderful thing to be able to help somebody else, anybody else, to extend their life for their family," Greg Allen said.

## **Jerry West, a 3-time Hall of Fame selection and the inspiration for the NBA logo, dies at 86**

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

Jerry West, who was selected to the Basketball Hall of Fame three times in a storied career as a player and executive, and whose silhouette is considered to be the basis of the NBA logo, died Wednesday morning, the Los Angeles Clippers announced.

He was 86.

West, nicknamed "Mr. Clutch" for his late-game exploits as a player, was an NBA champion who went into the Hall of Fame as a player in 1980 and again as a member of the gold medal-winning 1960 U.S.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 76 of 84

Olympic Team in 2010. He will be enshrined for a third time later this year as a contributor, and NBA Commissioner Adam Silver called West "one of the greatest executives in sports history."

"He helped build eight championship teams during his tenure in the NBA — a legacy of achievement that mirrors his on-court excellence," Silver said.

West was "the personification of basketball excellence and a friend to all who knew him," said the Clippers, who employed him as a consultant for the last seven years. West's wife, Karen, was by his side when he died, the Clippers said.

West was an All-Star in all 14 of his NBA seasons, a 12-time All-NBA selection, part of the 1972 Los Angeles Lakers team that won a championship, an NBA Finals MVP when the Lakers lost to the Boston Celtics in 1969 — the first year that award was given out, and still the only time it went to a player on the losing team — and was selected as part of the NBA's 75th anniversary team.

"He was absolutely my basketball sage: wise, loyal and so much fun," Clippers owner Steve Ballmer said. "If you were in his presence, you felt his competitiveness and his drive. He cared about everything and everyone."

West was general manager of championship teams with the Lakers, helping build the "Showtime" dynasty. He also worked in the front offices of the Memphis Grizzlies, the Golden State Warriors and the Clippers. Among his many highlights as an executive with the Lakers: he drafted Magic Johnson and James Worthy, then brought in Kobe Bryant and Shaquille O'Neal to win more titles.

His basketball life bridged generations: West played with Elgin Baylor, whom he called "the most supportive and the greatest player of that era," and Wilt Chamberlain. Even in the final years of his life, West was considered basketball royalty. He routinely sat courtside at Summer League games in Las Vegas, often watching many games in a day while greeting long lines of players — LeBron James among them — who would approach to shake his hand.

James, on social media, offered his condolences: "Will truly miss our convos my dear friend! My thoughts and prayers goes out to your wonderful family! Forever love Jerry! Rest in Paradise my guy!"

West is 25th on the NBA's all-time scoring list. The league has never confirmed that West was in fact the model for its logo — a player dribbling a ball, set against a red-and-blue background — but has never said otherwise, either.

"While it's never been officially declared that the logo is Jerry West," Silver said in 2021, "it sure looks a lot like him."

West is still the NBA Finals' all-time leader in total points. He played in the title series nine times with the Lakers; his teams went 1-2 against the New York Knicks, and 0-6 against the Celtics. "Those damn Celtics," he often said. West also hit one of the most famed shots in finals history, a 60-footer at the buzzer of Game 3 of the 1970 series between the Knicks and Lakers to force overtime.

Michael Jordan said he considered West "a friend and mentor — like an older brother to me."

"I valued his friendship and knowledge," Jordan said. "I always wished I could have played against him as a competitor, but the more I came to know him, I wish I had been his teammate. I admired his basketball insights and he and I shared many similarities to how we approached the game."

A native of Chelyan, West Virginia, West was known as a tenacious player who was rarely satisfied with his performance. He grew up shooting at a makeshift outdoor basket, often out there until his fingers bled. He became the first high school player in state history to score more than 900 points in a season, averaging 32.2 points in leading East Bank High to a state title.

Basketball, he would later reveal, was his therapy.

In his 2011 memoir, "West by West: My Charmed, Tormented Life," West chronicled a lifelong battle with depression. He wrote that his childhood was devoid of love and filled with anger as a result of an abusive father.

West led West Virginia University — where he is still the all-time leader in scoring average — to the NCAA final in 1959, when the Mountaineers lost by one point to California.

A year after he won Olympic gold in Rome, West joined the Lakers, where he spent his entire pro playing career. He was honored as one of the league's 50 greatest players in 1996 and when the league expanded

the polling to 75 players to commemorate its 75th anniversary in 2021, West was selected again.

"You know, it never ceases to amaze me the places you can go in this world chasing a bouncing ball," West said in 2019, when he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom — the nation's highest civilian honor — by then-President Donald Trump.

"I was a dreamer," West continued. "My family didn't have much, but we had a clear view of the Appalachian Mountains, and I'd sit alone on our front porch and wonder, 'If I ever make it to the top of that mountain, what will I see on the other side?' Well, I did make it to the other side, and my dreams have come true. I've been able to see the sides, thanks to that bouncing ball."

## France's Macron defends decision on snap legislative elections, urges voters to defeat far-right

By SYLVIE CORBET and BARBARA SURK Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — French President Emmanuel Macron defended his decision to call snap parliamentary elections after his party's crushing defeat in the European parliamentary vote, insisting on Wednesday that voters will ultimately choose the "progressive bloc" over the far-right.

In France, legislative elections decide the makeup of the parliament, not the occupant of the presidential Elysee Palace. Macron has a presidential mandate until 2027, and said he would not step down before the end of his term.

The somber-looking French leader said his move to call early polls — the voting will take place in two rounds, on June 30 and July 7 — showed his "confidence" in the French people. He urged moderate politicians from the left and the right to regroup with his own centrist alliance to defeat the far-right.

"I think the French are intelligent, they see what's being done, what's coherent and what's not, and they know what to do," Macron said. He added: "I don't believe at all that the worst can happen. You see, I'm an indefatigable optimist."

The 46 year-old addressed French voters in his first news conference since his stunning Sunday decision to dissolve the National Assembly, France's lower house of parliament, after the far-right National Rally party of Marine Le Pen triumphed at the vote for the European Parliament.

Macron sought to address concerns of those who fear the risky move could result in the French far-right leading government for the first time since World War II.

Since Sunday evening, crowds have been gathering every day in Paris and across the country to protest against the National Rally.

Macron was adamant in his faith in the voters to refuse to choose the extremes of both sides of the political spectrum. He assured that he was not falling into defeatism and said he would serve out his second presidential term regardless of the outcome of the legislative vote.

Macron said his decision is "about allowing political forces chosen by the French to be able to govern." He added that it's "awkward to think it has to be the extreme right or political extremes. Or maybe you've got the spirit of defeat spread everywhere."

"If that's what people are afraid of, it's time now to take action," he said.

Macron justified his decision by the fact that he could not ignore the new political reality after his pro-European party was handed a chastening defeat and garnered less than half the support of the National Rally with its star leader, Jordan Bardella.

Unlike in his recent national addresses in which Macron focused on Russia's war in Ukraine and ways Europe should forge a common defense policy, independent of the United States, and shore up trade protections against China, the French president stuck to his country's internal issues favored by the surging right, including curbing immigration, fighting crime and Islamic separatism in France.

Macron, who is in his second and last presidential term, said he hopes voters will band together to contain the far-right in national elections in a way they didn't in European ones. He called on "men and women of goodwill who were able to say 'no' to extremes on the left and the right to join together to be able to build a joint project" for the country.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 78 of 84

"Things are simple today: we have unnatural alliances at both extremes, who quite agree on nothing except the jobs to be shared, and who will not be able to implement any program," Macron said.

While he seemed to project the kind of enthusiasm that helped bring him to the presidency in 2017, analysts say French voters are more pessimistic about their future, and see Macron as increasingly out of touch with real life and pocketbook problems.

The French president acknowledged some faults committed by his pro-business centrist party while harshly criticizing some conservatives who have decided to team up with Le Pen's National Rally, which has a history of racism and xenophobia. He scathingly called an alliance formed by parties on the left as "unusual and incoherent" after they included the hard-left France Unbowed of Jean-Luc Mélenchon who, Macron said "justified anti-Semitic policies" in the wake of the Israel-Hamas war.

"We're not perfect, we haven't done everything right, but we have results... and above all, we know how to act," Macron said of his Renaissance party, adding that the "far-right (is) the main danger" in the upcoming election.

"The question is who will govern the country tomorrow?" he asked. "The far-right and a few associates, or the democratic, progressive bloc? That's the fundamental question."

Potential alliances and France's two-round voting system in national elections make the outcome of the vote highly uncertain.

Opposition parties on the left and right have been scrambling to form alliances and field candidates in the early legislative balloting.

While sharp differences between parties remain on either side of the political spectrum, prominent figures calling for a united front appear to have one thing in common: They don't want to cooperate with Macron.

Despite their divisions, left-wing parties agreed late Monday to form an alliance that includes the Greens, the Socialists, the Communists and the far-left France Unbowed.

Le Pen is working to consolidate power on the right in efforts to translate the European triumph into a national win and come closer to claiming power. Her party is expected to win the most French seats in the European Parliament, potentially as many as 30 of France's 81.

## What are the main sticking points in the cease-fire talks between Israel and Hamas?

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

The latest proposal for a cease-fire in Gaza has the support of the United States and most of the international community, but Hamas has not fully embraced it, and neither, it seems, has Israel.

Hamas this week accepted the broad outline but requested "amendments." Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has publicly disputed aspects of the plan, raising questions about Israel's commitment to what the U.S. says is an Israeli proposal.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is on his eighth visit to the region since Hamas' Oct. 7 attack triggered the war, told reporters in Qatar on Wednesday that the negotiations will continue.

But he said Hamas had requested "numerous" changes, adding that "some of the changes are workable; some are not."

Blinken declined to elaborate, but recent statements by Israeli and Hamas officials suggest they remain divided over many of the same issues that mediators have been trying to bridge for months.

Here's a look at the main sticking points.

Ending the war Hamas has insisted it will not release the remaining hostages unless there's a permanent cease-fire and a full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. When President Joe Biden announced the latest proposal last month, he said it included both.

But Netanyahu says Israel is still committed to destroying Hamas' military and governing capabilities, and ensuring it can never again carry out an Oct. 7-style assault. A full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, where Hamas' top leadership and much of its forces are still intact, would almost certainly leave the

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 79 of 84

group in control of the territory and able to rearm.

That's in part because Israel has yet to put forward a plan for Gaza's postwar governance, and has rejected a U.S. proposal that has wide regional support because it would require major progress toward creating a Palestinian state.

Hamas spokesman Jihad Taha told a Lebanese news outlet on Wednesday that the "amendments" requested by the group aim to guarantee a permanent cease-fire and a complete Israeli withdrawal.

Hamas is also seeking the release of hundreds of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel, including political leaders and senior militants convicted of orchestrating deadly attacks on Israeli civilians. But it's unclear if the sides have agreed on a list of who will be freed, or on whether they will be released in Gaza, the occupied West Bank or sent into exile.

Getting to the second phase of the planThe cease-fire plan calls for an initial six-week phase in which Hamas would release some hostages — including women, older adults and wounded people — in exchange for an Israeli withdrawal from populated areas. Palestinian civilians would be able to return to their homes and humanitarian aid would be ramped up.

But then things get tricky.

The two sides are supposed to use that six-week period to negotiate an agreement on the second phase, which Biden said would include the release of all remaining living hostages, including male soldiers, and Israel's full withdrawal from Gaza. The temporary cease-fire would become permanent.

But only if the two sides agree on the details.

Hamas appears concerned that Israel will resume the war once its most vulnerable hostages are returned. And even if it doesn't, Israel could make demands in that stage of negotiations that were not part of the initial deal and are unacceptable to Hamas — and then resume the war when Hamas refuses them.

Israel's ambassador to the U.N., Gilad Erdan, said Israel would demand in those negotiations that Hamas be removed from power. "We cannot agree to Hamas continuing to be the rulers of Gaza because then Gaza will continue to pose a threat to Israel," Erdan told CNN's "The Source" on Monday.

Israel also appears wary of the plan's provision that the initial cease-fire be extended as long as negotiations continue over the second phase. Erdan said that would allow Hamas to "continue with endless and meaningless negotiations."

Resolving mistrust between longtime enemiesThere are other issues that could unravel cease-fire efforts, beginning with the utter lack of trust between Israel and Hamas, which have fought five wars and are committed to each other's destruction.

Then there are the intense and contrasting pressures on Netanyahu, which may explain his mixed signals about the proposal.

Thousands of Israelis, including families of the hostages, have protested in recent months to demand the government bring the captives home, even at the expense of a lopsided deal with Hamas.

But the far-right partners in Netanyahu's increasingly narrow coalition have rejected the U.S.-backed plan and have threatened to bring down his government if he ends the war without destroying Hamas.

They want to reoccupy Gaza, encourage the "voluntary emigration" of Palestinians from the territory and rebuild Jewish settlements there. Netanyahu's ultranationalist allies have more leverage over him than at any time since the start of the war after Benny Gantz, a centrist political opponent, resigned Sunday from Israel's war Cabinet.

It's hard to imagine either Israel or Hamas entirely giving up on the talks. For Israel, that would likely mean abandoning scores of hostages still held in Gaza. For Hamas, it would prolong the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza and give Israel more time to annihilate the militants.

But Blinken hinted that the negotiations would not continue indefinitely.

"At some point in a negotiation, and this has gone back and forth for a long time, you get to a point where if one side continues to change its demands, including making demands and insisting on changes for things that it already accepted, you have to question whether they're proceeding in good faith or not."

## AP-NORC poll: About half of US adults approve of Trump's conviction, but views of him remain stable

By STEVE PEOPLES and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — About half of U.S. adults approve of Donald Trump's recent felony conviction, according to a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The survey shows some potential vulnerabilities, along with some signs of resilience in his support, as Trump tries to become the first American with a felony record to win the presidency.

Less than five months before Election Day, the poll paints a picture of a nation with firmly entrenched opinions of the divisive former Republican president. Overall views of Trump and Democratic President Joe Biden remain unchanged since before the guilty verdict in Trump's New York hush money trial.

But the findings also suggest that Trump's conviction is one more weakness among disaffected Republicans. While most people in the United States have heard about the conviction, political independents are less likely to be paying attention and more likely to have a neutral opinion of Trump's conviction, indicating that there may still be room for the campaigns to sway them.

Nancy Hauser, a 74-year-old independent from West Palm Beach, Florida, said she approves of Trump's conviction based on the little she followed of the trial. The verdict, she said, suggests that Trump may be willing to engage in criminal activity if he were back in the White House.

"I feel if you've been convicted of a crime, especially a felony, a serious crime, how can you run a country?" she said.

But she also has concerns about Biden, especially his age and leadership on the economy and the war in Israel. Biden is 81, while Trump turns 78 on Friday.

"I'm not sure who I'm voting for," Hauser said. "That's the sad part."

Overall, U.S. adults are more likely to approve of Trump's conviction than they are to disapprove, according to a survey of 1,115 adults nationwide conducted over three days beginning a week after the verdict was delivered May 30, and before Biden's son Hunter was convicted in a federal gun case on Tuesday.

About 3 in 10 somewhat or strongly disapprove of Trump's conviction, and about 2 in 10 do not approve or disapprove. Perspectives were similar among registered voters, with about half saying the conviction was the right choice.

Republicans are less united on the verdict than are Democrats. Roughly 6 in 10 Republicans somewhat or strongly disapprove of the conviction, while 15% of Republican adults approve and about 2 in 10 Republicans neither approve nor disapprove. Among Democrats, by contrast, more than 8 in 10 somewhat or strongly approve.

About half of Americans say that the conviction was politically motivated, while a similar share think it was not. Nearly half of Republicans who have an unfavorable view of Trump do not see the conviction as politically motivated, compared with less than 1 in 10 Republicans who have a positive opinion of him.

Overall opinions of Trump barely budged.

About 6 in 10 U.S. adults have an unfavorable opinion of Trump, which is in line with findings from an AP-NORC poll conducted in February. Four in 10 have a favorable view of Trump, also largely unchanged since February.

The numbers are equally poor for Biden: 4 in 10 U.S. adults have a favorable view of the Democratic president, while about 6 in 10 have a negative one.

Ron Schwartz, a 59-year-old self-described moderate Republican who lives in Dallas, said that Trump was "probably guilty" of the alleged crimes, although Schwartz believes politics were a major factor in the case.

He said the charges should not have been felonies, a level of crime that blocks those convicted from owning guns or voting in many states. Still, Schwartz plans to vote for Trump, as he did in the past two presidential elections, despite having serious concerns about the former president's character.

"I think he's a disgusting human being," Schwartz said. "But he has some good policies and good ideas."

Independents are split on Trump overall: About 4 in 10 have a positive view, while a similar share have a negative view. A plurality — nearly half — did not express a strong opinion on the conviction, saying



they did not approve or disapprove.

Cassi Carey, a 60-year-old independent who lives in suburban Milwaukee, said the conviction does not reflect well on Trump, although she acknowledges she was not paying close attention to the specifics.

"I think Trump is a terrible choice for our country because of his divisiveness," Carey said. She also lamented the advanced age of Biden, who turns 82 in November.

"Someday in my lifetime, I want very much to be able to vote for a candidate and not against a candidate," she said.

Overall, Americans are more likely to see Trump's conviction as bad for the nation.

About 4 in 10 adults describe it as a bad thing for the country overall, while about one-third say it was a good thing and about 2 in 10 say it is neither. As for the U.S. democratic system, about 4 in 10 say the conviction is a good thing, with roughly the same share calling it a bad thing.

Trump continues to be overwhelmingly disliked by Democrats: 9 in 10 Democrats have an unfavorable view of him, with roughly 8 in 10 saying their opinion is "very unfavorable."

Democrat Oscar Baza, a 29-year-old Mexican immigrant who lives in Los Angeles, said he approves of the Trump verdict, which is evidence of "the judicial process working as it should."

"I just think it's really worrisome that he's on the ballot," Baza said. "If you've been convicted of 34 counts of anything, you probably shouldn't be leading anything, you should be going to therapy."

The poll of 1,115 adults was conducted June 7-10, 2024, using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.0 percentage points.

## Supreme Court has a lot of work to do and little time to do it with a sizable case backlog

By MARK SHERMAN and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is headed into its final few weeks with nearly half of the cases heard this year still undecided, including ones that could reshape the law on everything from guns to abortion to social media. The justices are also still weighing whether former President Donald Trump is immune from criminal prosecution in the election interference case against him, more than a month after hearing arguments.

The court heard 61 cases this term, and 29 remain unresolved, with some decisions expected Thursday and Friday.

Here's a look at some of the major undecided cases:

**Presidential immunity** Donald Trump is arguing that former presidents are immune from prosecution for official acts they took in office and that the indictment he faces on charges of election interference must be dismissed.

The Supreme Court has previously ruled that former presidents can't be sued in civil cases for what they did in office, but it has never weighed in on criminal immunity.

The timing of the decision may be as important as the outcome. Trump's trial in Washington, D.C., may not take place before the November election, even if the court rules he is not immune.

**Jan. 6, 2021** A former Pennsylvania police officer is challenging the validity of obstruction charges brought against hundreds of people who took part in the violent assault on the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. Trump faces the same charge of obstructing an official proceeding.

The issue is whether a law meant to discourage tampering with documents sought in investigations can be used against the Capitol rioters.

**Abortion pill** Abortion opponents are trying to make it harder for pregnant women to obtain medication abortions. They want the Supreme Court to roll back changes made by the FDA that have made it easier to obtain mifepristone, one of the two drugs used in nearly two-thirds of abortions in the United States

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 82 of 84

last year. Those include eliminating the need for in-person visits and allowing the drug to be mailed.

Most Republican-led states have severely restricted or banned abortion since the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in 2022. The high court's decision in this case will affect abortion even in states where it remains legal.

Emergency abortion There's a second abortion case on the docket this year: whether doctors can provide that medical procedure in emergencies in states that banned abortion after the court overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

In a case out of Idaho, the Biden administration says abortions must be allowed in emergencies where a woman's health is at serious risk.

The state argues that its strict abortion ban does allow abortions to save a woman's life, and doesn't need to expand exceptions for health risks.

Guns The justices are weighing whether to uphold a federal law that seeks to protect domestic violence victims by keeping guns away from the people alleged to have abused them. An appeals court struck down a law that prohibits people under domestic violence restraining orders from possessing firearms. That court found that the law violated the 2nd Amendment right to "keep and bear arms" following the Supreme Court's 2022 ruling that expanded gun rights and changed how courts are supposed to evaluate gun restrictions.

Homelessness The most significant Supreme Court case in decades on homelessness centers on whether people can be banned from sleeping outdoors when shelter space is lacking.

A San Francisco-based appeals court decision said that amounts to cruel and unusual punishment.

Leaders from California and across the West say that the ruling makes it harder for them to regulate homeless encampments encroaching on sidewalks and other public places.

Advocates say it would criminalize homelessness just as rising costs have pushed the number of people without a permanent place to live to record levels.

Bump stocks The Trump administration banned bump stocks, a gun accessory that allows rapid fire like a machine gun, after they were used in the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history.

The ban is being challenged by a Texas gun shop owner who says the Justice Department was wrong to reverse course and declare them illegal machine guns after the 2017 Las Vegas massacre.

The Biden administration argues banning them after the shooting that left 60 people dead was the right call.

Chevron The justices could overturn a 40-year-old decision that has been cited thousands of times in federal court cases and used to uphold regulations on the environment, public health, workplace safety and consumer protections. The decision colloquially known as *Chevron* calls on judges to defer to federal regulators when the words of a statute are not crystal clear. The decision has long been targeted by conservative and business interests who say *Chevron* robs judges of their authority and gives too much power to regulators.

Social media Three cases remain unresolved at the intersection of social media and government.

Two cases involve social media laws in Texas and Florida that would limit how Facebook, TikTok, X, YouTube and other social media platforms regulate content posted by their users. While the details vary, both laws aimed to address conservative complaints that the social media companies were liberal-leaning and censored users based on their viewpoints, especially on the political right.

In the third case, Republican-led states are suing the Biden administration over how far the federal government can go to combat controversial social media posts on topics including COVID-19 and election security. A federal appeals court sided with the states in finding that administration officials unconstitutionally coerced the platforms to limit conservative points of view.

Purdue Pharma The Supreme Court controls the fate of a nationwide settlement with OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma that would allocate billions of dollars to combat the opioid epidemic, but also provide a legal shield for members of the Sackler family who own the company. The settlement has been on hold since last summer after the Supreme Court agreed to weigh in.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 83 of 84

Wealth tax A business-backed challenge to a tax on foreign income is being watched closely for what it might say about the fate of a wealth tax, an often discussed but never implemented tax on the wealthiest Americans.

Air pollution Republican-led, energy-producing states and the steel industry want the court to put the Environmental Protection Agency's air pollution-fighting "good neighbor" plan on hold while legal challenges continue. The plan aims to protect downwind states that receive unwanted air pollution from other states.

SEC Another important regulatory case could strip the SEC of a major tool in fighting securities fraud and have far-reaching effects on other regulatory agencies. The court is being asked to rule that people facing civil fraud complaints have the right to a jury trial in federal court.

## Today in History: June 13

### Johnson nominates Marshall to become first Black Supreme Court justice

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, June 13, the 165th day of 2024. There are 201 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 13, 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson nominated Solicitor-General Thurgood Marshall to become the first Black justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

On this date:

In 1865, Nobel Prize-winning poet-playwright William Butler Yeats was born in Dublin, Ireland.

In 1942, a four-man Nazi sabotage team arrived on Long Island, New York, three days before a second four-man team landed in Florida. (All eight men were arrested after two members of the first group defected.) President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Office of Strategic Services and the Office of War Information.

In 1966, the Supreme Court ruled in *Miranda v. Arizona* that criminal suspects had to be informed of their constitutional right to consult with an attorney and to remain silent.

In 1971, *The New York Times* began publishing excerpts of the Pentagon Papers, a secret study of America's involvement in Vietnam from 1945 to 1967 that had been leaked to the paper by military analyst Daniel Ellsberg.

In 1977, James Earl Ray, the convicted assassin of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., was recaptured following his escape three days earlier from a Tennessee prison.

In 1981, a scare occurred during a parade in London when a teenager fired six blank shots at Queen Elizabeth II.

In 1983, the U.S. space probe Pioneer 10, launched in 1972, became the first spacecraft to leave the solar system as it crossed the orbit of Neptune.

In 1996, the 81-day-old Freemen standoff ended as 16 remaining members of the anti-government group surrendered to the FBI and left their Montana ranch.

In 1997, a jury voted unanimously to give Timothy McVeigh the death penalty for his role in the Oklahoma City bombing. The Chicago Bulls captured their fifth NBA championship in seven years with a 90-86 victory over the Utah Jazz in game six.

In 2005, a jury in Santa Maria, California, acquitted Michael Jackson of molesting a 13-year-old cancer survivor at his Neverland ranch.

In 2012, federal prosecutors dropped all charges against former Democratic vice-presidential candidate John Edwards after his corruption trial ended the previous month in a deadlocked jury.

In 2013, the White House said it had conclusive evidence that Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime had used chemical weapons against opposition forces seeking to overthrow the government.

In 2020, Atlanta's police chief resigned, hours after the fatal police shooting of Rayshard Brooks; protests over the shooting grew turbulent, and the Wendy's restaurant at the scene of the shooting was gutted by flames.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Thursday, June 13, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 353 ~ 84 of 84**

In 2022, the committee investigating the Capitol attack was told that Donald Trump's closest campaign advisers, top government officials and even his family were dismantling his false claims of 2020 election fraud ahead of Jan. 6, but the defeated president was becoming "detached from reality" and clinging to outlandish theories to stay in power.

In 2023, Donald Trump became the first former president to face a judge on federal charges as he pleaded not guilty in a Miami courtroom to dozens of felony counts that he hoarded classified documents and refused government demands to give them back.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Malcolm McDowell is 81. Former U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is 80. Singer Dennis Locorriere is 75. Actor Richard Thomas is 73. Actor Jonathan Hogan is 73. Actor Stellan Skarsgard is 73. Comedian Tim Allen is 71. North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper is 67. Actor Ally Sheedy is 62. TV anchor Hannah Storm is 62. Rock musician Paul De Lisle (deh-LYL') (Smash Mouth) is 61. Actor Lisa Vidal is 59. Singer David Gray is 56. R&B singer Denise Pearson (Five Star) is 56. Rock musician Soren Rasted (Aqua) is 55. Actor Jamie Walters is 55. Singer-musician Rivers Cuomo (Weezer) is 54. Country singer Susan Haynes is 52. Actor Steve-O is 50. Country singer Jason Michael Carroll is 46. Actor Ethan Embry is 46. Actor Chris Evans is 43. Actor Sarah Schaub is 41. Singer Raz B is 39. Actor Kat Dennings is 38. Fashion designer and former actor Ashley Olsen is 38. Fashion designer and former actor Mary-Kate Olsen is 38. DJ/producer Gesaffelstein is 37. Actor Aaron Johnson is 34.