

Groton Daily Independent

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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

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Sunday, June 16

U8 Older at Milbank Tourney
United Methodist: Worship at Conde at 8:30 a.m., at Groton at 10:30 a.m., coffee hour at 9:30 a.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion at 9 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's, 9 a.m., and at Zion, 11 a.m.

Monday, June 17

Senior Menu: Lasagna bake, tossed salad with dressing, fruit cocktail, cookie, whole wheat bread.
Legion at Battle of Omaha, Neb.
Cancelled: Junior Teeners at Britton, 5:30 p.m. (2)
U10 B/W hosts Webster, 6 p.m. (2)
U8 R/B at Webster, 6 p.m. (4)
T-Ball G/B scrimmage, 6 p.m.
Ladies Invitational Golf Tourney at Olive Grove, Registration at 9 a.m., shotgun start at 10 a.m.
The Pantry at Community Center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

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1440

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Abortion Pill Ruling

The Supreme Court unanimously rejected a challenge yesterday that sought to restrict access to the abortion drug mifepristone. The ruling prevents further limitations on access to the oral pill, which, when taken as part of a two-drug regimen, accounted for 63% of US abortions last year.

The challenge, which came two years after the court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, was brought by conservative medical groups who questioned the Food and Drug Administration's approval and subsequent rule relaxations for how mifepristone can be prescribed and dispensed. The doctors argued they could be asked to treat complications from medical abortions; however, the justices determined the groups lacked standing as they neither prescribe nor use the drug. The ruling did not address the plaintiff's safety concerns from when the FDA made the drug easier to obtain.

Separately, the Supreme Court will rule on the legality of Idaho's abortion ban in the coming weeks.

G7 Funds Ukraine

Countries from the Group of Seven agreed yesterday to supply a \$50B loan to Ukraine as leaders from the world's wealthiest democracies met for annual talks in Italy. The loan will be serviced via interest accrued from roughly \$300B in seized Russian assets amid its war in Ukraine.

The G7—consisting of the UK, France, Canada, Germany, Japan, Italy, and the US—originated in the 1960s and acts as a consensus-building forum for those nations. As more countries develop economically around the world, the G7 tends to lack the same impact as the larger Group of 20 countries. At the gathering, leaders of the US and Ukraine also signed a 10-year joint-security agreement.

In Russia, jailed Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich was formally indicted on espionage charges yesterday, over a year after he was first arrested. The US has designated Gershkovich as wrongfully detained and is seeking his release. A trial date has not been announced.

South Florida Deluge

A storm system drenched South Florida for a third straight day yesterday, flooding neighborhoods, disrupting flights, and forcing road closures. Seven million people, including those in Fort Lauderdale, Miami, and Naples, remain under flood watches through tonight.

The National Weather Service issued a rare high risk outlook for excessive rainfall for parts of South Florida, which represents the top level of a four-category scale and occurs on 4% of days each year on average. Such an extreme weather event in the US accounts for more than 80% of flood-related damage and over one-third of flood-related deaths.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) declared a state of emergency for five counties as some areas saw up to 25 inches of rainfall since Tuesday. Roughly an entire average month's rainfall for June fell on Fort Lauderdale in 24 hours alone Wednesday.

Separately, the latest El Niño weather pattern, associated with stronger hurricanes in the Pacific (and weaker hurricanes in the Atlantic) as well as drought in the West, is officially over.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

The Florida Panthers take 3-0 lead in the Stanley Cup Final after holding on to defeat the Edmonton Oilers 4-3 in Game 3. The Dallas Mavericks look to avoid being swept by the Boston Celtics tonight (8:30 pm ET, ABC) in Game 4 of the NBA Finals.

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The 77th Tony Awards take place Sunday (8 pm ET, CBS); see predictions for each category. Disney drops lawsuit against Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) after the state and Disney reach land development deal for Disney World.

UEFA European Championship kicks off today from Germany; see preview of all 24 teams.

Science & Technology

Earth's inner core is slowing down in its rotation relative to the planet's surface, scientists confirm; phenomenon began in 2010 after an estimated four decades of moving slightly faster than the surface.

Engineers combine AI learning model with robotic exoskeleton to develop a suit that learns to adapt to a user's movements, helping them save energy while running, climbing stairs, and more.

Soaring birds like eagles and falcons use air sacs in the lungs to add extra power to their flight; study sheds light on the evolution of long-distance flight in animals.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.2%, Dow -0.2%, Nasdaq +0.3%); S&P 500, Nasdaq close at records for fourth consecutive day. US weekly jobless claims rise to 242,000 for week ending June 8; figure is greater than estimates and the highest level since August 2023.

Tesla shareholders vote to reinstate CEO Elon Musk's previous \$56B pay package and move Tesla's incorporation from Delaware to Texas; shareholder vote does not override a Delaware court's January order to rescind the pay package.

Supreme Court sides with Starbucks in labor dispute involving the firing of seven Memphis-based employees amid unionization efforts; ruling restricts National Labor Relations Board's authority to intervene during contested labor practices.

Politics & World Affairs

US Justice Department investigation concludes Phoenix police department routinely violates rights, uses excessive force, and discriminates against Black, Hispanic, and Native American people.

Roughly 1.5 million people journey to the Muslim holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia as the annual Hajj pilgrimage begins today.

Argentina's Senate passes watered-down legislation aimed at overhauling the country's troubled economy as police clash with protestors; legislation heads to lower house of Congress for final approval.

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Groton Transit Fundraiser

Thursday, June 20th, 2024

5:00 pm - 7:00pm at

Groton Community Center

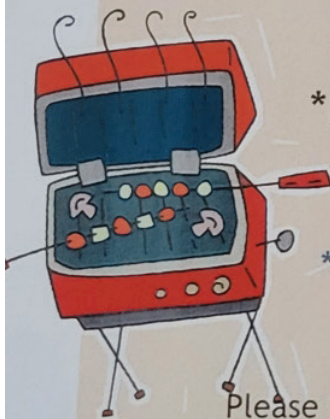
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Big First Inning Leads Groton Jr Teeners 14U Past VFW Post 4690

By GameChanger Media

Groton Jr Teeners 14U defeated Webster VFW Post 4690 13-3 on Thursday thanks in part to 10 runs in the first inning. TC Schuster drew a walk, scoring one run, Jordan Schwan drew a walk, scoring one run, a wild pitch scored two runs, John Bisbee drew a walk, scoring one run, an error scored one run, an error scored three runs, and Ryder Schelle singled, scoring one run.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U extended their early lead with two runs in the top of the second thanks to RBI walks by Ethan Kroll and Shaydon Wood.

Kason Oswald earned the win for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. They allowed one hit and three runs (two earned) over three and two-thirds innings, striking out seven and walking five. Zayden Finch took the loss for VFW Post 4690. The righty went three innings, allowing one run on four hits, striking out three and walking two. Hudson Lesnar led things off on the hill for VFW Post 4690. They gave up three hits and 12 runs (six earned) over one inning, striking out two and walking eight. Sam Crank appeared in relief for Groton Jr Teeners 14U.

Kroll led Groton Jr Teeners 14U with three runs batted in from the number eight spot in the lineup. Schelle went 2-for-2 at the plate to lead Groton Jr Teeners 14U in hits. Groton Jr Teeners 14U had a strong eye at the plate, amassing 10 walks for the game. Wood and Bisbee led the team with two free passes each. Alex Abeln stole two bases.

Dylan Rasmus and Finch were a one-two punch in the lineup, as each drove in one run for VFW Post 4690. Lesnar led VFW Post 4690 with one hit in two at bats. VFW Post 4690 turned one double play in the game.

Jordan Schwan Drives 4 Runners Home In Groton Jr Teeners 14U

Victory Over VFW Post 4690

By GameChanger Media

Jordan Schwan drove in four runs on four hits to lead Groton Jr Teeners 14U past VFW Post 4690 16-4 on Thursday. Schwan hit an inside the park home run in the second scoring three, doubled in the third scoring one, and singled in the fourth scoring one.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U got on the board in the top of the second inning after Sam Crank doubled, scoring two runs, Ethan Kroll doubled, scoring one run, Alex Abeln doubled, scoring one run, Schwan hit an inside the park home run, scoring three runs, and Shaydon Wood drew a walk, scoring one run.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U added to their early lead in the top of the third inning after TC Schuster singled, Schwan doubled, Layne Johnson singled, Braeden Flihs was struck by a pitch, Kolton Antonsen singled, and Wood grounded out, each scoring one run.

Antonsen earned the win for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. The starting pitcher surrendered six hits and three runs (two earned) over three innings, striking out two and walking four. Dylan Rasmus took the loss for VFW Post 4690. They went two innings, surrendering 11 runs (six earned) on 10 hits, striking out none and walking four. Crank appeared in relief for Groton Jr Teeners 14U.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U collected 16 hits in the game. Schuster, Johnson, Abeln, and Kason Oswald each collected multiple hits for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. Groton Jr Teeners 14U had patience at the plate, collecting six walks for the game. Groton Jr Teeners 14U turned one double play in the game. Groton Jr Teeners 14U were sure-handed and didn't commit a single error. Antonsen made the most plays with three.

Silas Simonson, Rasmus, Tucker Acree, Zayden Finch, Karstyn Schlecter, and Chase Gregorson each collected one hit for VFW Post 4690. Simonson and Finch each drove in one run for VFW Post 4690. VFW Post 4690 had patience at the plate, piling up six walks for the game. Rasmus and Hudson Lesnar led the team with two bases on balls each.

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COVID-19

A Mayo Clinic virologist explains FLiRT and why you may need a new COVID-19 vaccination

by Deb Balzer

A new variant of COVID-19, known as FLiRT, is now the most dominant strain in the U.S. This variant, which evolved from the omicron strain, is characterized by changes in its spike protein — the part of the virus that binds to host cells. Dr. Matthew Binnicker, director of the Clinical Virology Laboratory at Mayo Clinic, says that these changes could increase the virus' ability to infect cells and evade the immune system, even in people who have previously been infected or vaccinated.

"This variant can evade the immune response more effectively than prior versions of the virus. If you've been infected, or you've been vaccinated, and you've got some antibodies in your system, those antibodies may not recognize the protein on the surface of the virus as well," says Dr. Binnicker.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), this new variant is now responsible for more than 28% of COVID-19 cases in the U.S. Dr. Binnicker says there is a potential for an increase in cases during the summer months, with a more significant surge expected in the fall and winter.

"I anticipate we'll see an uptick in cases with this more transmissible virus that can evade the immune system. But what I'm really watching are the fall and winter months because that's typically when we see the largest surge in respiratory viral infections," he says.

For those who are vaccinated, antibodies are present to combat the virus. However, the effectiveness of these antibodies can vary with different virus variants.

"With this latest round of variants, this FLiRT variant, the antibodies that you have from past vaccination may not bind and neutralize the virus as well. If you've been infected or vaccinated in the past three to four months, you're probably going to have antibodies that are going to recognize these newer viruses effectively. And it will help you keep from getting really sick and may even help prevent you from coming down with any symptoms," says Dr. Binnicker.

"If you were infected or vaccinated more than six months ago, you may not have as good of protection, and you may come down with a subsequent infection with the typical symptoms of COVID," he adds.

Symptoms of FLiRT

The symptoms of this variant are consistent with other variants and include:

- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Shortness of breath (especially in unvaccinated people or those infected long ago)

Receiving an updated vaccine will help protect you from the newer strain.

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Bench Restoration Project

The Groton Chamber's Bench Restoration Project has been completed! Their bench restoration project was paid for partly by a shirt fundraiser last year as well as Treasurer Katelyn's Give Where You Live Dacotah Bank donation. Pictured here are the benches placed along Main Street. (Courtesy Photos April Abeln)



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The Groton Chamber would like to thank Topper Tastad for his continued dedication to the Groton SD Community. Topper rescued these benches and spent countless hours getting them in tip top shape for Main Street.

We the People

The South Dakota Humanities Council is making available a weekly column -- "We the People" -- that focuses on the U.S. Constitution. It is written by David Adler, who is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality, and civic education.



By David Adler

Image Management Must Be a Priority for the Justices

The defining characteristic of the American experience is the premise of law as a check on governmental power. Challenged throughout our history and subjected to stresses and strains inflicted by indifference, partisanship and political affiliations that prefer the ends-justify-the-means philosophy, the premise remains an ideal, though its fibers are frayed.

The institution that most nearly embodies this ideal is the U.S. Supreme Court, the history of which is the story of how a few men and women, when at their best, have exercised their authority to uphold the rule of law in American life.

In those moments, when the justices deliver rulings that defend our cherished right and liberties and maintain the doctrines of separation of powers and checks and balances—critical to constitutional equilibrium—the Court is exalted by commentators as the conscience of the nation, an institution that has fulfilled the aims and purposes of those who wrote our Constitution.

When the Court extols the virtues of equal protection of the law and due process of law and avoids strident tones free of individual preferences—social, political and otherwise—its behavior is suggestive of Alexander Hamilton's representation of the judiciary as an impersonal vessel through which the Constitution speaks, rather than a forum for individual justices to promote their own political goals and agendas. At that moment, warnings from the pens of some founding era writers who opposed the awesome power of judicial review, such as Robert Yates, writing under the pseudonym, "Brutus," who feared that the power would lead the Justices to "feel themselves independent of Heaven itself," strike us as an exercise in exaggeration.

Management of the Court's image has been left, chiefly, to the Justices themselves. The Justices are their own worst enemies when they fail to withdraw from cases when recusal is plainly required, accept millions of dollars in unreported gifts and luxurious vacations from billionaires who would influence the direction of the Court, overturn precedents protective of fundamental rights that are as sturdy as giant oaks and unwisely reveal their political views in speeches and comments to reporters, accompanied by warnings that liberals are threats to freedom of speech and religion.

Each act, by itself, would be sufficient to persuade the citizenry that Brutus, not Hamilton, had the better view of what the Court might become. If enough Americans embrace the warnings of Brutus, rather than the assurances of Hamilton, then the all-important mystique of the Court as a law court, rather than a political court, will have been pierced and perhaps shredded.

Justice Louis Brandeis, one of the greatest in the Court's history, used to say that what the Court did not do was often more important than what it did do. Thus, the Court has refrained from issuing advisory opinions, avoided comments on pending cases and generally abstained from offering sharp public critiques of previous decisions, all of which would lend credence to Brutus's predictions about the High Tribunal. Regardless of Brutus's characterizations, Americans, informed by insightful judicial studies and commentary on the work of the Court, are not going to mistake the Supreme Court for the Delphic Oracle. At this juncture, the Court must labor to retore public trust.

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There is a role for common sense among the justices. Those who desire the lifestyle of the rich and famous probably should decline a Supreme Court appointment at the "paltry" salary of \$275,000 a year and virtual guarantees of hundreds of thousands of dollars in book royalties, if their thing is travel by private jets and yachts. They should find a different job, one that will support those extravagant tastes. Two centuries ago, attorneys in line for a seat on the Court declined offers of appointment in favor of jobs that were more lucrative. Those were wise choices by wise men who understood that life requires choices.

The Court is under intense scrutiny today, as it should be, but it has always drawn criticism. Horace Greeley, the famous New York antislavery newspaper editor, once wrote that he would just as soon trust the judgment of his dog than that of Chief Justice Roger Taney. Management of the Court's image should be a priority for the justices, if they hope to regain the confidence of the American people.

David Adler is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality and civic education. This column is made possible with the support of the South Dakota Humanities Council, South Dakota NewsMedia Association and this newspaper.

Economic Development Boards Approve State-Wide Financing

PIERRE, S.D. – The Governor’s Office of Economic Development Board of Economic Development approved six loans and two grants while the Economic Development Finance Authority authorized two bond resolutions. These projects reflect a capital investment of over \$121 million and the creation of 148 full-time jobs.

“The Governor’s Office of Economic Development is proud of the role they play in helping these companies grow,” said Governor Kristi Noem. “These companies and communities are choosing to make significant investments in South Dakota.”

Plainview Dairy, LLC near Toronto was authorized for up to \$25 million in Livestock Nutrient Management bonds. When issued, the bonds will be used for solid waste management and disposal at the new dairy.

Wildrose Dairy, LLC in Brandt was authorized for up to \$4.8 million in Livestock Nutrient Management bonds. When issued, the bonds will be used for solid waste management and disposal functions at an expanding dairy farm.

Midstates, Inc. in Aberdeen was approved for an SD Works loan of \$800,000. The loan will be used to purchase new printing equipment.

JMP Design and Catering in Madison was approved for an SD Works loan in the amount of \$549,696. The loan will be used to construct and furnish an event venue.

RF Holdings, LLC of Watertown was approved for an SD Works loan in the amount of \$364,000. The loan will be used to construct a new building and purchase equipment for Active Heating, Inc. as part of the business expansion.

BibiSol, LLC in Sioux Falls was approved for an SD Works loan in the amount of \$57,300. The proceeds will be used for leasehold improvements, furniture and fixtures, and equipment purchases for a new restaurant.

Never Too Busy Construction in Lennox was approved for an SD Works loan of \$46,500. The loan will be used to purchase an existing construction business.

Grant County Development Corporation in Milbank was approved for a REDI loan of \$426,025 to purchase vacant land for an industrial park.

The City of Canton was approved for a Local Infrastructure Improvement Program grant of \$423,000. The grant will be used to extend a street and related infrastructure within the Canton Industrial Park.

The City of Dell Rapids was awarded an Economic Development Partnership Program grant for \$1000. The funding will be used to attend economic development training.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Failure to make domestic violence arrests draws demerits for Bennett County sheriff's deputy

Officer will be required to complete remedial training by 2025

BY: JOHN HULT - JUNE 13, 2024 5:31 PM

The state's police commission has ordered a Bennett County sheriff's deputy to take part in remedial training because of his mishandling of domestic violence cases.

The Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Training Commission made its vote on Deputy Kevin Curtis after a Wednesday hearing in Pierre. The hearing included more than two hours of testimony on his response to two separate domestic violence incidents in late 2017 and early 2018, and one from 2020.

Curtis was found to have engaged in conduct unbecoming of an officer for the first two incidents. For the third, during which the Bennett County sheriff argued that Curtis had followed his instructions and properly handled the situation, the commission ruled there was insufficient evidence to call his conduct unbecoming.

Curtis had already attended remedial domestic violence training after the 2017-18 incidents. One involved a 15-year-old allegedly assaulted by a family member of the child on New Year's Eve of 2017; the other involved an assault Curtis witnessed a little over a month later before giving the assailant a ride away from the scene.

Officers are required to make an arrest in domestic violence cases in South Dakota if the officer is able to determine the primary aggressor in a physical altercation, but Curtis failed to make an arrest in either of the two cases, and failed to interview the victim in one. Victims in such cases are not legally able to decline pressing charges.

Both of the older assaults involved the same perpetrator, a woman who'd eventually plead guilty to domestic simple assault after being charged by a prosecutor. Curtis participated in domestic violence training after those incidents at the behest of an investigator with the police commission.

Complaints came from prosecutor

Bennett County State's Attorney Sarah Harris brought a complaint against Curtis to the commission in 2021. She alleged that in spite of his additional training, he'd once again failed to properly attend to a domestic violence situation.

In that case, the perpetrator was an employee of the Bennett County Sheriff's Department.

Curtis had attempted to resolve the years-old complaint – delayed at one point by the illness of the attorney handling the complaint for the state – through a consent decree in April.

But the commission rejected the terms of that decree, which would have involved a seven-day suspension for Curtis.

On Wednesday, the Bennett County State's Attorney and two detectives with the state Division of Criminal Investigation testified that Curtis should have taken all three of the incidents more seriously.

In the first situation, Curtis did not interview the underage victim without others present. He'd arrived after the victim's young sibling called 911 to report that her sister was having a seizure. Curtis talked to a man on the scene whose blood alcohol level was found to be nearly three times the legal limit, who told him that the girl didn't have a history of seizures.

Harris later heard from the child's grandmother, who said the girl was covered in bruises from an attack.

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In the second situation, Curtis saw the perpetrator strike the victim and give him a bloody lip. Harris charged the perpetrator with assault after fielding a call from that victim.

"He witnessed domestic abuse happen right in front of him and didn't make the mandatory arrest," said Harris.

In the third situation, Curtis responded to an incident in Martin that would ultimately result in a felony aggravated assault charge for a man who'd worked in maintenance for the sheriff's office.

Harris argued that he failed to interview the victim or follow through. Curtis and his boss, Bennett County Sheriff Paul Williams, said Curtis followed his instructions to get the victim away from the scene, and that the investigation was properly handed off to an outside agency.

Harris and Kelly Marnette, the assistant attorney general who prosecuted the case on Wednesday, argued that Curtis had time to interview the victim as she waited for a ride at the sheriff's office, and that he should have.

"Did you believe that Deputy Curtis did everything he should have done?" Marnette asked Williams.

"I'm working on memory, so I really can't say," Williams said.

Sheriff: Deputies needs discretion

Williams said officers and deputies need to be able to use discretion. When asked by Marnette if that applies in domestic violence cases where arrests are meant to be mandatory, he said, "If we arrested everybody in Bennett County that had a fight, the jail would be full."

In his own testimony, Curtis said the victim in the second incident from 2018 didn't want the perpetrator charged, only removed from the home to sober up. The assault he witnessed came as the perpetrator was trying to leave the home, he said.

"It looked to me more like a 'get out of the way and let me get the door open,'" Curtis said.

Curtis said he felt as though he'd handled any shortcomings with his performance on domestic violence calls by attending the additional training.

He learned from his mistakes, he said on Wednesday.

"I will admit that there are things I could've handled better," Curtis said.

In the 2020 incident, Curtis said, he didn't interview the victim because she didn't want to talk to him.

"I can't force someone to talk who doesn't want to," Curtis said.

After about an hour of deliberations, the commission reconvened to make a vote.

Before the group cast its unanimous vote to formally determine that Curtis had gone astray of his law enforcement obligations in the first two incidents, Lincoln County State's Attorney and commission member Tom Wollman said it's important for the people of South Dakota to know how seriously police officers ought to take domestic violence.

"We know that victims of violence, particularly domestic violence, often will be abused for years before reaching out to law enforcement," Wollman said. "How law enforcement responds to those calls is of the utmost importance."

Curtis will be required to complete 12 hours of domestic violence training by 2025 to maintain his law enforcement certification.

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.

Tribal members divided about banning Noem, united in need for better public safety

Crow Creek launches its own security task force to compensate for insufficient federal support

BY: JOHN HULT - JUNE 13, 2024 11:02 AM

Drug cartels weren't top of mind for Crow Creek Tribal Chairman Peter Lengkeek on May 17. That day, as Gov. Kristi Noem held a press conference in Pierre about drug cartels in Indian Country, Lengkeek was thinking of Rikki Rae Voice.

Voice was a 36-year-old tribal member and Air Force veteran who died May 1 in her Box Elder home, three hours from the Crow Creek headquarters in Fort Thompson.

Lengkeek shut down tribal government on the afternoon of May 17 to prepare for the funeral, which came a day after Voice's wake and two before her burial at the Black Hills National Cemetery in Sturgis.

Voice's death is under investigation by Pennington County. So far, authorities have said only that there's no indication of foul play.

Lengkeek isn't sure he believes that, and he doesn't trust the county's conclusions. Too many tribal members have died or gone missing without justice, he said, both on and off the reservation.

"We fight and fight on our reservations for investigators to look into some of these deaths that they rule 'Oh, it's just a drunk Indian,' or 'It was a suicide,'" Lengkeek said.

Drug cartels don't have a physical presence in Crow Creek, he said. But there's no shortage of concern for missing and murdered Indigenous people.

That's what he thinks about when he thinks about underfunded law enforcement in his community.

"If I were a serial killer, I would hang out on a reservation," Lengkeek said. "I would have a heyday because of the lack of resources, because of the lack of genuine involvement and compassion for our people from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which is a government law enforcement agency. That's all we have to rely on."

Crow Creek security task force

Noem's event was live streamed from the state Capitol, about two hours from Fort Thompson. There were comments from Noem, her tribal relations secretary and tribal law enforcement liaison, and state lawmakers, and photos of alleged cartel affiliates. The governor showed a video clip from Pine Ridge, filmed by Chris Hansen, the former host of the reality show "To Catch A Predator." The segment is part of a project called "Merchants of Death" for TruBlu, Hansen's video streaming service.

The funeral in Fort Thompson on the day of that press conference highlights the disconnect between the governor's rhetoric on crime and drug cartels, and what tribal leaders say they need in their own communities. Among community members on the Crow Creek Reservation and its neighboring Lower Brule Reservation, opinions are divided about the tribe's ban of Noem and her suggestions for bolstering law enforcement.

Noem and tribal leaders agree that the federal government has failed to uphold its treaty obligations to provide for public safety on tribal lands.

Noem is pushing for the state's nine tribes – the governments of which have all voted this year to banish her from their lands – to sign agreements to let state officers enforce tribal law.

But Lengkeek doesn't want that. The state Highway Patrol works in Crow Creek for 72 hours a year during the tribe's powwow, he said, but he doesn't trust that outside officers are the answer to the day-to-day issues facing his reservation.

Crow Creek lacks its own police force and instead depends on the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs to police the reservation. Lengkeek declared a public safety emergency and authorized the creation of a security task force last summer after a young man named Garrett Hawk was killed in a shooting at a known drug house. No one has been arrested for the slaying.

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"That was the tribe taking matters into its own hands," Lengkeek said.

The tribe also held a gun buy-back last year, handing out \$500 payments for sawed-off shotguns and assault-style rifles. The tribe collected around 50.

"I'm a staunch supporter of the Second Amendment," Lengkeek said. "I will die for that. But illegally possessing firearms, and the gunplay that happens with the brandishing of weapons, I can't defend that."

Since the tribe doesn't have its own police force, the work of the task force is funded by proceeds from the tribe's cannabis operation – medical for everyone and recreational for members of any Native American tribe – and its 20,000 acres of farmland, where commodities like corn and soybeans are grown.

There may be a point in the future at which the security force morphs into a full-scale tribal police department, similar to departments operated by the Rosebud and Oglala Sioux tribes, but the group hasn't moved in that direction or sought federal support at this point.

As for Mexican drug cartels, task force member Cody Dion said the only time he hears Spanish is from visitors who show up to go fishing at the Missouri River that borders the reservation, and that it would be all but impossible to hide out in Fort Thompson. Outsiders can't escape attention for long enough to operate on the reservation in the ways Noem is alleging, he said.

"I think if she was worried about the cartels, she should focus that effort on where they live at," Dion said. "If they're in South Dakota, they ain't here on the reservation. They're probably in the major cities."

Lower Brule: Cooperation can't start with law enforcement

The Lower Brule Reservation sits just across the Missouri River from the Crow Creek Reservation. Chairman Clyde Estes said there are plenty of issues where the state and tribes ought to work together before discussions of inking a law enforcement agreement can take place.

He wants to see economic development, entrepreneurship and returns on tribal investment.

"I've been requesting economic data studies so we can go to the drawing board and say, 'Well, this is where we are, and how are we missing out on capitalizing on building our economy?'" Estes said. "Right now, the tribe is the biggest employer."

Estes said he'd like to see proof that tribal leaders are "personally benefiting" from drug cartels, as Noem said at a March town hall. At Noem's May 17 press conference, her Tribal Relations Secretary David Flute read a comment received by the governor's office. The anonymous comment said tribal council members are "some of the biggest drug dealers on the reservation."

There have been corruption cases filed against tribal leaders for misuse of tribal funds in recent years, but no tribal council members or tribal presidents have been charged with drug distribution in the state.

In 2016 and 2017, leaders of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe banished tribal members convicted of selling methamphetamine.

"I understand that there's always going to be people who make accusations," Estes said. "And my thing is, if they have that evidence, go to law enforcement with it."

Residents split on ban, united in opposition to state policing

There are plenty of opinions in Lower Brule and Fort Thompson – about Gov. Noem, as well as about tribal council members.

Alvin Grassrope, of Lower Brule, told South Dakota Searchlight that he agrees with Noem's calls for comprehensive audits of federal funding for tribes, which Noem says ought to be directed toward public safety. Grassrope's grandson, Daniel Goodface, doesn't like the governor's rhetoric but doesn't agree with banning her.

The drug problems are real and serious, he said, and Noem should be able to come around to talk about it.

Goodface recently posted a YouTube video titled "the Poorest Place in the Nation: Pine Ridge Reservation" to his Facebook page. The 41-minute video came from content creator Tommy G, who travels the country visiting rough neighborhoods. In it, he tours Pine Ridge, learning about methamphetamine addiction, bootleg alcohol and a host of other social ills through conversations with residents.

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"I was like, 'It's like that on every rez,'" Goodface said. "You know, people might say it's not or hide and bullsh*t, but it's drugs and alcohol. It's meth. It's an epidemic."

The governor's office shared the same video with media outlets recently.

Even so, Goodface doesn't necessarily want to see the state Highway Patrol enforcing tribal law. He'd rather see them catch drug couriers on the state highways leading onto the reservation.

"We're supposed to be sovereign, right?" Goodface said. "In some ways, we do need the state to help, but it would be nice to catch them coming onto the rez, because they have to cross state lines either way to get here. This is not a reservation problem. It's a state problem."

Floyd Hawk Wind, of Lower Brule, doesn't agree with the ban, either. He doesn't like what the governor has said and doesn't see cartel members in Lower Brule, but he'd like Noem to visit and learn.

"Instead of banning the governor, they should invite her here," he said.

Jennifer Wounded Knee, of Fort Thompson, lives next door to the house where Garrett Hawk was killed in 2023. Hawk's slaying sparked the creation of the security task force. Years ago, Wounded Knee was a law enforcement officer with the military police and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

Drug activity was common in her neighborhood for five years before something was done, Wounded Knee said, and she begged the tribe to deal with the issue. She applauded the creation of the security task force, but said it felt like too little, too late after so many years of trouble.

"They broke my window out, they slashed my daughter's tires," Wounded Knee said. "They were throwing needles in my yard, throwing trash in my yard."

Wounded Knee doubts an outsider with cartel ties could hide out in the small town without being noticed, but she agrees with Noem on the need for more attention from law enforcement.

When it comes to the idea that drugs and violence have gotten bad enough that tribes can handle themselves, she said, "the governor may be right."

"Something needs to be done, or somebody needs to not be in leadership that's allowing meth to be sold around here," Wounded Knee said.

She would like Lengkeek to work with the governor.

"He's good, but what he's doing is he's trying to stay out of it, right or wrong," Wounded Knee said. "And that's not right, either."

Terry Middletent, who also lives in Fort Thompson, agrees with the Noem ban.

Middletent has little patience for talk of cartels, drugs and violence on reservations.

"You have that everywhere," Middletent said. "It's not just here."

Middletent sees the governor's approach to the issues as divisive, not helpful.

"For her to make those types of comments," he said, "she's just destroyed that relationship between the two nationalities."

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.

U.S. Supreme Court rejects attempt to limit access to abortion pill

South Dakota among states that supported limitations on mifepristone

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JUNE 13, 2024 12:24 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a much-anticipated decision Thursday that mifepristone, one of two pharmaceuticals used in medication abortion, can remain available under current prescribing guidelines.

The high court unanimously rejected attempts by anti-abortion groups to roll back access to what was in place more than eight years ago, writing that they lacked standing to bring the case.

Those limits would have made it more difficult for patients to get a prescription for mifepristone, which

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the Food and Drug Administration has approved for up to 10 weeks gestation and is used in about 63% of U.S. abortions.

Erin Morrow Hawley, senior counsel at Alliance Defending Freedom, who argued the case in front of the court on behalf of the legal organization, doesn't believe this is the end of efforts to challenge access to mifepristone.

She said on a call shortly after the ruling was released the three states that intervened in a lower court — Idaho, Kansas and Missouri — could still advance their arguments against mifepristone and potentially hold standing, the legal right to bring a case.

"I would expect the litigation to continue with those three states," Hawley said.

Kavanaugh writes opinion

Justice Brett Kavanaugh wrote the opinion in the united ruling from the Supreme Court, with Justice Clarence Thomas writing a concurring opinion.

"Plaintiffs are pro-life, oppose elective abortion, and have sincere legal, moral, ideological, and policy objections to mifepristone being prescribed and used by others," Kavanaugh wrote.

The four anti-abortion medical organizations and four anti-abortion doctors who originally brought the lawsuit against mifepristone have protections in place to guard against being forced to participate in abortions against their moral objections, he noted.

"Not only as a matter of law but also as a matter of fact, the federal conscience laws have protected pro-life doctors ever since FDA approved mifepristone in 2000," Kavanaugh wrote. "The plaintiffs have not identified any instances where a doctor was required, notwithstanding conscience objections, to perform an abortion or to provide other abortion-related treatment that violated the doctor's conscience."

"Nor is there any evidence in the record here of hospitals overriding or failing to accommodate doctors' conscience objections," he added.

Kavanaugh might have also included hints on how the court will rule later this session on a separate abortion access case that addresses the Emergency Medical Treatment & Labor Act, known as EMTALA.

"EMTALA does not require doctors to perform abortions or provide abortion-related medical treatment over their conscience objections because EMTALA does not impose obligations on individual doctors," Kavanaugh wrote.

Thomas agrees but questions who can sue

Thomas wrote a concurring opinion in the case, saying that he agreed with the court's unanimous decision, which he did join, but brought up concerns with how a certain type of standing is used by the Court.

"Applying these precedents, the Court explains that the doctors cannot establish third-party standing to sue for violations of their patients' rights without showing an injury of their own," Thomas wrote.

"But, there is a far simpler reason to reject this theory: Our third-party standing doctrine is mistaken," Thomas added. "As I have previously explained, a plaintiff cannot establish an Article III case or controversy by asserting another person's rights."

Reaction pours in

Politicians, anti-abortion groups and reproductive rights organizations all reacted to the ruling within hours of its release, often pointing to November's elections as a potential next step.

President Joe Biden released a written statement saying the "decision does not change the fact that the fight for reproductive freedom continues."

"It does not change the fact that the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade two years ago, and women lost a fundamental freedom," Biden added. "It does not change the fact that the right for a woman to get the treatment she needs is imperiled if not impossible in many states."

Former President Donald Trump, the Republican Party's presumptive nominee, was in meetings most of Thursday with U.S. House Republicans and then separately with Republican U.S. Senators.

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Neither Trump nor his campaign released a statement by early Thursday afternoon addressing the Supreme Court's ruling.

Louisiana Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy, ranking member on the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, wrote in a statement that the justices didn't actually address the merits of the case.

"The Court did not weigh in on the merits of the case, but the fact remains this is a high risk drug that ends the life of an unborn child," Cassidy wrote. "I urge FDA to follow the law and reinstate important safeguards."

President of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Stella Dantas related a statement saying the ruling "provides us with long-awaited relief."

"We now know that patients and clinicians across the country will continue to have access to mifepristone for medication abortion and miscarriage management," Dantas wrote. "Decades of clinical research have proven mifepristone to be safe and effective, and its strong track record of millions of patient uses confirms that data."

Hawley from Alliance Defending Freedom wrote in a written statement the organization was "disappointed that the Supreme Court did not reach the merits of the FDA's lawless removal of commonsense safety standards for abortion drugs."

"While we're disappointed with the court's decision, we will continue to advocate for women and work to restore commonsense safeguards for abortion drugs—like an initial office visit to screen for ectopic pregnancies," Hawley wrote. "And we are grateful that three states stand ready to hold the FDA accountable for jeopardizing the health and safety of women and girls across this country."

Nancy Northup, president and CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights, wrote in a statement she had "both relief and anger about this decision."

"Thank goodness the Supreme Court unanimously rejected this unwarranted attempt to curtail access to medication abortion, but the fact remains that this meritless case should never have gotten this far," Northup wrote.

"The FDA's rulings on medication abortion have been based on irrefutable science," Northup wrote. "Unfortunately, the attacks on abortion pills will not stop here — the anti-abortion movement sees how critical abortion pills are in this post-Roe world, and they are hell bent on cutting off access."

Scientific evidence argued

The Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the case in March, during which Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar argued the FDA's guidelines for prescribing mifepristone were based on reputable scientific evidence and years of real-world use.

"Only an exceptionally small number of women suffer the kinds of serious complications that could trigger any need for emergency treatment," Prelogar said. "It's speculative that any of those women would seek care from the two specific doctors who asserted conscience injuries. And even if that happened, federal conscience protections would guard against the injury the doctors face."

Hawley of ADF told the court that conscience protections in federal law didn't do enough to protect anti-abortion doctors from having to possibly treat patients experiencing complications from medication abortion.

"These are emergency situations," Hawley said. "Respondent doctors don't necessarily know until they scrub into that operating room whether this may or may not be abortion drug harm — it could be a miscarriage, it could be an ectopic pregnancy, or it could be an elective abortion."

The case reached the Supreme Court within two years of ADF originally filing the lawsuit in the District Court for the Northern District of Texas, where ADF wrote the FDA "exceeded its regulatory authority" when it originally approved mifepristone in 2000.

ADF filed the case on behalf of Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine, the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American College of Pediatricians and Christian Medical & Dental Associations, as well as four doctors from California, Indiana, Michigan and Texas.

Kacsmaryk ruling started journey to high court

Judge Matthew Joseph Kacsmaryk essentially agreed with the anti-abortion groups, in a ruling in April 2023, where he wrote he did "not second-guess FDA's decision-making lightly."

"But here, FDA acquiesced on its legitimate safety concerns — in violation of its statutory duty — based on plainly unsound reasoning and studies that did not support its conclusions," Kacsmaryk wrote.

The U.S. Supreme Court issued a stay at the request of the Justice Department, which put the district court's ruling on hold until the appeal process could work itself out.

The Justice Department also appealed the district court's ruling to the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals in Louisiana, where a three-judge panel heard the case in May 2023.

The panel — composed of Jennifer Walker Elrod, who was appointed by former President George W. Bush, as well as James C. Ho and Cory T. Wilson, who were both appointed by former President Donald Trump — issued its ruling in August 2023.

The appeals court disagreed with the district court's ruling that mifepristone's original approval should be overturned, though it said that the FDA erred in making changes to prescribing guidelines in 2016 and 2021.

"It failed to consider the cumulative effect of removing several important safeguards at the same time. It failed to consider whether those 'major' and 'interrelated' changes might alter the risk profile, such that the agency should continue to mandate reporting of non-fatal adverse events," the appeals judges wrote. "And it failed to gather evidence that affirmatively showed that mifepristone could be used safely without being prescribed and dispensed in person."

That ruling didn't take effect under the Supreme Court's earlier stay.

The Department of Justice wrote to the high court weeks later in September, urging the justices to take up an appeal of the 5th Circuit's decision.

"The loss of access to mifepristone would be damaging for women and healthcare providers around the Nation," the DOJ wrote in the 42-page document. "For many patients, mifepristone is the best method to lawfully terminate their early pregnancies. They may choose mifepristone over surgical abortion because of medical necessity, a desire for privacy, or past trauma."

Briefs filed with court

Dozens of abortion rights organizations and lawmakers filed so-called amicus curiae or friend of the court briefs to the Supreme Court calling on the justices to keep access to mifepristone in line with the FDA guidelines.

A group of more than 16 medical organizations, including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Medical Association, wrote that "restricting access to mifepristone will not only jeopardize health, but worsen racial and economic inequities and deprive women of the choices that are at the very core of individual autonomy and wellbeing."

Anti-abortion groups and lawmakers opposed to mifepristone wrote numerous briefs as well.

Attorneys general from Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, West Virginia and Wyoming sent in a 28-page brief.

They wrote that the availability of mifepristone undermined states' rights, since some of their states had sought to restrict abortion below the 10 weeks approved for mifepristone use or had sought to bar access to medication abortion.

"The FDA's actions undermine these laws, undercut States' efforts to enforce them, and thus erode the federalism the Constitution deems vital," the attorneys general wrote. "Given these harms to federalism, this Court should view the FDA's actions with skepticism."

During oral arguments in March, several Supreme Court justices brought up conscience protections that insulate health care workers from having to assist with or perform procedures they have a religious objection to, like abortion.

Associate Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson said she was “worried that there is a significant mismatch in this case between the claimed injury and the remedy that’s being sought.”

“The obvious, common-sense remedy would be to provide them with an exemption that they don’t have to participate in this procedure,” Jackson said.

Associate Justice Neil Gorsuch said the case seemed “like a prime example of turning what could be a small lawsuit into a nationwide legislative assembly on an FDA rule, or any other federal government action.”

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.

State abortion bans forcing interstate travel, U.S. Senate panel hears

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JUNE 13, 2024 8:04 AM

WASHINGTON — When Lauren Miller flew from her home state of Texas to Colorado two years ago she felt a moment of relief when the plane took off — not because she had been delayed for hours or because she needed a vacation, but because she was about to meet with doctors who would be able to treat her complicated pregnancy with twins.

Miller, whose family has been in the Lone Star State for eight generations, testified Wednesday before a U.S. Senate panel about the struggles she faced after learning in 2022 one of the twins’ brains wasn’t developing correctly and was about half fluid.

“One of our twin sons was going to die. It was just a matter of how soon,” Miller testified. “And every day that he continued to grow, he put his twin and myself at greater and greater risk.”

The fear was complicated by Texas’ strict restrictions on abortion, which forced Miller to seek out treatment options without her doctors’ assistance.

Miller testified that, thankfully, she had a longtime friend she could trust who was an OB-GYN, who understood the landscape of abortion laws and knew doctors who could help address her diagnosis.

“She fortunately knew an OB-GYN in Colorado, in a safe state,” Miller testified. “And I’ll never forget getting on the phone with him and his first words were, ‘My feet are on the ground in Colorado, and I can answer anything you ask.’”

Miller said the best option for her and her family was to have a single fetal reduction, but that was technically an abortion and she couldn’t get it in Texas.

While discussing how to travel, she and her husband debated leaving their cell phones at home and only using cash out of fear of being tracked or facing prosecution for traveling for the procedure. But they ultimately took a flight instead of driving due to how sick she was at the time.

“We didn’t tell anybody what had happened,” Miller said Wednesday. “We didn’t tell anybody what we had done because we were so scared.”

Bill on interstate travel

The hearing on interstate travel was held by the Senate Judiciary Committee’s subcommittee on Federal Courts, Oversight, Agency Action, and Federal Rights.

Rhode Island Democratic Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, the panel’s chairman, said Congress should pass legislation from Nevada Democratic Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto that would reaffirm that people have a right to travel between states for reproductive health care.

Cortez Masto testified before the committee on Wednesday that her home state has seen a drastic increase in patients traveling for abortion care during the last two years and that the bill would protect those people and their doctors.

“Our legislation reaffirms that women have a fundamental right to interstate travel and makes it crystal

clear states cannot prosecute women or anyone who helps them for going to another state to get the critical reproductive care they need," Cortez Masto said. "The Freedom to Travel for Healthcare Act would also protect healthcare providers in pro-choice states like Nevada, who help these women traveling from out of state."

The right to travel is already fundamental throughout the United States, but several GOP states have begun looking for ways to block their residents from traveling for abortions.

Right to travel

Jocelyn Frye, president of the National Partnership for Women and Families in Washington, D.C., testified during the hearing that attempting to bar travel is "highly problematic, inconsistent with long-standing constitutional protections and Supreme Court precedent, and would bring even more disruption to our healthcare system."

Frye told senators that the right to travel between the states "is one of the bedrock" foundations of the United States that was included in the Articles of Confederation, which were approved before the Constitution, though the right is also found in that document.

"The efforts to really impede the right to travel, really go to the heart of our Constitution and our democracy," Frye said. "And, you know, even in a world where people disagree on a lot of things, our ability to go from state to state of our own accord is a fundamental principle."

Frye also referenced Supreme Court Associate Justice Brett Kavanaugh's concurring opinion in the case that overturned the constitutional right to an abortion, where he affirmed that people seeking abortions have a right to travel between states.

Kavanaugh wrote: "For example, may a State bar a resident of that State from traveling to another State to obtain an abortion? In my view, the answer is no based on the constitutional right to interstate travel."

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.

Cultural healing camps, equine therapy: Federal diversion grants for kids awarded across SD

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JUNE 13, 2024 7:51 AM

The state Department of Corrections will award over \$800,000 in funds to 17 juvenile service programs across the state this year.

The money will be used to support expanded diversion programs for young offenders, as well as cultural healing camps, equine therapy programs and court resource homes.

The awards were approved by the Council of Juvenile Services at a meeting this week. The group oversees the state's role in the federal Formula Grants Program, meant to help states support delinquency prevention and make juvenile justice system improvement.

"There is some great programming going on around the state," said council chairwoman Elisabeth O'Toole after the award amounts were decided. "... We're putting a lot of money into this state, and that is wonderful."

The 17 awards approved include:

\$73,470 for the Hughes County State's Attorney to dedicate staff time to diversion coordination, including data and success tracking for diversion programs.

\$16,000 for the Hughes County State's Attorney to focus diversion efforts on Native American youth by developing cultural programs in the community.

\$30,000 for Crow Creek Sioux Tribal Courts to fund a Juvenile Healing to Wellness Program for juveniles.

\$75,000 for the Boys & Girls Club of Vermillion to expand diversion programs alongside the Teen Court and Teen Club program by creating a youth diversion director position.

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\$94,061 for Lutheran Social Services to support its "Strengthening Families" early intervention program, which teaches parents, teenagers and children skills in communication, discipline, and positive interactions.

\$30,000 for the Brown County State's Attorney to expand alternatives to detention programming by recruiting a family as the county's "court resource home" to care for and shelter some juveniles.

\$29,405 for the Brown County State's Attorney to support an inter-tribal cultural community center called the Wotakuye Oyate to provide restorative healing, revive cultural practices and reduce racial disparities.

\$21,860 for the Boys and Girls Club of Watertown for a Codington County court resource home. A local family was licensed in 2023 to remain on-call for youth who need to be held but don't need secure detention. The family will act as liaison between the juvenile, courts, school and other community partners.

\$24,956 for the Boys and Girls Club of Watertown to reduce the disparate representation of Native American youth involved in the juvenile justice system. The club plans to place some Native American youth in a healing camp, rather than in juvenile detention.

\$104,566 for the Oglala Lakota Division of Behavioral Health to employ juvenile probation officers, since the tribe does not employ any officers, provide shelter care and preventative programming and connect youth to cultural resources. The tribe plans to expand diversion options for youth living off-reservation through its partnership with Bennett County.

\$25,564 for the Yankton County State's Attorney for a court resource home as an alternative to detention. The county is seeking a court resource home host family.

\$120,000 for the Northern Hills Diversion, which serves as Teen Court for Lawrence, Meade and Butte counties, to expand diversion services, including piloting a risk assessment tool for alternatives to detention.

\$90,856 for Lincoln County to improve existing diversion services and assess needs in the community.

\$29,500 for the Davison County State's Attorney to support court resource homes as an alternative to detention..

\$31,987 for the Davison County State's Attorney for equine therapy at the Reclamation Ranch, and for a partnership with a group called I.AM.LEGACY to work with and guide Indigenous youth.

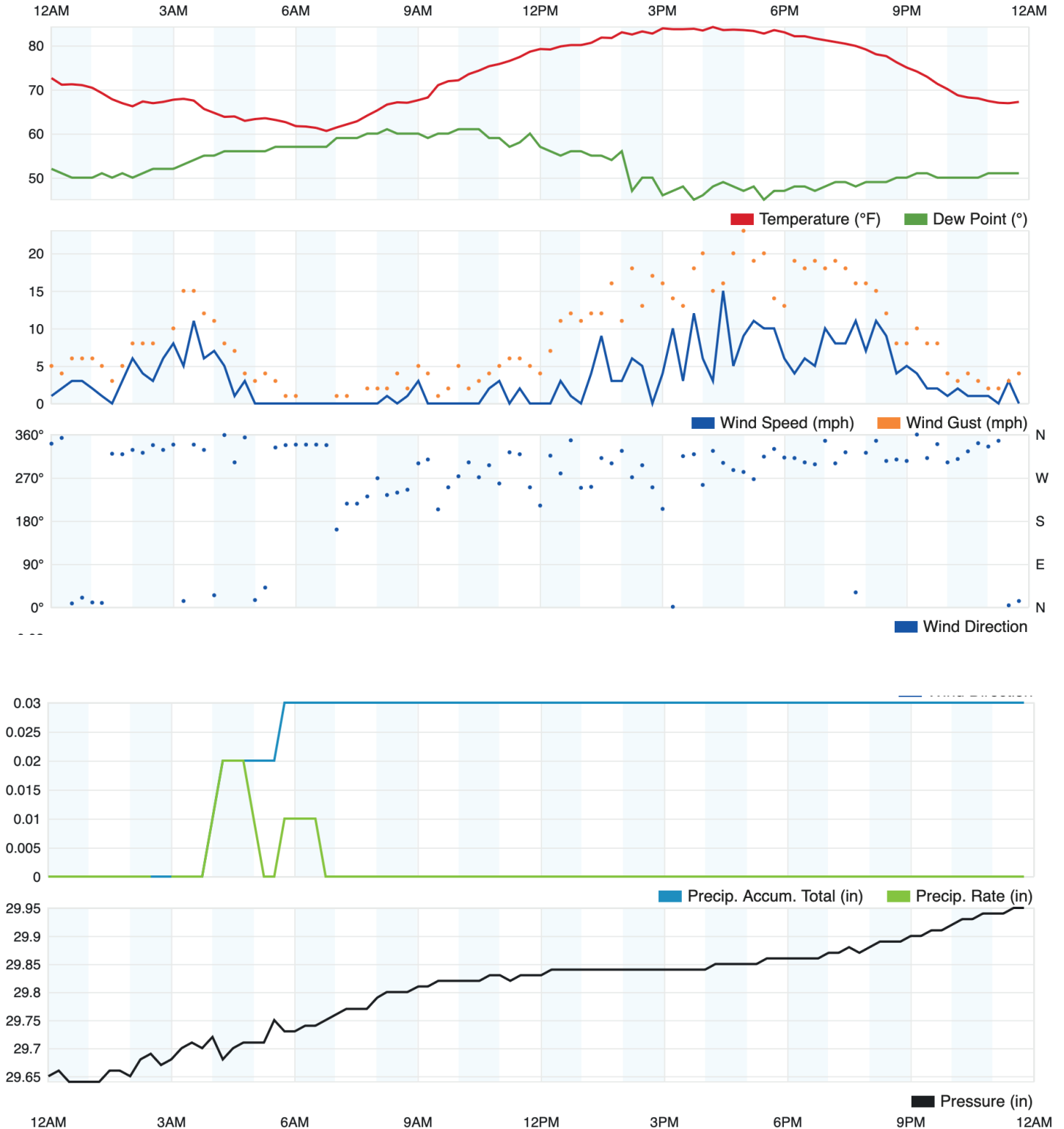
Less than \$20,000 for the Pennington County State's Attorney to fund and expand its community court, which includes Lakota-centered cultural programs, ceremonies and case management. Council members did not say how much the award would be worth, only that it would cover juvenile-related costs.

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today

Tonight

Saturday

Saturday Night

Sunday



High: 85 °F

Sunny



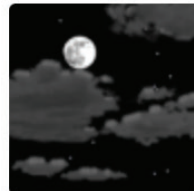
Low: 62 °F

Chance
T-storms



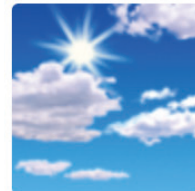
High: 81 °F

Chance
Showers and
Breezy



Low: 63 °F

Partly Cloudy



High: 86 °F

Mostly Sunny

Through the Weekend

Friday



Highs: 79-87°F
Lows: 60-64°F

25-50% chance
of PM showers
and t-storms

Saturday



Highs: 72-90°F
Lows: 59-67°F

30-50% chance
of showers and
t-storms (mainly
east of MO river)

Sunday



Highs: 79-87°F
Lows: 50-64°F

Mainly dry,
shower chances
return after
sunset

Temperatures through the weekend will be around to a little above normal with highs in the 70s to 80s, maybe reaching 90 west river on Saturday. Friday and Saturday also have a chance for some showers and thunderstorms, although no storms are expected to be severe.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 84 °F at 3:36 PM

Low Temp: 61 °F at 6:46 AM

Wind: 24 mph at 5:32 PM

Precip: : 0.03

Day length: 15 hours, 42 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 99 in 1933

Record Low: 34 in 1969

Average High: 80

Average Low: 55

Average Precip in June.: 1.65

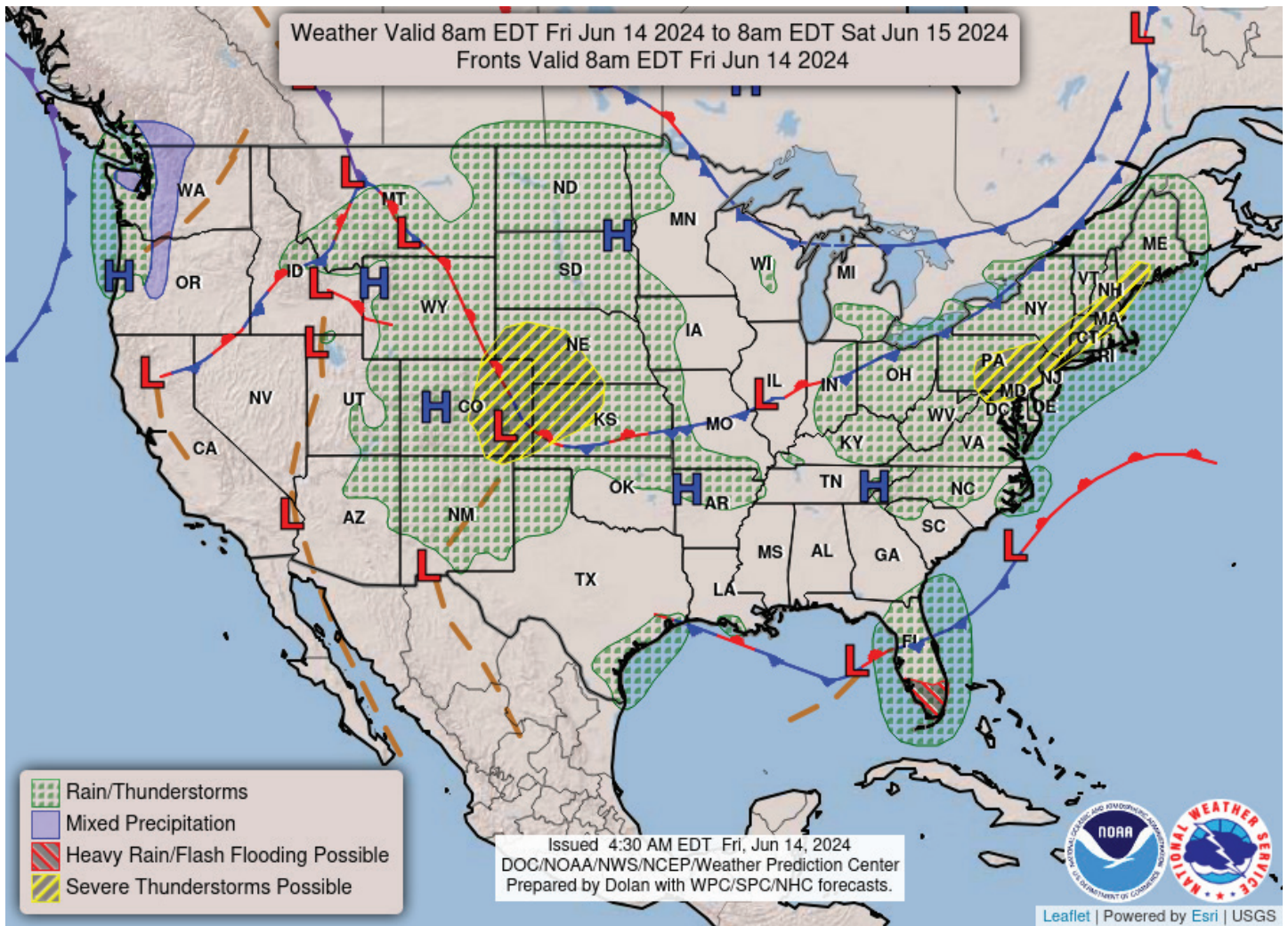
Precip to date in June: 0.50

Average Precip to date: 8.90

Precip Year to Date: 7.57

Sunset Tonight: 9:24:18 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:41:25 am



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Today in Weather History

June 14, 1970: An estimated F3 tornado moved northeast from just southeast of Mound City. Barns and sheds were said to have been blown away on three farms.

June 14, 1985: A thunderstorm produced golf ball size hail in the Castlewood area causing considerable damage to grain, corn, soybeans, and gardens. Some areas just south of Castlewood had hail piled up to six inches deep. Leaves were stripped from several trees. Wind gusts to 60 mph accompanied the hail.

Another thunderstorm produced high winds and damaging hail in Grant and Roberts Counties. North of Milbank along both sides of Highway 15, crops incurred considerable damage. An area 17 miles northeast of Sisseton into Browns Valley, to Mud Lake, saw crop damage from golf ball size hail.

June 14, 2009: An upper-level disturbance combined with a warm front and very unstable air brought severe thunderstorms to parts of central and north-central South Dakota. Hail up to the size of golf balls, flash flooding, along with several tornadoes occurred with these storms. Heavy rain caused flash flooding on the Moreau River with the bridge on Route 14 being overtopped. The bridge had to be closed west of Green Grass. A basement was also flooded three miles east of Green Grass along with several roads in the area in Dewey Country. A tornado touched down west of Hayes in Stanley County and traveled almost a mile before lifting. No damage occurred. A second tornado touched down east of Hayes with no damage occurring.

1903: Major flash flooding along Willow Creek destroyed a significant portion of Heppner, Oregon on this day. With a death toll of 247 people, it remains the deadliest natural disaster in Oregon.

1961 - The temperature in Downtown San Francisco, CA, soared to 106 degrees to establish an all-time record for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thirty-two cities in the central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. The high of 97 degrees at Flint, MI, tied their record for June, and the high of 101 at Milwaukee WI marked their first 100 degree reading in 32 years. Thunderstorms brought much needed rains to South Texas, drenching McAllen with 3.2 inches in one hour. A thunderstorm soaked the town of Uncertain with 2.3 inches of rain in one hour. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thirty cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced severe weather from the Central Gulf States to the Middle Atlantic Coast Region during the day and into the night. There were 62 reports of large hail and damaging winds. Thunderstorm winds caused 28 million dollars damage in Montgomery County MD. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

"I DO CARE"

George went to confession on a regular basis. He was more faithful than most. But whenever he went, his attitude expressed no feelings of remorse, and his behavior showed no signs of repentance.

His priest was concerned that there was no sorrow for his sins or shame for his shortcomings. It hurt the priest because he loved George deeply. He had known him since his childhood.

One day in his frustration he said, "George, please go into the cathedral. Near the altar is a statue of Christ on the cross. Get down on your knees, look into the face of our Lord, raise your fist and say, 'Jesus, you did all this for me but I don't really care! It's just not that important to me.' Will you do that for me?"

Reluctantly he agreed and went into the cathedral. He slowly walked to the cross, dropped to his knees, looked up into the face of Jesus and began to repeat the words of the priest: "Jesus, you did all this for me...Jesus you did all this for me...Jesus you did all this for me." Suddenly he began to sob loudly and shouted, "Jesus forgive me, please forgive me for my sins. Now that I see You, I really do care."

Once we finally see and understand what Jesus did for us on the cross of Calvary our lives will change.

Prayer: Lord, may we come to that place in our lives where we will in some small way realize the depth of Your suffering, the price of our salvation and of the debt we owe You by the care we show others. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: My old self has been crucified with Christ.[a] It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20



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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.11.24

1 5 7 22 24 8

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$47,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 12 Mins 31 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: 1 Days 16 Hrs 27 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.13.24

1 12 18 23 38 1

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 42 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.12.24

5 6 10 17 21

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 42 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.12.24

12 13 59 68 69 13

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 11 Mins 31 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: 1 Days 17 Hrs 11 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Reported birth of rare white buffalo calf in Yellowstone park fulfills Lakota prophecy

By AMY BETH HANSON Associated Press

HELENA, Mont. (AP) — The reported birth of a rare white buffalo in Yellowstone National Park fulfills a Lakota prophecy that portends better times, according to members of the American Indian tribe who cautioned that it's also a signal that more must be done to protect the earth and its animals.

"The birth of this calf is both a blessing and warning. We must do more," said Chief Arvol Looking Horse, the spiritual leader of the Lakota, Dakota and the Nakota Oyate in South Dakota, and the 19th keeper of the sacred White Buffalo Calf Woman Pipe and Bundle.

The birth of the sacred calf comes as after a severe winter in 2023 drove thousands of Yellowstone buffalo, also known as bison, to lower elevations. More than 1,500 were killed, sent to slaughter or transferred to tribes seeking to reclaim stewardship over an animal their ancestors lived alongside for millennia.

Erin Braaten of Kalispell took several photos of the calf shortly after it was born on June 4 in the Lamar Valley in the northeastern corner of the park.

Her family was visiting the park when she spotted "something really white" among a herd of bison across the Lamar River.

Traffic ended up stopping while bison crossed the road, so Braaten stuck her camera out the window to take a closer look with her telephoto lens.

"I look and it's this white bison calf. And I was just totally, totally floored," she said.

After the bison cleared the roadway, the Braatens turned their vehicle around and found a spot to park. They watched the calf and its mother for 30 to 45 minutes.

"And then she kind of led it through the willows there," Braaten said. Although Braaten came back each of the next two days, she didn't see the white calf again.

For the Lakota, the birth of a white buffalo calf with a black nose, eyes and hooves is akin to the second coming of Jesus Christ, Looking Horse said.

Lakota legend says about 2,000 years ago — when nothing was good, food was running out and bison were disappearing — White Buffalo Calf Woman appeared, presented a bowl pipe and a bundle to a tribal member, taught them how to pray and said that the pipe could be used to bring buffalo to the area for food. As she left, she turned into a white buffalo calf.

"And some day when the times are hard again," Looking Horse said in relating the legend, "I shall return and stand upon the earth as a white buffalo calf, black nose, black eyes, black hooves."

A similar white buffalo calf was born in Wisconsin in 1994 and was named Miracle, he said.

Troy Heinert, the executive director of the South Dakota-based InterTribal Buffalo Council, said the calf in Braaten's photos looks like a true white buffalo because it has a black nose, black hooves and dark eyes.

"From the pictures I've seen, that calf seems to have those traits," said Heinert, who is Lakota. An albino buffalo would have pink eyes.

A naming ceremony has been held for the Yellowstone calf, Looking Horse said, though he declined to reveal the name. A ceremony celebrating the calf's birth is set for June 26 at the Buffalo Field Campaign headquarters in West Yellowstone.

Other tribes also revere white buffalo.

"Many tribes have their own story of why the white buffalo is so important," Heinert said. "All stories go back to them being very sacred."

Heinert and several members of the Buffalo Field Campaign say they've never heard of a white buffalo being born in Yellowstone, which has wild herds. Park officials had not seen the buffalo yet and could not confirm its birth in the park, and they have no record of a white buffalo being born in the park previously.

Jim Matheson, executive director of the National Bison Association, could not quantify how rare the calf is.

"To my knowledge, no one's ever tracked the occurrence of white buffalo being born throughout history. So I'm not sure how we can make a determination how often it occurs."

Besides herds of the animals on public lands or overseen by conservation groups, about 80 tribes across the U.S. have more than 20,000 bison, a figure that's been growing in recent years.

In Yellowstone and the surrounding area, the killing or removal of large numbers of bison happens almost every winter, under an agreement between federal and Montana agencies that has limited the size of the park's herds to about 5,000 animals. Yellowstone officials last week proposed a slightly larger population of up to 6,000 bison, with a final decision expected next month.

But ranchers in Montana have long opposed increasing the Yellowstone herds or transferring the animals to tribes. Republican Gov. Greg Gianforte has said he would not support any management plan with a population target greater than 3,000 Yellowstone bison.

Heinert sees the calf's birth as a reminder "that we need to live in a good way and treat others with respect."

"I hope that calf is safe and gonna live its best life in Yellowstone National Park, exactly where it was designed to be," Heinert said.

The Latest | Group of Seven summit turns to migration after promising tens of billions to Ukraine

BORGO EGNAZIA, Italy (AP) — A summit meeting of the Group of Seven leading industrialized nations is expected to focus on migration on its second day Friday, seeking ways to combat trafficking and increase investment in countries from where migrants start out on often life-threatening journeys.

Migration is a priority for summit host Italy and its right-wing Premier Giorgia Meloni, who's seeking to increase investment and funding for African nations as a means of reducing migratory pressure on Europe.

The gathering in a luxury resort in Italy's southern Puglia region is also focusing on global conflicts and the spread of artificial intelligence. Perennial issues such as climate change and China also will be discussed. As the summit opened on Thursday, attendees promised tens of billions of dollars in aid for Ukraine.

But some divisions also appeared to emerge over the wording of the summit's final declaration, with disagreement reported over the inclusion of a reference to abortion.

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:

- Italian Premier Meloni opens G7 summit with agreement to back a \$50 billion loan to Ukraine
- 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
- Pope Francis, the first pontiff to address a G7 summit, will raise the alarm over AI

Here's the latest:

Putin denounces the freezing of Russian assets as theft, vows retaliation
Russian President Vladimir Putin has denounced the freezing of Russian assets by the West as "theft" and vowed that it "will not go unpunished."

Putin's remarks at the Russian Foreign Ministry Friday came on the heels of a deal by the Group of Seven industrialized nations for a \$50 billion loan package for Ukraine using frozen Russian assets.

Putin accused Western countries of "now thinking about some kind of legal basis in order to completely appropriate" frozen assets and foreign exchange reserves. The Russian president said "despite all the scheming, theft will remain theft, and it will not go unpunished."

He added that the move made it "obvious to all countries and companies, sovereign funds that their assets and reserves are far from safe" in the West.

The G7 agreed on Thursday to lock up sanctioned Russian assets until Moscow pays reparations for invading Ukraine. That paves the way for the announcement of the loan agreement that will leverage interest and income from the more than \$260 billion in frozen Russian assets, largely held in Europe to

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secure the \$50 billion sum.

A U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity to preview the agreement, said the first disbursements will be made this year.

EU official confirms abortion won't be mentioned in final G7 statement
BARI, Italy — A senior EU official has confirmed that the word "abortion" will not be in the final communique of the Group of Seven leaders.

It was removed after host Italy lobbied to remove it. Abortion, which has been legal in Italy since 1978, is new on the political agenda of far-right Premier Giorgia Meloni's government.

The final communique does contain reference to promoting sexual and reproductive health rights. The EU official says: "It was not possible to reach agreement on these things in the room."

The text does make reference to the final communique of the last G7 summit in Hiroshima, Japan, which included a lengthy section on abortion, gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights, but doesn't repeat it.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said "it's true, the text is not reflecting what was agreed in Hiroshima."

Biden to meet with Italian premier, Pope Francis before returning to U.S.
BORGO EGNAZIA, Italy — President Joe Biden will meet with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Pope Francis on Friday before heading back to the U.S. later in the day for a Hollywood fundraiser for his presidential campaign. He will skip Saturday's summit events.

On Thursday, Biden attended four working sessions and a discussion on his investment initiative and he watched a skydiving demonstration along with the other leaders.

He also met with Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy where the two signed a security agreement and held a press conference.

Biden did not attend a G7 leaders' dinner on Thursday evening. White House aides say that he tries to meet with as many leaders and attend as many events as possible, but it doesn't always work out and said the U.S. leader's evening capped with the Ukraine agreement.

Switzerland is also hosting a Ukrainian peace summit this weekend, but Biden is not attending. Vice President Kamala Harris will go in his place.

Biden and Zelenskyy sign security agreement at G7 summit
BORGO EGNAZIA, Italy — U.S. President Joe Biden and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a security agreement on Thursday during the Group of Seven summit, sending what they described as a message of unified opposition to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"He cannot wait us out," Biden said. "He cannot divide us."

Zelenskyy said the agreement demonstrated the "credibility of American support for our Ukrainian independence."

Ukraine has been eager for fresh assistance to hold the line against Russia, which has recently made gains on the battlefield during a bloody war that's in its third year.

Leaders of Ukraine and Japan sign 10-year agreement on security, defense, humanitarian aid
BARI, Italy — The leaders of Ukraine and Japan have signed a 10-year agreement under which Japan will provide assistance in the fields of security, defense, humanitarian aid, reconstruction and technical and financial support.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio signed the accord on the sidelines of the Group of Seven summit in southern Italy on Thursday.

Zelenskyy said Japan would provide \$4.5 billion for Ukraine this year. A text of the deal released by the Japanese Embassy in Italy said Japan has committed and provided more than \$12 billion in financial, humanitarian and other assistance since March 2022.

Under the agreement, Japan will support Ukraine with the provision of non-lethal equipment and goods, cooperate in the field of intelligence and provide support in reconstruction and recovery, as well as providing assistance in the medical and health fields, among others.

"For Japan, this type of agreement and this level of support is a breakthrough," Zelenskyy wrote on the social media platform X. "We see this and thank Japan for its unwavering solidarity with our country and

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people.”

Official says US, Europe agree details to clear way for Ukraine loan package
BORGIO EGNAZIA, Italy — The United States and European countries have agreed to lock up sanctioned Russian assets until Moscow pays reparations for invading Ukraine, a senior U.S. official said Thursday.

The consensus clears the way for leaders to announce a \$50 billion loan package for Ukraine during the Group of Seven summit that began Thursday in Italy.

The highly anticipated agreement will leverage interest and income from the more than \$260 billion in frozen Russian assets, largely held in Europe, to secure a \$50 billion loan from the U.S. along with additional loans from other partners.

The first disbursements will be made this year, the official said, adding that it will take time for Ukraine to use all the money.

The U.S. official spoke on the condition of anonymity to preview the agreement, which will be included in the G7 leaders’ statement on Friday.

President Joe Biden will meet on Thursday with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to discuss a bilateral security agreement between the U.S. and Ukraine.

— By Colleen Long, Darlene Superville and Zeke Miller

Britain announces new sanctions aimed at degrading Russia’s ability to wage war in Ukraine
LONDON — Britain has announced new sanctions designed to degrade Russia’s ability to wage war in Ukraine, targeting entities based in China, Israel, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey, as well as the Russian energy industry.

The sanctions announced at the start of Thursday’s G7 summit apply to 50 companies and individuals involved in supplying munitions, machine tools, microelectronics, and logistics to the Russian military, together with ships transporting military goods from North Korea to Russia.

Britain also said it was targeting the “shadow fleet” of ships used to circumvent G7 sanctions on the Russia oil and natural gas industry. The U.K. Foreign Office said this is particularly important because taxes on oil production accounted for 31% of the Russian government’s revenue last year.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said in a statement that the U.K. “will always stand shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine in its fight for freedom.”

Sunak added that Russian President Vladimir Putin “must lose, and cutting off his ability to fund a prolonged conflict is absolutely vital.”

Italy joins rail corridor project to connect southern and central Africa
BORGIO EGNAZIA, Italy — U.S. officials say that Italy is joining a rail corridor project in Africa as part of a collaborative effort by the Group of Seven nations to fund infrastructure projects.

The Lobito corridor is a railway line that will connect southern and central Africa. Not just railway, the project will also bring telecommunication cables and other infrastructure to the region.

It’s projected eventually to go from Angola to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The investment project is meant to serve as an alternative to China’s development efforts, which the U.S. and its allies say China uses to exert influence on developing nations.

Pope Francis to meet with world leaders on sidelines of G7 summit
BARI, Italy — Pope Francis will be meeting a series of world leaders on the sidelines of the Group of Seven summit in southern Italy.

Francis, who will be the first pope to address a G7 summit, will kick off his bilateral talks shortly after arriving at the summit location. He will meet Friday with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, French President Emmanuel Macron and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, as well as with the head of the International Monetary Fund, Kristalina Georgieva.

The pope has previously met with Zelenskyy but caused a stir earlier this year when he said that Ukraine should have the “courage of the white flag” to negotiate an end of the war with Russia. Kyiv summoned the Holy See ambassador to complain.

After delivering a speech at the G7 summit, the pope will continue his meetings with Kenyan President William Ruto, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US President Joe Biden, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune.

G7 leaders agree to lend Ukraine \$50 billion using frozen Russian assets as collateral. BARI, 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 collateral.

US-built pier in Gaza is facing its latest challenge — whether the UN will keep delivering the aid

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S.-built pier to bring food to Gaza is facing one of its most serious challenges yet — its humanitarian partner is deciding if it can safely and ethically keep delivering supplies arriving by the U.S. sea route to starving Palestinians.

The United Nations, the player with the widest reach delivering aid within Gaza, has paused its work with the pier after a June 8 operation by Israeli security forces that rescued four Israeli hostages and killed more than 270 Palestinians.

Rushing out a mortally wounded Israeli commando after the raid, Israeli rescuers opted against returning the way they came, across a land border, Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari, an Israeli military spokesman, told reporters. Instead, they sped toward the beach and the site of the U.S. aid hub on Gaza's coast, he said. An Israeli helicopter touched down near the U.S.-built pier and helped whisk away hostages and the commando, according to the U.S. and Israeli militaries.

For the U.N. and independent humanitarian groups, the event made real one of their main doubts about the U.S. sea route: Whether aid workers could cooperate with the U.S. military-backed, Israeli military-secured project without violating core humanitarian principles of neutrality and independence and without risking aid workers becoming seen as U.S. and Israeli allies — and in turn, targets in their own right.

Israel and the U.S. deny that any aspect of the month-old U.S. pier was used in the Israeli raid. They say an area near it was used to fly home the hostages after.

The U.N. World Food Program, which works with the U.S. to transfer aid from the \$230 million pier to warehouses and local aid teams for distribution within Gaza, suspended cooperation as it conducts a security review. Aid has been piling up on the beach since.

"You can be damn sure we are going to be very careful about what we assess and what we conclude," U.N. humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths said.

Griffiths told reporters at an aid conference in Jordan this week that determining whether the Israeli raid improperly used either the beach or roads around the pier "would put at risk any future humanitarian engagement in that operation."

The U.N. has to look at the facts as well as what the Palestinian public and militants believe about any U.S., pier or aid worker involvement in the raid, spokesman Farhan Haq told reporters in New York.

"Humanitarian aid must not be used and must not be perceived as taking any side in a conflict," Haq said. "The safety of our humanitarian workers depends on all sides and the communities on the ground trusting their impartiality."

Rumors have swirled on social media, deepening the danger to aid workers, humanitarian groups say.

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"Whether or not we've seen the pier used for military purposes is almost irrelevant. Because the perception of people in Gaza, civilians and armed groups, is that humanitarian aid has been instrumentalized" by parties in the conflict, said Suze van Meegen, head of operations in Gaza for the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Oxfam International and some other aid organizations said they are waiting for answers from the U.S. government because it's responsible for the agreements with the U.N. and other humanitarian groups on how the pier and aid deliveries would function.

Questions include whether the Israeli helicopters and security forces used what the U.S. had promised aid groups would be a no-go area for the Israeli military around the pier, said Scott Paul, an associate director at Oxfam.

The suspension of deliveries is only one of the problems that have hindered the pier, which President Joe Biden announced in March as an additional way to get aid to Palestinians. The U.S. has said the project was never a solution and have urged Israel to lift restrictions on aid shipments through land crossings as famine looms.

The first aid from the sea route rolled onto shore May 17, and work has been up and down since:

— May 18: Crowds overwhelmed aid trucks coming from the pier, stripping some of the trucks of their cargo. The WFP suspended deliveries from the pier for at least two days while it worked out alternate routes with the U.S. and Israel.

— May 24: A bit more than 1,000 metric tons of aid had been delivered to Gaza from the pier, and the U.S. Agency for International Development later said all of it was distributed within Gaza.

— May 25: High winds and heavy seas damaged the pier and four U.S. Army vessels ran aground, injuring three service members, one critically. Crews towed away part of the floating dock in what became a two-week pause in operations.

— June 8: The U.S. military announced that deliveries resumed off the repaired and reinstalled project. The Israeli military operation unfolded the same day.

— Sunday: World Food Program chief Cindy McCain announced a "pause" in cooperation with the U.S. pier, citing the previous day's "incident" and the rocketing of two WFP warehouses that injured a staffer.

"The WFP, of course, is taking the security measures that they need to do, and the reviews that they need to do, in order to feel safe and secure and to operate within Gaza," Pentagon spokeswoman Sabrina Singh said this week.

The pier has brought to Gaza more than 2,500 metric tons (about 5.6 million pounds) of aid, Singh said. About 1,000 metric tons of that was brought by ship Tuesday and Wednesday — after the WFP pause — and is being stored on the beach awaiting distribution.

Now, the question is whether the U.N. will rejoin the effort.

For aid workers who generally work without weapons or armed guards, and for those they serve, "the best guarantee of our security is the acceptance of communities" that aid workers are neutral, said Paul, the Oxfam official.

Palestinians already harbored deep doubts about the pier given the lead role of the U.S., which sends weapons and other support to its ally Israel, said Yousef Munayyer, a senior fellow at Washington's Arab Center, an independent organization researching Israeli-Arab issues.

Distrustful Palestinians suffering in the Israel-Hamas war are being asked to take America at its word, and that's a hard sell, said Munayyer, an American of Palestinian heritage.

"So you know, perception matters a lot," he said. "And for the people who are literally putting their lives on the line to get humanitarian aid moving around a war zone, perception gets you in danger."

Pope Francis will be the first pontiff to address a G7 summit. He's raising the alarm about AI

By NICOLE WINFIELD and KELVIN CHAN Associated Press

BARI, Italy (AP) — Pope Francis is no stranger to artificial intelligence — a deepfake photo of him in a white puffer jacket went viral last year — but his concerns about AI go far beyond an unflattering shot and are now taking center stage at the Group of Seven summit.

Francis will address G7 leaders on Friday at their annual gathering in southern Italy — a first for a pope. He intends to use the occasion to join the chorus of countries and global bodies pushing for stronger guardrails on AI following the boom in generative artificial intelligence kickstarted by OpenAI's ChatGPT chatbot.

The Argentine pope used his annual peace message this year to call for an international treaty to ensure AI is developed and used ethically. He argues that a technology lacking human values of compassion, mercy, morality and forgiveness is too perilous to develop unchecked.

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni invited Francis and announced his participation, knowing the potential impact of his star power and moral authority to twin a broadly shared concern about AI with his priorities about peace and social justice.

"The pope is, well, a very special kind of a celebrity," said John Kirton, a political scientist at the University of Toronto who directs the G7 Research Group think tank.

Kirton recalled the last summit that had this kind of star power was the 2005 meeting in Gleneagles, Scotland, where members decided to wipe out the \$40 billion of the debts owed by 18 of the world's poorest countries to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

That summit was preceded by a Live8 concert in London that featured Sting, The Who and a reformed Pink Floyd and drew over a million people in a show of solidarity against hunger and poverty in Africa.

"Gleneagles actually hit a home run and for some it's one of the most successful summits," Kirton said.

No such popular pressure is being applied to G7 leaders in the Italian city of Puglia, but Francis can wield his own moral authority to renew his demands for safeguards for AI and highlight the threats to peace and society it poses.

Generative AI technology has dazzled the world with its capabilities to produce humanlike-responses, but it's also sparked fears about AI safety and led to a jumble of global efforts to rein it in.

Some worry about catastrophic but far off risks to humanity because of its potential for creating new bioweapons and supercharging disinformation. Others fret about its effect on everyday life, through algorithmic bias that results in discrimination or AI systems that eliminate jobs.

In his peace message, Francis echoed those concerns and raised others. He said AI must keep foremost concerns about guaranteeing fundamental human rights, promoting peace and guarding against disinformation, discrimination and distortion.

On the regulation front, Francis will in some ways be preaching to the converted as the G7 members have been at the forefront of the debate on AI oversight.

Japan, which held the G7's rotating presidency last year, launched its Hiroshima AI process to draw up international guiding principles and a code of conduct for AI developers. Adding to those efforts, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida last month unveiled a framework for global regulation of generative AI, which are systems that can quickly churn out new text, images, video, audio in response to prompts and commands.

The European Union was one of the first movers with its wide-ranging AI Act that's set to take effect over the next two years and could act as a global model. The act targets any AI product or service offered in the bloc's 27 nations, with restrictions based on the level of risk they pose.

In the United States, President Joe Biden issued an executive order on AI safeguards and called for legislation to strengthen it, while some states like California and Colorado have been trying to pass their own AI bills, with mixed results.

Antitrust enforcers on both sides of the Atlantic have been scrutinizing big AI companies including Microsoft, Amazon and OpenAI over whether their dominant positions stifle competition.

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Britain kickstarted a global dialogue on reining in AI's most extreme dangers with a summit last fall. At a followup meeting in Seoul, companies pledged to develop the technology safely. France is set to host another meeting in the series early next year. The United Nations has also weighed in with its first resolution on AI.

On the sidelines of his AI speech, Francis has a full day of bilateral meetings. He'll see Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, as well as invited leaders from Algeria, Brazil, India, Kenya, Turkey. He will also meet with G7 members, including Biden, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and French President Emmanuel Macron.

A peace summit for Ukraine opens in Switzerland, but Russia won't be taking part

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Switzerland will host scores of world leaders this weekend to try to map out first steps toward peace in Ukraine even though Russia, which launched the ongoing war, won't take part.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's government didn't want Russia involved, and the Swiss — aware of Moscow's reservations about the talks — didn't invite Russia. The Swiss insist Russia must be involved at some point, and hope it will join the process one day. Ukrainians, too, are considering that possibility.

The conference, underpinned by elements of a 10-point peace formula presented by Zelenskyy in late 2022, is unlikely to produce major results and is seen as a largely symbolic effort on the part of Kyiv to rally the international community and project strength against its better armed and numbered adversary.

But the question looming over the summit will be how the two countries can move back from the brink and eventually silence the guns in a war that has cost hundreds of billions of dollars and caused hundreds and thousands of deaths and injuries, without Moscow attending.

The conflict has also led to international sanctions against nuclear-armed Russia and has raised tensions between NATO and Moscow. The summit comes as Russian forces have been making modest territorial gains in eastern and northeastern Ukraine, extending the grip they already hold on about a quarter of the country.

Here's a look at what to expect from the weekend gathering at the Burgenstock Resort on a cliff overlooking Lake Lucerne.

Who's going? Among the stakes will be simple optics: How many countries the Swiss and Ukrainians can draw in. The bigger the turnout, the bigger the international push — and pressure — for peace will be, the thinking goes.

Swiss officials sent out some 160 invitations, and say about 90 delegations, including a handful of international organizations like the United Nations, will attend. Roughly half will be from Europe. Zelenskyy led a diplomatic push in Asia and beyond to rally participation.

Several dozen attendees will be heads of state or government, including French President Emmanuel Macron, Polish President Andrzej Duda, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

United States Vice President Kamala Harris will meet with Zelenskyy on Saturday on the sidelines of the summit, according to a senior Biden administration official. Harris, who is making a quick trip to Lucerne to take part in the opening day, is also expected to deliver an address before the gathering.

The official, who briefed a small group of reporters on the vice president's plans on the condition of anonymity, said Harris intended to focus her engagements on "defending and strengthening the international rules-based order."

Who are the major no-shows? U.S. President Joe Biden, who was wrapping up a visit to Italy on Friday for a Group of Seven summit, opted to dispatch Harris and national security adviser Jake Sullivan. The president, meanwhile, was headed to Los Angeles for a glitzy campaign fundraiser with actors George Clooney and Julia Roberts, as well as former President Barack Obama.

Biden and Zelenskyy signed a 10-year security agreement Thursday at the G7 summit.

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Russia's key ally China will not attend.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry has said it believes any such international peace conference should involve both Russia and Ukraine, although Beijing supports efforts to bring the conflict to an end and is monitoring the developments in Switzerland.

The final list of attendees isn't expected until late Friday, and question marks remain about how key developing countries like India, Brazil and Turkey might take part, if at all.

But so far, under half of the 193 United Nations member countries are planning to attend, testifying to a wait-and-see attitude in many world capitals.

"Russia does not have a lot of allies in this particular situation," said Keith Krause, a professor of international security studies at the Graduate Institute in Geneva. "It has a number of states that are susceptible to being pressured, and a few that actually wish to stand aside, from what they see as a northern, U.S.-Russia, NATO-Russia confrontation."

"They essentially don't have — what they would consider — a dog in the fight," he added.

What can be expected? Naysayers have harrumphed that the peace summit will be short on substantial achievements toward peace without Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin's government doesn't believe Switzerland, which has lined up behind European Union sanctions on Moscow over the war, is neutral.

Vasily Nebenzya, Russia's U.N. ambassador, said peace talks without Russia's participation are "a road to nowhere."

"In practice, the main goal is to present an ultimatum to the Russian Federation in the form of the so-called 'peace plan'" from Zelenskyy, the ambassador was quoted as saying by Russian state news agency RIA-Novosti.

Participants are expected to unite around an outcome document or a joint plan, and Ukraine will have a lot of input into what it says. But ironing out language that delegations can agree upon is still a work in progress, and could explain why some countries aren't yet saying whether they will attend.

Andriy Yermak, Zelenskyy's chief of staff, said Ukrainian officials wanted countries that respect Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity to be invited. He said the basis of the talks should be a 10-point peace formula that Zelenskyy has presented, and he held out the possibility that Russia could be invited to a second such summit.

Speaking to reporters late Tuesday, Yermak said Ukraine and the other participants would be preparing a "joint plan" to unite around, "and we're looking for the possibility in the second summit to invite representative of Russia, and together present this joint plan."

Asked what would be the measure of a successful summit in Burgenstock, he replied: "We think it's already a success because it's a big number of countries (attending)."

What is the Ukrainian 10-point peace formula? Ukraine's peace plan launched by Zelenskyy outlines 10 proposals that encapsulates the president's step-by-step vision to end the war against Russia's invasion, now in its third year.

The plan includes ambitious calls, including the withdrawal of Russian troops from occupied Ukrainian territory, the cessation of hostilities and restoring Ukraine's state borders with Russia, including Crimea. That is an unlikely outcome at this stage in this war, as Ukraine is unable to negotiate from a position of strength. Moscow's army has the upper hand in firepower and number of troops, while Kyiv's momentum has been stalled by delays in Western military supplies.

That is likely why the most contentious elements of the plan are not being discussed.

Only three themes will be on the table at the summit: nuclear safety, including at the Russia-controlled Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant; humanitarian aid; and food security, not just in Ukraine but globally — notably the spillover effects of the war on Ukrainian agricultural production and exports.

Western officials in Kyiv said these themes cut across international interests and are easy for Kyiv to rally the international community around. But they do not encompass the tougher issues that can only be resolved with Moscow as a negotiating partner.

Russia's hesitancy about the conference stems in part from its unwillingness to show any sign of ac-

ceptance of the Ukrainian peace formula, which it rejects, or any red lines set by Kyiv.

Putin has espoused a deal to be premised on a draft peace agreement negotiated in the early days of the war that included provisions for Ukraine's neutral status and put limits on its armed forces while delaying talks on the status of Russian-occupied areas.

What's the way forward? Krause, of the Graduate Institute, said Ukraine needs to emerge from the conference with momentum — a reaffirmation of commitment from its top allies and partners around its bottom lines on issues like territorial integrity and future relationships, even if membership may be far off, in NATO or the European Union one day.

He said Ukraine will want to see a reaffirmation that it's up to Kyiv to lay out the terms on which the war will end.

"I don't think anybody is particularly deluded that this is going to give birth to a new peace plan, or even to some kind of agreement that stops the hostilities on the battlefield," Krause said. "But as past wars have shown, including as far back as World War II, discussions about the contours of the peace begin long before the fighting stops on the battlefield."

Muslims start the Hajj against the backdrop of the destructive Israel-Hamas war

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

MINA, Saudi Arabia (AP) — In sweltering temperatures, Muslim pilgrims in Mecca converged on a vast tent camp in the desert on Friday, officially opening the annual Hajj pilgrimage. Ahead of their trip, they circled the cube-shaped Kaaba in the Grand Mosque, Islam's holiest site.

More than 1.5 million pilgrims from around the world have already amassed in and around Mecca for the Hajj, and the number was still growing as more pilgrims from inside Saudi Arabia joined. Saudi authorities expected the number to exceed 2 million this year.

This year's Hajj came against the backdrop of the raging war in the Gaza Strip between Israel and Palestinian militants, which pushed the Middle East to the brink of a regional war between Israel and its allies on one side and Iran-backed militant groups on the other.

Palestinians in the coastal enclave of Gaza were not able to travel to Mecca for Hajj this year because of the closure of the Rafah crossing in May when Israel extended its ground offensive to the strip's southern city of Rafah on the border with Egypt.

"We pray for the Muslims, for our country and people, for all the Muslim world, especially for the Palestinian people," Mohammed Rafeeq, an Indian pilgrim, said as he headed to the tent camp in Mina.

Palestinian authorities said 4,200 pilgrims from the occupied West Bank arrived in Mecca for Hajj. Saudi authorities said 1,000 more from the families of Palestinians killed or wounded in the war in Gaza also arrived to perform Hajj at the invitation of King Salman of Saudi Arabia. The 1,000 invitees were already outside Gaza — mostly in Egypt — before the closure of the Rafah crossing.

"We are deprived of (performing) Hajj because the crossing is closed, and because of the raging wars and destruction," said Amna Abu Mutlaq, a 75-year-old Palestinian woman in Gaza's southern city of Khan Younis who had planned to perform Hajj this year but was unable to. "They (Israel) deprived us from everything."

This year's Hajj also saw Syrian pilgrims traveling to Mecca on direct flights from Damascus for the first time in more than a decade. The change is part of an ongoing thaw in relations between Saudi Arabia and conflict-stricken Syria. Syrians in rebel-held areas used to cross the border into neighboring Turkey in their exhausting trip to Mecca for Hajj.

"This is the natural thing: Pilgrims go to Hajj directly from their home countries," said Abdel-Aziz al-Ashqar, a Syrian coordinator of the group of pilgrims who left Damascus this year for Hajj.

The pilgrimage is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, and all Muslims are required to make the five-day Hajj at least once in their lives if they are physically and financially able to do so.

It is a moving spiritual experience for pilgrims who believe it absolves sins and brings them closer to

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God, while uniting the world's more than 2 billion Muslims. It's also a chance to pray for peace in many conflict-stricken Arab and Muslim countries, including Yemen and Sudan, where more than a year of war between rival generals created the world's largest displacement crisis.

For many Muslims, the Hajj is the only major journey that they make in their lives. Some spend years saving up money and waiting for a permit to embark on the journey in their 50s and 60s after raising their children.

The rituals during the Hajj largely commemorate the Quran's accounts of Prophet Ibrahim, his son Prophet Ismail and Ismail's mother Hajar — or Abraham and Ismael as they are named in the Bible.

Male pilgrims wear an ihram, two unstitched sheets of white cloth that resemble a shroud, while women dress in conservative, loose-fitting clothing with headscarves and forgo makeup and perfume. They have been making the ritual circuit around the cube-shaped Kaaba in the seven-minaret Grand Mosque since arriving in Mecca over recent days.

Saudi authorities have adopted security restrictions in and around Mecca, with checkpoints set up on roads leading to the city to prevent those who don't have Hajj permits from reaching the holy sites.

Security authorities arrested many people who attempted to take pilgrims to Mecca who didn't have Hajj permits, said Lt. Gen. Muhammad al-Bassami, head of the Hajj Security Committee. Most were expelled from the country, while travel agents faced jail for up to six months, according to the Interior Ministry.

Many pilgrims whose documentations were not complete paid fines to be allowed into Mecca. Mohammed Ramadan, an Egyptian who came to Saudi Arabia to perform Hajj along with his parents, said he found that the type of visa they have didn't allow them into Mecca. They paid 500 Saudi riyals (\$133) each to be able to reach the holy sites.

"We were mistreated," he said while heading to their tent in Mina in the burning heat. "But we forgot everything when we saw the Grand Mosque."

On Friday, the pilgrims made their way to Mina, officially opening the Hajj. They then will move for a daylong vigil Saturday on Mount Arafat, a desert hill where the Prophet Muhammad is said to have delivered his final speech, known as the Farewell Sermon. Healthy pilgrims make the trip on foot, others use a bus or train.

The time of year when the Hajj takes place varies, given that it is set for five days in the second week of Dhu al-Hijjah, the last month in the Islamic lunar calendar.

Most of the Hajj rituals are held outdoors with little if any shade. When it falls in the summer months, temperatures can soar to over 40 Celsius (104 Fahrenheit). The Health Ministry has cautioned that temperatures at the holy sites could reach 48 Celsius (118 Fahrenheit).

Many pilgrims carried umbrellas to use under the burning sun, and in Mina charities distributed cold water and cooling stations sprayed pilgrims with water to cool them down. The faithful set up in their tents, resting in the rows of cubicles and praying together to prepare for the coming rituals.

After Saturday's worship in Arafat, pilgrims will travel a few kilometers (miles) to a site known as Muzdalifa to collect pebbles that they will use in the symbolic stoning of pillars representing the devil back in Mina.

Pilgrims then return to Mina for three days, coinciding with the festive Eid al-Adha holiday, when financially able Muslims around the world slaughter livestock and distribute the meat to poor people. Afterward, they return to Mecca for a final circumambulation, known as Farewell Tawaf.

In recent years, the annual pilgrimage has returned to its monumental scale after three years of heavy restrictions because of the coronavirus pandemic. In 2023, more than 1.8 million pilgrims performed Hajj, approaching the level in 2019, when more than 2.4 million participated.

AI startup Perplexity wants to upend search business. News outlet Forbes says it's ripping them off

By MATT O'BRIEN and SARAH PARVINI AP Technology Writers

The artificial intelligence startup Perplexity AI has raised tens of millions of dollars from the likes of Jeff Bezos and other prominent tech investors for its mission to rival Google in the business of searching for information.

But its AI-driven search chatbot is already facing challenges as some news media companies object to its business practices and tech giants Google, and now Apple, are increasingly fusing similar AI features into their core products.

Perplexity CEO Aravind Srinivas has spent much of the past week defending the company after it published a summarized news story with information and similar wording to a Forbes investigative story but without citing the media outlet or asking for its permission. Forbes said it later found similar "knock-off" stories lifted from other publications.

The Associated Press separately found another Perplexity product feature inventing fake quotes from real people, including a former elected town official from Martha's Vineyard falsely quoted to say he didn't want the Massachusetts island to become a destination for marijuana.

"I never said that," said Bill Rossi, a former member of the island town of Chilmark's select board.

Srinivas told The Associated Press that his company is trying to build positive relationships with news publishers that ensure their news content "reaches more people."

"We can definitely coexist and help each other," he said.

Asked about Forbes, he said his product "never ripped off content from anybody. Our engine is not training on anyone else's content," in part because the company is simply aggregating what other companies' AI systems generate.

"We are actually more of an aggregator of information and providing it to the people with the right attribution," Srinivas said. But, he added, "It was accurately pointed out by Forbes that they preferred a more prominent highlighting of the source. We took that feedback immediately and updated changes that day itself. And now the sources are more prominently highlighted."

Perplexity also revealed this week that it has been seeking revenue-sharing partnerships that would pay news publishers a portion of Perplexity's advertising revenue each time an outlet's news content is referenced as a source.

Randall Lane, chief content officer of Forbes Media, called the dispute an "inflection point" in the conversation about AI.

"It's a case study in where we're heading," Lane told the AP. "If the people who are leading the charge don't have a fundamental respect for the hard work of doing proprietary reporting, and keeping people informed with value-added content, we've got a big problem."

A self-described "AI bull" who believes that the technology could help make many news organizations more efficient, Lane said the dispute between Perplexity and Forbes is important because it is a "metaphor for what can happen if the people controlling the AI don't respect the people doing the work."

Perplexity bills itself as a search engine while "acting like a media company and publishing a story" that only Forbes had reported, Lane said.

"The whole thing was very disingenuous. And what we didn't hear was, 'Oops, yeah we messed that one up and we need to do better,'" he said. "Instead, it was just putting out more content, little tweaks to the model and treating journalism like it's just a commodity to be manufactured."

Srinivas, a computer scientist and former AI researcher at OpenAI and Google, co-founded Perplexity in the summer of 2022, not long before the AI image-generator Stable Diffusion and OpenAI's ChatGPT began sparking the public's fascination with the possibilities of generative AI.

Inspired, in part, by his childhood love of Wikipedia, he described Perplexity to the AP as "like a marriage of Wikipedia and ChatGPT" that can instantly answer a person's questions without the "huge cluttered mess" of Google's conventional search results.

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"You ask a question, you get an answer with clean sources, and there's like three or four suggested (follow-up) questions and that's it," he said of Perplexity. "That way people's minds can be free from distractions, and they can just focus on learning and digging deeper."

The company sells a subscription for premium features and is planning to start an advertising-based service as it grows its user base.

"We are not profitable as a company today, but we are also more sustainably run than foundation model companies because we do not train our own foundation models," which requires huge amounts of computing power, he said.

Perplexity relies on existing AI large language models such as those built by OpenAI, Anthropic and Meta Platforms, the parent company of Facebook; and then "post-trains" them.

"We shape them to be really good summarizers," he said.

It's not always clear where the summarized information is coming from. One Perplexity feature called Writing — which enables a user to "generate text or chat without searching the web" — produces lengthy and unsourced commentary, often in the style of a news article. Tests of the feature by an AP reporter asking it to write about the lack of marijuana on Martha's Vineyard led it to produce a 465-word document that resembled a news article and included fabricated quotations from the former town official and another real person.

The AP is not repeating the false quotes in order to avoid perpetuating misinformation. Srinivas said that the Writing feature of Perplexity is a "minor use case" that was intended for helping to compose essays or correcting grammar when primary source information isn't needed. He said it's "more prone to hallucinations" — a common problem with AI large language models — because it isn't tethered to the web search capabilities of Perplexity's core product.

"There is no doubt that generative AI is upending journalism, content creation, and search," said Sarah Kreps, director of Cornell University's Tech Policy Institute.

She pointed to Google's new, Perplexity-like approach that summarizes answers based on information pulled from crawling the web, as an example. That, too, led to false information and forced Google to make adjustments to the product after its public release.

"But their whole model of advertising is based on sending people to websites," she said in an email. "Why will people go to websites if they can have the one-stop-shop of the answer in the AI output?"

Srinivas claimed to the AP that "a lot of people get referrals from Perplexity, and I'm happy that they're getting referrals from a new player in the internet."

For now, much of that benefit may be aspirational. Perplexity's worldwide user base has grown rapidly this year to more than 85 million web visits in May, but that barely registers compared to the billions of users of ChatGPT and other popular platforms from Microsoft and Google, according to data from Similarweb.

The debate demonstrates the "uncertain and challenging times" for online content creators in general and journalism in particular because aggregators only work if publications such as Forbes exist, said Stephen Lind, an associate professor at the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business.

Using AI as a synthesizing tool works for widespread dissemination of information until "you run out of originals," he said.

"There are whole companies or whole applications that are also doing this, where they are rolling out new services without fully thinking through the implications or best practices or safeguards because they're rolling out applications for industries that maybe they're not native to," he said.

Lind said it's good that companies like Perplexity are "taking at least some steps to course correct when an industry or a user pushes back." But some of the changes should have been baked in from the beginning, he added.

Micro communities for the homeless sprout in US cities eager for small, quick and cheap solutions

By R.J. RICO and JESSE BEDAYN Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — In a dreary part of downtown Atlanta, shipping containers have been transformed into an oasis for dozens of previously unsheltered people who now proudly call a former parking lot home.

The gated micro community known as "The Melody" doesn't look like a parking lot anymore. Artificial turf is spread across the asphalt. Potted plants and red Adirondack chairs abound. There's even a dog park.

The shipping containers have been divided into 40 insulated studio apartments that include a single bed, HVAC unit, desk, microwave, small refrigerator, TV, sink and bathroom. On a recent afternoon, a half-dozen residents were chatting around a table in The Melody's smoking area.

"I'm just so grateful," said Cynthia Diamond, a 61-year-old former line cook who uses a wheelchair and used to be chronically homeless. "I have my own door key. I ain't got to worry about nobody knocking on my door, telling me when to eat, sleep or do anything. I'm going to stay here as long as the Lord allows me to stay here."

Faced with years of rising homelessness rates and failed solutions, city officials across the U.S. have been embracing rapid housing options emphasizing three factors: small, quick and cheap. Officials believe micro communities, unlike shelters, offer stability that, when combined with wraparound services, can more effectively put residents on the path to secure housing.

Denver has opened three micro communities and converted another five hotels for people who used to be homeless. In Austin, Texas, there are three villages of "tiny homes." In Los Angeles, a 232-unit complex features two three-floor buildings of stacked shipping containers.

"Housing is a ladder. You start with the very first rung. Folks that are literally sleeping on the ground aren't even on the first rung," said Denver Mayor Mike Johnston, sitting in one of the city's new micro communities that offer tiny, transitional homes for that first rung.

More than 1,500 people have been moved indoors through the program, with over 80% still in the housing as of last month, according to city data. The inexpensive units are particularly a boon for cities with high housing costs, where moving that many people directly into apartments wouldn't be financially feasible.

Both Atlanta's and Denver's program act as a stepping stone as they work to get people jobs and more permanent housing, with Denver aiming to move people out within six months.

That includes Eric Martinez, 28, who has been in limbo between the street and the bottom rung for most of his life. At birth Martinez was flung into the revolving door of foster care, and he's wrestled with substance use while surfing couches and pitching tents.

"It's kind of demeaning, it makes me feel less of a person," said Martinez, his eyes downcast. "I had to get out of it and look out for myself at that point: It's fight or flight, and I flew."

Martinez's Denver tent encampment was swept and he along with the others were directed into the micro communities of small cabin-like structures with a twin bed, desk and closet. The city built three such communities with nearly 160 units total in about six months, at roughly \$25,000 per unit, said Johnston. The 1,000 converted hotel units cost about \$100,000 each.

On site at the micro community are bathrooms, showers, washing machines, small dog parks and kitchens, though the Salvation Army delivers meals.

The program represents an about-face from policies that for years focused on short-term group shelters and the ceaseless shuffle of encampments from one city block to the next. That system made it difficult to keep people who were scattered through the city connected to services and on the path to permanent housing.

Those services in Denver's and Atlanta's micro communities are largely centralized. They offer residents case management, counseling, mental health and substance abuse therapy, housing guidance and assistance obtaining anything from vocational skills training to a new pair of dentures.

"We're able to meet every level of the hierarchy of needs — from security and shelter, all the way up to

self-actualization and the sense of community," said Peter Cumiskey, the Atlanta site clinician.

The Melody, and projects like it, are a "very promising, feasible and cost-effective way" to tackle homelessness, said Michael Rich, an Emory University political science professor who studies housing policy. Rich noted that transitional housing is still just the first step toward permanent housing.

The programs in Denver and Atlanta, taking inspiration from similar ones in cities like Columbia, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia, offer a degree of privacy and security not found in congregate shelters or encampments.

Giving each resident their own bathroom and kitchen is a crucial feature that helps set The Melody apart, said Cathryn Vassell, whose nonprofit, Partners For Home, oversees the micro community. Aside from a prohibition on overnight guests, staff emphasize the tenants are treated as independent residents.

Vassell acknowledged it's unclear how long the containers will last — she's hoping 20 years. But, she said, they were the right choice for The Melody because they were relatively inexpensive and already had handicap-accessible bathrooms since many were used by Georgia hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The project, which took only about four months to complete, cost about \$125,000 per unit — not "tremendously inexpensive," Vassell said, but less than traditional construction, and much quicker. Staffing and security operations cost about \$900,000 a year.

The Melody is the first part of Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens' target of supplying 500 units of rapid housing on city-owned land by December 2025. A 2023 "point-in-time" count found there were 738 unsheltered people in Atlanta, far fewer than many cities, but still an increase over the previous year.

"We need more Melodies as fast as possible," said Courtney English, the mayor's chief policy officer.

Few objected when The Melody was announced last year, but as city officials seek to expand the rapid-housing footprint, they know local pushback is likely. That's what Denver faced.

Mayor Johnston said he attended at least 60 town halls in six months as Denver tried to identify locations for the new communities and faced pushback from local residents worried about trash and safety.

"What they are worried about is their current experience of unsheltered homelessness," Johnston said. "We had to get them to see not the world as it used to exist, but the world as it could exist, and now we have the proof points of what that could be."

The scars of life on the street still stick with Martinez. All his belongings are prepped for a move at a moment's notice, even though he feels secure in his tiny home alongside his cat, Appa.

The community has been "very uplifting and supporting," he said, pausing. "You don't get that a lot."

On his wall is a calendar with a job orientation penciled in. The next step is working with staff to get a housing voucher for an apartment.

"I'm always looking down on myself for some reason," he said. But "I feel like I've been doing a pretty good job. Everyone is pretty proud of me."

Demolition of the Parkland classroom building where 17 died in 2018 shooting is set to begin

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

PARKLAND, Fla. (AP) — A crew is scheduled Friday to begin tearing down the three-story classroom building where 17 people died in the 2018 mass shooting at Parkland's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

The victims' families have been invited to watch the first blows and hammer off a piece themselves if they choose. Officials plan to complete the weekslong project before the school's 3,300 students return in August from summer vacation. Most were in elementary school when the shooting happened.

The building had been kept up to serve as evidence at the shooter's 2022 penalty trial. Jurors toured its bullet-pocked and blood-stained halls, but spared him a death sentence. He is serving a term of life without parole.

Broward County is not alone in taking down a school building after a mass shooting. In Connecticut, Sandy Hook Elementary School was torn down after the 2012 shooting and replaced. In Texas, officials closed Robb Elementary in Uvalde after the 2022 shooting there and plan to demolish it. Colorado's Col-

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umbine High had its library demolished after the 1999 shooting.

Over the last year, some victims' relatives have led Vice President Kamala Harris, members of Congress, school officials, police officers and about 500 other invitees from around the country on tours of the building. They mostly demonstrated how improved safety measures like bullet-resistant glass in door windows, a better alarm system and doors that lock from the inside could have saved lives.

Those who have taken the tour have called it gut-wrenching as something of a time capsule of Feb. 14, 2018. Textbooks and laptops sat open on desks, and wilted Valentine's Day flowers, deflated balloons and abandoned teddy bears were scattered amid broken glass. Those objects have now been removed.

The Broward County school board has not decided what the building will be replaced with. Teachers suggested a practice field for the band, Junior ROTC and other groups, connected by a landscaped pathway to a nearby memorial that was erected a few years ago. Several of the students killed belonged to the band or Junior ROTC.

Some parents want the site turned into a memorial.

Florida prepares for next round of rainfall after tropical storms swamped southern part of the state

By FREIDA FRISARO, TERRY SPENCER and DANIEL KOZIN Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Forecasters warned Floridians to prepare for additional flash flooding after a tropical disturbance dumped as much as 20 inches (50 centimeters) of rainfall in the southern parts of the state, with worsening conditions expected Friday.

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 downpours hit Tuesday and continued into Wednesday, delaying flights at two of the state's largest airports and leaving vehicles waterlogged and stalled in some of the region's lowest-lying streets. On Thursday, travelers tried to salvage their plans as residents cleared debris before the next round of rain.

The National Weather Service cautioned that even smaller amounts of precipitation could impact saturated areas, causing flash floods on Friday before the region has a chance to recover.

"Looked like the beginning of a zombie movie," said Ted Rico, a tow truck driver who spent much of Wednesday night and Thursday morning helping to clear the streets of stalled vehicles. "There's cars littered everywhere, on top of sidewalks, in the median, in the middle of the street, no lights on. Just craziness, you know. Abandoned cars everywhere."

Rico, of One Master Trucking Corp., was born and raised in Miami and said he was ready for the emergency.

"You know when its coming," he said. "Every year it's just getting worse, and for some reason people just keep going through the puddles."

Ticket and security lines snaked around a domestic concourse at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport Thursday. The travel boards showed about half of a terminal's flights had been canceled or postponed.

Bill Carlisle, a Navy petty officer first class, spent his morning trying to catch a flight back to Norfolk, Virginia. He arrived at Miami International Airport at about 6:30 a.m., but 90 minutes later he was still in line and realized he couldn't get his bags checked and through security in time to catch his flight.

"It was a zoo," said Carlisle, a public affairs specialist. He was speaking for himself, not the Navy. "Nothing against the (airport) employees, there is only so much they can do."

He used his phone to book an afternoon flight out of Fort Lauderdale. He took a shuttle the 20 miles (32 kilometers) north, only to find the flight was canceled. He was headed back to Miami for a 9 p.m. flight, hoping it wouldn't be canceled as a result of heavy rains expected later in the day. He was resigned, not angry.

"Just a long day sitting in airports," Carlisle said. "This is kind of par for the course for government travel."

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In Hallandale Beach, Alex Demchemko was walking his Russian spaniel Lex along the flooded sidewalks near the Airbnb where he has lived after arriving from Russia last month to seek asylum in the U.S.

"We didn't come out from our apartment, but we had to walk with our dog," Demchemko said. "A lot of flashes, raining, a lot of floating cars and a lot of left cars without drivers, and there was a lot of water on the streets. It was kind of catastrophic."

On Thursday morning, Daniela Urrieche, 26, was bailing water out of her SUV, which got stuck on a flooded street as she drove home from work Wednesday.

"In the nine years that I've lived here, this has been the worst," she said. "Even in a hurricane, streets were not as bad as it was in the past 24 hours."

The flooding wasn't limited to the streets. Charlea Johnson spent Wednesday night at her Hallendale Beach home barreling water into the sink and toilet.

"The water just started flooding in the back and flooding in the front," Johnson said.

Donald Trump's 78th birthday becomes a show of loyalty for his fans and fellow Republicans

By STEPHANY MATAT Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Donald Trump spent the day before his 78th birthday being feted by Republicans in Congress who sang "Happy Birthday" and presented him with a cake and gifts. It was a remarkable show of loyalty for a former president who was shunned by many of the same lawmakers after the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol riot.

On Friday, Trump will get another birthday celebration, this time with thousands of supporters in his adopted home state.

Members of the "Club 47" fan group will hear from Trump in West Palm Beach, Florida, a short drive from his Mar-a-Lago residence. The event sold out of 5,000 tickets at about \$35 apiece, with closer spots to the stage costing \$60, according to Club 47 President Larry Snowden.

Weeks after becoming the first former president to have been convicted of a felony, Trump has tightened his grip of much of his party's base and elected officials. Next month, he is scheduled to accept his party's presidential nomination for the third time.

Trump is now three years younger than Democratic President Joe Biden, who is 81.

Trump was in Washington Thursday to meet with House and Senate Republicans in his first visit to Capitol Hill since the riot, which was carried out by Trump supporters seeking to overturn his 2020 loss to Biden. A room of House Republicans sang "Happy Birthday" to Trump and gifted him with a baseball and bat from the annual congressional game.

Senators later presented an American flag cake with 45 candles, referencing that Trump was the 45th president. Sen. John Barrasso of Wyoming then added two more candles with the numerals 4 and 7.

"We're all committed to make sure he becomes the 47th president," Barrasso told reporters later, adding: "As he was sitting there, I pull them out, put them on. He loved it. And that was the last big applause at the end when you heard that."

Among the senators who attended the gathering was Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, who endorsed Trump earlier this year despite not having spoken since 2020. Barrasso told reporters that Trump and McConnell spoke and exchanged a fist bump.

Snowden, Club 47's president, and others said they expect Trump to talk about the verdict in New York as part of his regular campaign message. Trump will be sentenced July 11.

"Our people are anxious to hear his expression of his commitment to move ahead. I know that he is committed to continue to move ahead no matter what the left-wing side of our country throws at him," Snowden said.

Club 47 is based in Palm Beach County and says on its website that the club's goal is to keep Trump's supporters "in our area connected and engaged." Trump most recently spoke to the club in October, days after the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks on Israel.

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Lydia Maldonado, a local Hispanic activist who plans to attend Friday, said she's frequently attended events at Club 47 and been surrounded by a crowd adorned in U.S. flag shirts, Trump 2024 gear and U.S.-themed costumes.

Maldonado said this event is unique compared to any rally or event nationwide with the former president. Maldonado said she's excited to be at an event for Trump's birthday, but she also thinks Trump feels comfortable and familiar with this crowd since it's his hometown.

"The purpose of having this event is pretty much to let him know how much the community here loves him and how much the community supports him," Maldonado said.

'Biden Bingo': The president's campaign adapts a classic game to include malarkey and aviators

By JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — DeAnna Mireau reached into a container and fished out a scrap of paper.

"The next one is — do we have a drumroll?" she called out to a room crowded with some two dozen older adults and a half-dozen journalists. "Justice! Justice for all."

Nobody stirred, so Mireau reached for another scrap. Next was "worker empowerment." Then "malarkey." Finally, when she called out "folks," there was a winner.

"Biden Bingo!" came a quiet voice in the middle of the room. A white-haired man straightened his elbow to raise a triumphant fist in the air. The room filled with applause.

With that, 83-year-old Art Winter of Scottsdale, Arizona, became the first victor in President Joe Biden's latest effort to engage older voters in his quest for a second term.

Biden is marrying campaign mainstays like rallies and phone banks with social events like bingo and pickleball to get senior citizens involved in what is likely to be an extremely close election. Older people are more likely to vote than the average American, and many retirees have the free time to volunteer to knock on doors or make phone calls.

Seniors also make up an outsized share of the population in several swing states, including Arizona, a popular retirement destination. Biden narrowly beat former President Donald Trump, again the presumptive Republican nominee this year, by fewer than 11,000 votes here in 2020.

"Bingo and Biden — what a winning combination," Mireau, the game host, said after it was over. Some of the bingo players lingered to chitchat or eat food provided by the campaign.

Mireau was enlisted to lead the game because she lived in Las Vegas for nine years. She's also experienced. She leads the bingo games in her Phoenix mobile home park.

"People gathering together of like minds and like goals, we can just generate so much more energy, and it helps us get to the finish line," said Mireau, who learned about the event through her involvement in the Arizona Alliance for Retired Americans, a left-leaning group comprised largely of retired union members.

For his "Biden Bingo" victory, Winter was offered a choice of four prizes. His wife made the pick — several books of crossword puzzles.

The game continued. Just a few drawings later, there was another call of "Biden Bingo." Another triumphant fist in the air. Winter again. This time, his wife picked an envelope containing a mystery gift card. He set it aside unopened.

"I've never even won a door prize," he said to his table with a laugh.

The game continued. More scraps of paper pulled from the bin: Election day. Education. Veterans. Aviator sunglasses. Scranton. Expanding Medicare.

Here Mireau interjected. "It will literally save lives, and it could be yours," she said.

More scraps — and more references to Biden's political persona, some humorous, others serious: Amtrak train. Dr. Jill Biden. American jobs. Working families.

Not one but two bingos were called out now — but not "Biden Bingo" this time. These winners apparently forgot the instruction to announce victory with the president's name, but nobody enforced the rule.

Suddenly out of prizes, but with a bin still teeming with Biden-themed scraps of paper, a campaign aide

hurried to fetch some more. She came back with a deck of cards and a few large-print books of word games.

The scraps of paper drew from snippets of Biden's biography and governing priorities. He famously commuted by Amtrak train to the Capitol as a U.S. senator. He sports aviator-style sunglasses on bright days. And he's made "malarkey" into a household word.

Finally, there was just one scrap left.

"Good-paying jobs," said Mireau, and the room erupted in applause. Everyone had filled their board.

And now it was time for business. Up came an energetic young man who introduced himself as one of the campaign organizers working out of this Democratic field office in an aging office building in midtown Phoenix. He handed out his own scraps of paper — volunteer cards — and urged them to help the campaign by knocking on doors and calling other voters.

Half of adults who are 65 and older have a very or somewhat favorable opinion of Biden, according to a recent AP-NORC poll. Older adults are more likely than those under 65 to have a positive view of the president.

While Biden's approval has declined during his time in office, it's had less of a falling off among those who are 65 and older. About half of people 65 and older approved of how Biden was handling his job as president in an AP-NORC poll conducted in March. That's down slightly from January 2021 when Biden first took office, when about 6 in 10 adults who are 65 and older approved of his performance.

Only about one-third of those under 65 approved of Biden's job performance in March, which was down from roughly 6 in 10 in January 2021.

In the 2020 election, Biden and Trump split voters who were 65 and older. AP VoteCast data shows that about half of voters who are 65 and older went for Trump and about half went for Biden. Biden won among women and non-white voters who were 65 and older, while Trump won older men and white voters in this age group.

A majority of Americans say they doubt the mental capabilities of the 81-year-old Biden and the 77-year-old Trump. But in a major risk for Biden, independents are much more likely to say that they lack confidence in his mental abilities (80%) compared with Trump's (56%).

Brenda Clarke, a 75-year-old retiree in Tempe, Arizona, said she gets angry when she hears her friends express doubts about Biden's age and blames the media for fanning concerns. She said Biden's supporters need to remind people of his accomplishments.

"The onus is on us to continually call people out when they're trying to propagate that," said Clarke.

Alex Jones could lose his Infowars platform to pay for Sandy Hook conspiracy lawsuit

By DAVE COLLINS and JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Right-wing conspiracy theorist Alex Jones appears on the brink of losing the Infowars media platform that he turned into a multimillion-dollar moneymaker over the past 25 years, as a bankruptcy judge is set to rule on whether to liquidate his assets to help pay the \$1.5 billion he owes for his false claims that the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting was a hoax.

A hearing is scheduled for Friday morning in U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Houston.

Jones has been telling his web viewers and radio listeners that Infowars' parent company, Free Speech Systems, is on the verge of being shut down because of the bankruptcy. He's also been urging them to download videos from his online archive to preserve them and pointing them to a new website of his father's company if they want to continue buying the dietary supplements he sells on his show.

"I think it's very accurate to say Infowars is a sinking ship," Jones said on his show Wednesday, later adding that it could be a matter of hours or days when he loses the company.

"Infowars will live on through all the great work we've done, all the reports we've filed, through you saving them and you sharing them, and of course I will come back stronger than ever," he said. "But I'm going to stay with the ship until it fully sinks. ... At the last moment, I will then step onto the next ship."

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A liquidation would mean Jones' assets would be sold off. It could also mean Jones loses ownership of Free Speech Systems, Infowars, the company's social media accounts and all copyrights. Final details are not yet decided. Some of Jones' supporters, including former Donald Trump adviser Roger Stone, have suggested they might try to buy Infowars.

Messages seeking comment ahead of Friday's hearing were left for bankruptcy lawyers for Jones and Free Speech Systems. Jones has about \$9 million in personal assets, while his company has about \$4 million in cash on hand, according to the most recent financial filings in court.

Jones and Austin, Texas-based Free Speech Systems filed for bankruptcy protection in 2022, when relatives of many victims of the 2012 Sandy Hook school shooting that killed 20 first graders and six educators in Newtown, Connecticut, won lawsuit judgments of more than \$1.4 billion in Connecticut and \$49 million in Texas.

Lawyers for the Sandy Hook families have been seeking liquidation.

"Doing so will enable the Connecticut families to enforce their \$1.4 billion in judgments now and into the future while also depriving Jones of the ability to inflict mass harm as he has done for some 25 years," Chris Mattei, a lawyer for the families in the Connecticut case, said.

The relatives said they were traumatized by Jones' comments and his followers' actions. They testified about being harassed and threatened by Jones' believers, some of whom confronted the grieving families in person saying the shooting never happened and their children never existed. One parent said someone threatened to dig up his dead son's grave.

Jones and Free Speech Systems initially filed for bankruptcy reorganization protection that would have allowed him to run Infowars while paying the families with revenues from his show. But the two sides couldn't agree on a final plan, and Jones recently filed for permission to switch his personal bankruptcy from a reorganization to a liquidation.

The families in the Connecticut lawsuit, including relatives of eight dead children and adults, have asked that Free Speech Systems' separate bankruptcy case also be converted to a liquidation. But the parents in the Texas suit — whose child, 6-year-old Jesse Lewis, died — want the company's case dismissed.

Lawyers for the company filed documents indicating it supported liquidation, but attorneys for Jones' personal bankruptcy case filed a motion Wednesday saying he does not support that plan and wants the judge to dismiss the company's case.

If Free Speech Systems' case is dismissed, the company could return to the same position it was in after the \$1.5 billion was awarded in the lawsuits. Efforts to collect the damages would go back to the state courts in Texas and Connecticut. That could give Infowars an extended lifeline as collection efforts played out.

Although he has since acknowledged that the Sandy Hook shooting happened, Jones has been saying on his recent shows that Democrats and the "deep state" are conspiring to shut down his companies and take away his free speech rights because of his views. He also has said the Sandy Hook families are being used as pawns in the conspiracy. The families' lawyers say that is nonsense.

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

Free Speech Systems, which employs 44 people, made nearly \$3.2 million in April, including from selling the dietary supplements, clothing and other items that Jones promotes on his show, while listing \$1.9 million in expenses.

The families have a pending lawsuit in Texas accusing Jones of illegally diverting and hiding millions of dollars. Jones has denied the allegations.

G7 leaders tackle the issue of migration on the second day of their summit in Italy

By ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

BARI, Italy (AP) — Leaders of the Group of Seven leading industrialized nations are turning their attention to migration on the second day of their summit Friday, seeking ways to combat trafficking and increase investment in countries from where migrants start out on often life-threatening journeys.

The gathering in a luxury resort in Italy's southern Puglia region is also discussing other major topics, such as financial support for Ukraine, the war in Gaza, artificial intelligence and climate change, as well as China's industrial policy and economic security.

But some divisions also appeared to emerge over the wording of the summit's final declaration, with disagreement reported over the inclusion of a reference to abortion.

Migration is of particular interest to summit host Italy, which lies on one of the major routes into the European Union for people fleeing war and poverty in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Right-wing Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, known for her hard-line stance on the issue, has been keen to increase investment and funding for African nations as a means of reducing migratory pressure on Europe.

Italy "wanted to dedicate ample space to another continent that is fundamental to the future of all of us, which is Africa, with its difficulties, its opportunities," Meloni said at the summit opening Thursday.

"Linked to Africa, and not only to Africa, there is another fundamental issue that Italy has placed at the center of the presidency, which is the issue of migration, the increasingly worrying role that trafficking organizations are assuming, clearly exploiting the desperation of human beings," she said.

Meloni has a controversial five-year deal with neighboring Albania for the Balkan country to host thousands of asylum-seekers while Italy processes their claims. She has also spearheaded the "Mattei Plan" for Africa, a continentwide strategy to increase economic opportunities at home and so discourage migration to Europe.

More than 22,000 people have arrived in Italy by sea so far in 2024, according to UNHCR figures. In 2023, more than 157,000 arrived, and nearly 2,000 died or went missing while attempting the perilous Mediterranean crossing.

The United States has also been struggling with a growing number of migrants at its southern border. President Joe Biden introduced new policies to curb migration after a bill he tried to get through Congress failed to pass.

However, immigrant rights advocates filed lawsuits on Thursday over the new policies, and it is unclear whether they will be able to withstand the legal challenges in the U.S. courts.

Tackling migration "is a common challenge," European Council President Charles Michel said after arriving at the summit.

"This is the route that we intend, together with our partners, to put in place: this coalition to fight against the smugglers, these criminal groups which are abusing (vulnerable people) to make money and to destabilize regions and countries across the world," he added.

Apart from the G7 nations of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the U.S., the Italian hosts have also invited several African leaders — Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, Kenyan President William Ruto and Tunisian President Kais Saied — to press Meloni's migration and development initiatives.

Pope Francis will also become the first pontiff to address a G7 summit when he delivers a speech on artificial intelligence Friday. Other invitees include Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The summit opened Thursday with a strong show of support for Kyiv: an agreement reached on a U.S. proposal to back a \$50 billion loan to Ukraine using frozen Russian assets as collateral. Biden also signed a bilateral security agreement with Zelenskyy on Thursday evening, aiming to send a signal to Russia of American resolve in supporting Kyiv.

Describing it as a "truly historic day," Zelenskyy said the agreement was "on security and thus on the

protection of human life.”

But some cracks appeared among the G7 leaders, with French President Emmanuel Macron deploring a lack of reference to abortion in the draft of the summit’s final document.

The statement after last year’s summit in Hiroshima, Japan, expressed a commitment to provide access to safe and legal abortion to women and girls, and pledged to defend gender equality and the rights of members of the LGBTQ+ community.

But Italy’s ANSA news agency, citing the draft for this year’s communique, said Thursday the final document had no reference to abortion.

“I regret this,” Macron said, answering a question on the issue from an Italian reporter. France “has included women’s right to abortion, the freedom of decision on one’s own body, into its Constitution,” he said, adding that France defends “this vision of equality between women and men.”

“It’s not a vision that’s shared across all the political spectrum,” Macron said. “I regret it, but I respect it because it was the sovereign choice of your people.”

Meloni, who campaigned on a “God, Faith and Fatherland” motto, has denied she is rolling back abortion rights, which have been legal in Italy since 1978. But the center-left opposition has warned that her initiatives are chipping away at those rights, including by giving pro-life groups access to women considering abortions.

According to ANSA, this year’s text says the G7 “repeats our commitment expressed in the final communique of the G7 of Hiroshima for a universal, adequate and sustainable access to health services for women, including the right to reproduction.”

Elon Musk wins back his \$44.9 billion Tesla pay package in shareholder vote

By TOM KRISHER and DAVID HAMILTON AP Business Writers

DETROIT (AP) — Tesla shareholders voted Thursday to restore CEO Elon Musk’s record \$44.9 billion pay package that was thrown out by a Delaware judge earlier this year, sending a strong vote of confidence in his leadership of the electric vehicle maker.

The favorable vote doesn’t necessarily mean that Musk will get the all-stock compensation anytime soon. The package is likely to remain tied up in the Delaware Chancery Court and Supreme Court for months as Tesla tries to overturn the Delaware judge’s rejection.

Musk has raised doubts about his future with Tesla this year, writing on X, the social media platform he owns, that he wanted a 25% stake in the company in order to stop him from taking artificial intelligence development elsewhere. The higher stake is needed to control the use of AI, he has said.

Tesla also has struggled with falling sales and profit margins as demand for electric vehicles slows worldwide.

But at the company’s annual meeting Thursday in Austin, Texas, Musk reassured shareholders that he will stick around, telling them he can’t sell any stock in the compensation package for five years.

“It’s not actually cash, and I can’t cut and run, nor would I want to,” he said.

Vote totals on Musk’s pay weren’t immediately announced, but the company said shareholders voted for Musk’s compensation plan, which initially was approved by the board and stockholders six years ago.

Tesla last valued the package at \$44.9 billion in an April regulatory filing. It was once as much as \$56 billion but has declined in value in tandem with Tesla’s stock, which has dropped about 25% so far this year.

Chancellor Kathaleen St. Jude McCormick ruled in January in a shareholder’s lawsuit that Musk essentially controlled the Tesla board when it ratified the package in 2018, and that it failed to fully inform shareholders who approved it the same year.

Tesla has said it would appeal, but asked shareholders to reapprove the package at Thursday’s annual meeting.

A separate vote approved moving the company’s legal home to Texas to avoid the courts in Delaware, where Tesla is registered as a corporation.

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"Its incredible," a jubilant Musk told the crowd gathered at Tesla's headquarters and large factory in Austin, Texas. "I think we're not just opening a new chapter for Tesla, we're starting a new book."

Musk and Tesla didn't win everything. Shareholders approved measures that trimmed board member terms from three years to one and cut the required vote on shareholder proposals to a simple majority.

Legal experts say the issue of Musk's pay will still be decided in Delaware, largely because Musk's lawyers have assured McCormick they won't try to move the case to Texas.

But they differ on whether the new ratification of the pay package will make it easier for Tesla to get it approved.

Charles Elson, a retired professor and founder of the corporate governance center at the University of Delaware, said he doesn't think the vote will influence McCormick, who issued a decision based on the law.

McCormick's ruling essentially made the 2018 compensation package a gift to Musk, Elson said, and that would need unanimous shareholder approval, an impossible threshold. The vote, he said, is interesting from a public perception standpoint, but "in my view it does not affect the ruling."

John Lawrence, a Dallas-based lawyer with Baker Botts who defends corporations against shareholder lawsuits, agreed the vote doesn't end the legal dispute and automatically give Musk the stock options. But he says it gives Tesla a strong argument to get the ruling overturned.

He expects Musk and Tesla to argue that shareholders were fully informed before the latest votes, so McCormick should reverse her decision. But the plaintiff in the lawsuit will argue that the vote has no impact and isn't legally binding, Lawrence said.

The vote, he said, was done under Delaware law and should be considered by the judge.

"This shareholder vote is a strong signal that you now have an absolutely well-informed body of shareholders," he said. "The judge in Delaware still could decide that this doesn't change a thing about her prior ruling and doesn't require her to make any different ruling going forward. But I think it definitely gives Tesla and Musk strong ammunition to try to get her to revisit this."

If the ruling stands, then Musk likely will appeal to the Delaware Supreme Court, Lawrence said.

Multiple institutional investors have come out against Musk's sizeable payout, some citing the company's recent struggles. But analysts said votes by individual shareholders likely put Musk's pay over the top.

Earlier Thursday, Tesla disclosed that shareholders were voting for Musk's pay package by a wide margin. That drove the company's shares up 3% by the time the markets closed.

After the votes were announced, Musk began telling shareholders about new developments in the company's "Full Self-Driving" system. He has staked the company's future on development of autonomous vehicles, robots and artificial intelligence.

"Full Self-Driving" keeps improving with new versions, and its safety per mile is better than human drivers, Musk said.

"This is actually going to work. This is going to happen. Mark my words, this is just a matter of time," he said.

Despite its name, "Full Self-Driving" can't drive itself, and the company says human drivers must be ready to intervene at all times. Tesla's "Full Self-Driving" hardware went on sale late in 2015, and Musk has used the name ever since as the company gathered data to teach its computers how to drive.

In 2019, Musk promised a fleet of autonomous robotaxis by 2020, and he said in early 2022 that the cars would be autonomous that year. In April of last year, Musk said the system should be ready in 2023.

Since 2021, Tesla has been beta-testing "Full Self-Driving" using volunteer owners. U.S. safety regulators last year made Tesla recall the software after finding that the system misbehaved around intersections and could violate traffic laws.

Musk also said the company is making huge progress on its Optimus humanoid robot. Currently it has two working at its factory in Fremont, California, that take battery cells off a production line and put them in shipping containers, he said.

Despite laying off the team working on Tesla's Supercharger electric vehicle charging network, Musk said he thinks the company will deploy more chargers this year "that are actually working" than the rest of the industry. In the second half of the year, he expects to spend \$500 million on Superchargers, Musk said.

Phoenix police have pattern of violating civil rights and using excessive force, Justice Dept. says

By JACQUES BILLEAUD Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Phoenix police discriminate against Black, Hispanic and Native American people, unlawfully detain homeless people and use excessive force, including unjustified deadly force, according to a sweeping federal civil rights investigation of law enforcement in the nation's fifth-largest city.

The U.S. Justice Department report released Thursday says investigators found stark racial disparities in how officers in the Phoenix Police Department enforce certain laws, including low-level drug and traffic offenses. Investigators found that Phoenix officers shoot at people who do not pose an imminent threat, fire their weapons after any threat has been eliminated, and routinely delay medical care for people injured in encounters with officers.

The report does not mention whether the federal government is pursuing a court-enforced reform plan known as a consent decree — an often costly and lengthy process — but a Justice Department official told reporters that in similar cases that method has been used to carry out reforms.

Interim Phoenix Police Chief Michael Sullivan said in a statement that they need time to thoroughly review the findings before considering any next steps. A top police union official, meanwhile, called the Justice Department investigation a "farce," and warned that a consent decree would hurt officer morale.

"The Department of Justice is not interested in making local police departments and the communities they serve better," said Darrell Kriplean, president of the Phoenix Law Enforcement Association, which represents about 2,200 officers. "This action demonstrates that they are only interested in removing control of local police from the communities that they serve through consent decrees."

Attorney General Merrick Garland called the report "an important step toward accountability and transparency." He said in an email that it underscores the department's commitment to "meaningful reform that protects the civil rights and safety of Phoenix residents and strengthens police-community trust."

Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego said in a statement that city officials would meet June 25 to get legal advice and discuss next steps.

"I will carefully and thoroughly review the findings before making further comment," Gallego said.

The Justice Department said Phoenix officers enforce certain laws — such as low-level drug and traffic offenses, loitering and trespassing — more harshly against Black, Hispanic and Native American people than against white people who engage in the same conduct.

Black people in the city are over 3.5 times more likely than white people, for example, to be cited or arrested for not signaling before turning, the report says. Hispanic drivers are more than 50% more likely than white drivers to be cited or arrested for speeding near school zone cameras. And Native American people are more than 44 times more likely than white people — on a per capita basis — to be cited or arrested for possessing and consuming alcohol.

Officers investigating drug-related offenses also were 27% more likely to release white people in 30 minutes or less, but Native Americans accused of the same offense were detained longer, the department said. And Native Americans were 14% more likely to be booked for trespass, while officers cited or released white people accused of the same offense.

There is "overwhelming statistical evidence" that the disparities are due to discrimination, the Justice Department said.

Phoenix has a population of 1.6 million, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Race and ethnicity figures show 2% of the population is Native American, 7% is Black, nearly 43% is Hispanic and 41% is non-Hispanic white.

Of the more than 2,500 officers who work for the Phoenix Police Department, 68% are white, 21% are Hispanic and 4% are Black.

Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke, who leads the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, criticized Phoenix for "over-policing" homeless people, including arrests without reasonable suspicion of a crime. More than a third of the Phoenix Police Department's misdemeanor arrests and citations were of

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homeless people, the report says. The DOJ investigation began in August 2021.

Litigation is an option if the Justice Departments' efforts to secure a consent decree are unsuccessful. "We remain very hopeful that we can build on the track record of success that we have had in other jurisdictions across our country and put in place a consent decree that contains the strong medicine necessary to address the severe violations identified," Clarke said.

Similar DOJ investigations in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Baltimore and elsewhere have found systemic problems related to excessive force and civil rights violations, some resulting in costly consent decrees that have lasted for years.

In Phoenix, a 2020 case accusing 15 protesters of being in an anti-police gang was dismissed because there wasn't credible evidence; in 2017, a "challenge coin" was circulated among officers depicting a gas mask-wearing demonstrator getting shot in the groin with a projectile; and in June 2019, cellphone video emerged showing officers pointing guns when they confronted an unarmed Black couple with two small children they suspected of shoplifting.

Poder In Action, a Phoenix group that advocates for people of color and workers, said the findings were no surprise.

"We never needed a DOJ investigation to tell us this," the group said in a statement. "The data and the stories from residents have been telling us this for years."

The report said some police shootings happened because of officers' "reckless tactics," and that police "unreasonably delay" providing aid to people they have shot and use force against those who are unconscious or otherwise incapacitated.

In one instance, police waited more than nine minutes to provide aid to a woman whom officers had shot 10 times, the Justice Department said. The woman died.

The investigation zeroed in on the city's 911 operations. Even though Phoenix has invested \$15 million to send non-police responders to mental health calls, the city hasn't given the 911 call-takers and dispatchers necessary training.

Officers assume people with disabilities are dangerous and resort to force rather than de-escalation tactics, leading to force and criminal consequences for those with behavioral health disabilities, rather than finding them care, the Justice Department said.

City Manager Jeff Barton said in a message to city employees late Thursday: "We are taking all allegations seriously and are planning to review this lengthy report with an open mind."

McIlroy showing major form with bogey-free 65 to share US Open lead with Cantlay

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

PINEHURST, N.C. (AP) — Rory McIlroy sent his 20-foot birdie putt on its way at the 18th hole Thursday and started walking toward the cup when the ball was still some 6 feet away from falling. It looked like the walk of a four-time major champion in control of his game on a Pinehurst No. 2 course that demanded every bit of that in the U.S. Open.

Turns out that was about the only thing that didn't go according to plan.

"I thought I'd left it short. That's why I walked after it — full disclosure," McIlroy said. "It looked good, though."

He looked as good as ever, posting a bogey-free opening round in a major for the first time since last winning one 10 years ago in the British Open. His 5-under 65 gave him a share of the lead with nemesis Patrick Cantlay in a first round that had a little bit of everything.

Scottie Scheffler was over par in the opening round of a major for the first time in two years, Collin Morikawa had two double bogeys and still shot 70. Tyrrell Hatton dropped his club on impact at the par-3 17th hole, kicked his club, watched it land on the green and made birdie.

The final touch was McIlroy's final birdie.

"A great way to finish," he said. "The way I played today, the way I hit the ball, the way I managed

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myself, I felt like that score was pretty deserved.”

Cantlay played in the morning beneath a full sun, holing out from a bunker for birdie on his second hole and making a pair of birdie putts in the 20-foot range in an otherwise tidy round marred by only one bogey.

Pinehurst No. 2 was both playable and punishing, yielding 15 rounds under par, the same number as the last time on this Donald Ross gem in 2014.

Scheffler did not have one of them. The world’s No. 1 player, coming off his fifth win of the year at the Memorial, was a picture of frustration — clean-shaven and with a fresh haircut — as he didn’t have his usual control off the tee.

He still managed a 71 and was very much in the game.

Tiger Woods couldn’t say the same. After a good start, he had five bogeys in a seven-hole stretch around the turn for a 74, his 12th consecutive round in the majors without breaking par.

McIlroy was in control from the start, hitting 6-iron to 7 feet at the 528-yard fourth hole — the toughest par 4 on the course — for birdie, and then chipping in from the front of the green on the next hole.

He has the advantage of towering iron shots that land softly, and they were usually pin-high and away from the domed edges of the Pinehurst greens that cause so much trouble.

McIlroy has won majors the last three times he has started with a bogey-free round — at Hoylelake in the 2014 British Open, at Kiawah Island in the 2012 PGA Championship and at Congressional in the 2011 U.S. Open.

“Getting off to a good start is important to try to keep yourself up there, because you have to give yourself as big of a cushion as possible, knowing what is lurking around the corner,” McIlroy said.

Ludvig Aberg, in his U.S. Open debut, hit his tee shot to 6 feet on the scary par-3 ninth hole for birdie and a 66. Every major is something new for the rising star from Sweden, who only turned pro a year ago. He was runner-up in the Masters.

Bryson DeChambeau, the runner-up at Valhalla in the PGA Championship last month, and Matthieu Pavon of France were at 67.

Sergio Garcia had the other bogey-free round — 17 pars and a birdie — in his 25th consecutive time playing the U.S. Open. He also played in the morning and didn’t seem particularly alarmed by Cantlay’s 65. That matches the low opening round in four U.S. Opens at Pinehurst No. 2.

“There’s always going to be someone that hits the ball great, everything goes his way, makes a couple of bombs, and you can shoot it,” Garcia said. “You might see someone shooting another 66 or 65 or something like that. I think as the course gets even firmer, even faster, a tiny bit of breeze comes up here and there, it’s going to be difficult to shoot those kind of scores.”

It shouldn’t be a surprise to see Cantlay contending given he has no real weakness in his game, except for his performance in the majors. He has only four top 10s in his 26 major starts since returning from a serious back injury in 2017, and only one real chance at winning one.

McIlroy and Cantlay never saw eye-to-eye during their time on the PGA Tour board as it tried to negotiate an agreement with the Saudi-backers of LIV Golf, and McIlroy was on the losing in a tense fourballs match in Rome last fall when Cantlay buried a 45-foot putt at the end.

Cantlay watched his best friend in golf — Xander Schauffele, who opened with a 70 at Pinehurst — finally win a major last month. His start was enough to at least wonder if his time is coming next.

“I’ve been working really hard on my game,” Cantlay said. “And usually when you make just a couple changes and you’re working really hard, it’s just a matter of time.”

Cantlay isn’t known to be verbose on many subjects, particularly when it comes to his performance in golf’s most important championships. He also has rejected notions that his time on the PGA Tour board during the divide with LIV Golf has been a distraction.

Whatever the case, this was a good day of work.

But it was still a test, and some of the scores would indicate that. Viktor Hovland had to make a tough par at the end for 78. Justin Thomas had a 77 and Will Zalatoris, who typically thrives in the majors, was at 75. Dustin Johnson joined the group at 74.

Five-time major champion Brooks Koepka was sailing along and dropped a 35-foot birdie putt for birdie on

the par-5 10th to reach 3 under in the morning. He had three bogeys coming in and had to settle for a 70. Colin Morikawa, who has played in the final group at the first two majors of the year, hit a decent bunker shot on the par-3 ninth that rolled by the cup 2 feet and then took a slope and stopped rolling 80 feet away, leading to double bogey. He took another double bogey on the par-3 15th and still managed a 70 by holing a bunker shot on the par-3 17th for birdie and finishing with a 30-foot birdie putt on the 18th. "Hit two poor shots and one bad bunker shot. It wasn't that bad on 9," he said. "But other than that, I felt like I played pretty good. Very, very happy I got out with even par after today."

Takeaways from Supreme Court ruling: Abortion pill still available but opponents say fight not over

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court unanimously upheld access to a drug used in the majority of U.S. abortions on Thursday, though abortion opponents say the ruling won't be the last word in the fight over mifepristone.

The narrow decision came two years after the high court overturned the nationwide right to abortion. Rather than fully dive into the issue, the high court found that anti-abortion doctors lacked the legal right to sue.

That could leave an opening for anti-abortion states or other opponents to keep up the fight.

Some takeaways from the decision:

What does this say about the Supreme Court and abortion? Not necessarily very much. Justice Brett Kavanaugh, who was part of the court majority two years ago to overturn Roe, employed a minimalist approach in the opinion that seemed designed to sidestep disagreements and arrive at a unanimous outcome.

The court found that the abortion opponents couldn't sue because they weren't actually injured by the medication, in part because federal laws protect doctors from performing abortions if they object.

The court did not address whether the FDA ultimately adhered to the law when it made changes to relax access to mifepristone, including allowing telehealth prescribing and mail delivery to patients. It said opponents could go elsewhere with their arguments, like to the president or the FDA.

Not a word was written about the Comstock Act, a 19th-century law that some abortion opponents think can be used to prevent mifepristone from being sent in the mail and was mentioned by two conservative justices during oral arguments.

The court's ability to reach a unanimous decision was also surely made easier by the aggressive lower-court rulings that embraced much of the abortion opponents' lawsuits and strayed from how courts typically decide whether someone can sue. This term, the Supreme Court is weighing several appeals of novel rulings by the New Orleans-based 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Kavanaugh delivered a rebuke in the form of a brief but pointed civics lesson, saying a federal court is "not a legislative assembly, a town square, or a faculty lounge."

What happens next? The legal fight over mifepristone doesn't seem to be over.

Erin Hawley, the lead attorney for the abortion opponents, said she expects states who previously joined the lawsuit to continue the case. They could argue that while doctors may not have legal standing to challenge the drug, states do.

The attorney general in one of those states, Kris Kobach of Kansas, sounded a similar note, saying it is "essential" the case continues.

One potential problem for the states is that the justices refused to let them intervene in the Supreme Court case.

Abortion rights advocates have also said they expect the push to restrict mifepristone to continue.

What does this mean politically? Thursday's ruling sidesteps immediate seismic political effects, but the issue will still be center stage this election year.

Democrats said the Supreme Court made the right call on abortion medication, but warned that the ruling wouldn't end GOP threats to abortion rights. Vice President Kamala Harris said former President

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Donald Trump's allies would still try to halt access to medication abortion and enact further restrictions, including a nationwide ban.

Patient Kaniya Harris, 21, said she was deeply relieved the medication allowed her to self-manage her abortion in Bethesda, Maryland, during her junior year in college in March 2023. She later demonstrated in front of the court to support access to the drug.

"We still have a ways to go," she said. "We're still pushing for abortion access But at least this is a step in the right direction."

Currently, only about half of states allow full access to the drug under the FDA's framework, though statistics show people in restricted states have continued to receive the drug by mail.

Most Republican officials and candidates weren't as vocal. Trump, the presumed Republican nominee, has previously said he'd announce a position on medication abortion but hasn't done so. He said in April that abortion should be left up to states, though this week he also urged an anti-abortion Christian group to stand up for "innocent life."

Abortion will also be directly on the ballot in at least four states where voters are being asked to approve constitutional amendments that would assure abortion access. Similar measures could be before voters in several other states, too.

Is the Supreme Court done with abortion? No. It's not even the last abortion case this term. The Supreme Court is also expected to hand down a decision in the next few weeks on whether federal law protects emergency abortions in states with strict bans.

The Biden administration argues that abortion care must be allowed in cases where a woman's health is at serious risk. It sued the state of Idaho, which maintains that its exception for life-saving care is enough.

Kavanaugh mentioned the high court's other abortion case in Thursday's ruling, as he pointed out that the Justice Department has acknowledged that doctors who are opposed to abortion don't have to take part under federal conscience laws.

The reference doesn't hint at how the court might rule in the case, said Sara Rosenbaum, a health policy professor at George Washington University. The fact that the court didn't release a decision in that case along with the mifepristone case could signal that the emergency abortion ruling "is going to be a much more difficult decision."

President Biden says he won't offer commutation to his son Hunter after gun sentence

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

FASANO, Italy (AP) — President Joe Biden said Thursday that he will not use his presidential powers to lessen the eventual sentence that his son Hunter will receive for his federal felony conviction on gun crimes.

Biden, following the conclusion of a news conference held at the Group of Seven summit of the world's wealthiest democracies, responded he would not when asked whether he plans to commute the sentence for his son. Hunter Biden's sentencing date has not been set, and the three counts carry up to 25 years in prison, though that's unlikely as a first-time offender.

Ultimately, it will be up to U.S. District Judge Maryellen Noreika, who was nominated to the bench by former Republican President Donald Trump, to decide how much time, if any, Hunter Biden serves behind bars.

Biden's remarks came one day after the White House declined to rule out a potential commutation for Hunter Biden. Both the president and the White House have said for months that Biden would not pardon his son.

"I'm extremely proud of my son Hunter. He has overcome an addiction. He is one of the brightest most decent men I know," Biden said earlier during the news conference Thursday. "I abide by the jury decision. I will do that and I will not pardon him."

Tropical rainstorms in South Florida lead to flight delays and streets jammed with stalled cars

By FREIDA FRISARO, TERRY SPENCER and DANIEL KOZIN Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — A tropical disturbance that brought a rare flash flood emergency to much of southern Florida delayed flights at two of the state's largest airports and left vehicles waterlogged and stalled in some of the region's lowest-lying streets.

"Looked like the beginning of a zombie movie," said Ted Rico, a tow truck driver who spent much of Wednesday night and Thursday morning helping to clear the streets of stalled vehicles. "There's cars littered everywhere, on top of sidewalks, in the median, in the middle of the street, no lights on. Just craziness, you know. Abandoned cars everywhere."

Rico, of One Master Trucking Corp., was born and raised in Miami and said he was ready for the emergency.

"You know when its coming," he said. "Every year it's just getting worse, and for some reason people just keep going through the puddles."

Travelers across the area were trying to adjust their plans on Thursday morning. More than 20 inches (50 centimeters) of rain has fallen in some areas of South Florida since Tuesday, with more predicted over the next few days.

Ticket and security lines snaked around a domestic concourse at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport just before noon Thursday. The travel boards showed about half of that terminal's flights had been canceled or postponed.

Bill Carlisle, a Navy petty officer first class, had spent his morning trying to catch a flight back to Norfolk, Virginia. He had arrived at Miami International Airport at about 6:30 a.m., but 90 minutes later he was still in line and realized he couldn't get his bags checked and through security in time to catch his flight.

"It was a zoo," said Carlisle, a public affairs specialist. He was speaking for himself, not the Navy. "Nothing against the (airport) employees — there is only so much they can do."

So he used his phone to book an afternoon flight out of Fort Lauderdale. He took a shuttle the 20 miles north, only to find that flight had been canceled. He was now heading back to Miami for a 9 p.m. flight, hoping it wouldn't get canceled by the heavy rains expected later in the day. He was resigned, not angry.

"Just a long day sitting in airports," Carlisle said. "This is kind of par for the course for government travel."

Wednesday's downpours and subsequent flooding blocked roads, floated vehicles and even 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 moves into the Atlantic Ocean after crossing Florida, according to the National Hurricane Center.

In Hallandale Beach, Alex Demchemko, was walking his Russian spaniel Lex along the still-flooded sidewalks near the Airbnb where he's lived after arriving from Russia last month to seek asylum in the U.S.

"We didn't come out from our apartment, but we had to walk with our dog," Demchemko said. "A lot of flashes, raining, a lot of floating cars and a lot of left cars without drivers, and there was a lot of water on the streets. It was kind of catastrophic."

On Thursday morning, Daniela Urrieche, 26, was bailing water out of her SUV, which got stuck on a flooded street as she drove home from work on Wednesday afternoon.

"In the nine years that I've lived here, this has been the worst," she said. "Even in a hurricane, streets were not as bad as it was in the past 24 hours."

The flooding wasn't limited to the streets. Charlea Johnson spent Wednesday night at her Hallandale Beach home barreling water into the sink and toilet.

"The water just started flooding in the back and flooding in the front," Johnson said.

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By Wednesday evening, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, and mayors in Fort Lauderdale, Hollywood and Miami-Dade County each declared a state of emergency.

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) fell in Miami Beach, according to the National Weather Service. Hollywood got about 5 inches (12 centimeters).

More rain was forecast for the rest of the week, with some areas getting 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.

White House preps 'dreamers' celebration while President Biden eyes new benefits for immigrants

By SEUNG MIN KIM and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden will host a White House event next week celebrating an Obama-era directive that offered deportation protections for young undocumented immigrants, as his own administration prepares potential new benefits for others without legal status but with long-standing ties in the United States.

White House officials are closing in on a plan that would tap Biden's executive powers to shield spouses of U.S. citizens without legal status from deportation, offer them work permits and ease their path toward permanent residency and eventually American citizenship, according to five people with knowledge of the deliberations.

The people said those actions could be unveiled as early as next week, although a White House official stressed Thursday that no final decisions have been made on what Biden will announce, if anything. As of earlier this week, Biden had not been presented with the proposal for his final approval, adding to the uncertainty for the timing of any announcement. The president is currently in Italy participating in the Group of Seven summit of the world's wealthiest democracies.

But Biden telegraphed last week as he rolled out his directive to crack down on asylum claims at the border — a move that has infuriated immigrant-rights groups and many Democratic lawmakers — that he would be announcing other actions more to the advocates' liking.

"Today, I have spoken about what we need to do to secure the border," Biden said at the June 4 event at the White House. "In the weeks ahead — and I mean the weeks ahead — I will speak to how we can make our immigration system more fair and more just."

To protect the spouses of Americans, the administration is expected to use a process called "parole-in-place." It not only offers deportation protections and work permits to qualifying immigrants but also removes a legal obstacle that prevents them from getting on a path to a green card, and eventually, U.S. citizenship.

That power has already been used for other groups of immigrants, such as members of the U.S. military or their family members who lack legal status.

For Biden's actions, White House officials were narrowing in on a plan that would offer parole in place for spouses of Americans who have been here for at least five or 10 years, according to the people briefed on the deliberations. The people were granted anonymity to discuss internal White House deliberations.

The immigrant advocacy group FWD.us estimates that there are roughly 1.1 million immigrants without legal status married to Americans. However, depending on how the Biden administration writes the proposal, the actual universe of people who could qualify for the president's plan is likely far smaller.

Advocates were also lobbying the White House to include benefits for immigrants lacking legal status who provide caregiving roles for American family members, according to two of the people familiar with the discussions, although that provision was seen as far less likely to be enacted for now. Allowing such caregivers to apply for a so-called "cancellation of removal" would affect immigrants like family members of Americans who have specific needs or disabilities.

Amid these deliberations, the White House has invited lawmakers to an event Tuesday afternoon to celebrate the 12th anniversary of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, according to a person familiar with the event. The initiative was created June 15, 2012, by then-President Barack Obama to protect young immigrants who lacked legal status, often known as "dreamers."

Although House lawmakers will be away from Washington on a recess, White House officials say it will be worthwhile to make it to the event.

"We're expecting positive news," said Rep. Nanette Barragán, the chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, a Democratic group that has advocated for the White House to take action to provide relief for immigrants.

"I think it just says that we value our immigrants and those people who are part of the American fabric," she said.

Unanimous Supreme Court preserves access to widely used abortion medication

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Thursday unanimously preserved access to a medication that was used in nearly two-thirds of all abortions in the U.S. last year, in the court's first abortion decision since conservative justices overturned *Roe v. Wade* two years ago.

The nine justices ruled that abortion opponents lacked the legal right to sue over the federal Food and Drug Administration's approval of the medication, mifepristone, and the FDA's subsequent actions to ease access to it. The case had threatened to restrict access to mifepristone across the country, including in states where abortion remains legal.

Abortion is banned at all stages of pregnancy in 14 states, and after about six weeks of pregnancy in three others, often before women realize they're pregnant.

Justice Brett Kavanaugh, who was part of the majority to overturn *Roe*, wrote for the court on Thursday that "federal courts are the wrong forum for addressing the plaintiffs' concerns about FDA's actions."

The opinion underscored the stakes of the 2024 election and the possibility that an FDA commissioner appointed by Republican Donald Trump, if he wins the White House, could consider tightening access to mifepristone, including prohibiting sending it through the mail.

Kavanaugh's opinion managed to unite a court deeply divided over abortion and many other divisive social issues by employing a minimalist approach that focused solely on the technical legal issue of standing and reached no judgment about the FDA's actions. Kavanaugh's seven "pro-life" references to abortion opponents may have been the only language in his opinion that revealed anything of his views on abortion.

While praising the decision, President Joe Biden signaled Democrats will continue to campaign heavily on abortion ahead of the November elections. "It does not change the fact that the right for a woman to get the treatment she needs is imperiled if not impossible in many states," Biden said in a statement.

Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of SBA Pro-Life America, expressed disappointment with the ruling, but trained her fire on Democrats. "Joe Biden and the Democrats are hell-bent on forcing abortion on demand any time for any reason, including DIY mail-order abortions, on every state in the country," Dannenfelser said.

About two-thirds of U.S. adults oppose banning the use of mifepristone, or medication abortion, nationwide, according to a KFF poll conducted in February. About one-third would support a nationwide ban.

The high court is separately considering another abortion case, about whether a federal law on emergency treatment at hospitals overrides state abortion bans in rare emergency cases in which a pregnant

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patient's health is at serious risk.

More than 6 million people have used mifepristone since 2000. Mifepristone blocks the hormone progesterone and primes the uterus to respond to the contraction-causing effect of a second drug, misoprostol. The two-drug regimen has been used to end a pregnancy through 10 weeks gestation.

Jillian Phillips, of North Brookfield, Massachusetts, took mifepristone after she suffered a miscarriage eight years ago. She eventually passed the remains of her nine-week pregnancy, which she buried in a memorial garden.

"It should have never been something we had to win," Phillips, a 42-year-old mother of three, said. "These are decisions that should be happening in a medical exam room, not courtrooms."

Health care providers have said that if mifepristone is no longer available or is too hard to obtain, they would switch to using only misoprostol, which is somewhat less effective in ending pregnancies.

Biden's administration and drug manufacturers had warned that siding with abortion opponents in this case could undermine the FDA's drug approval process beyond the abortion context by inviting judges to second-guess the agency's scientific judgments. The Democratic administration and New York-based Danco Laboratories, which makes mifepristone, argued that the drug is among the safest the FDA has ever approved.

The decision "safeguards access to a drug that has decades of safe and effective use," Danco spokeswoman Abigail Long said in a statement.

The plaintiffs in the mifepristone case, anti-abortion doctors and their organizations, argued in court papers that the FDA's decisions in 2016 and 2021 to relax restrictions on getting the drug were unreasonable and "jeopardize women's health across the nation."

Kavanaugh acknowledged what he described as the opponents' "sincere legal, moral, ideological, and policy objections to elective abortion and to FDA's relaxed regulation of mifepristone."

Federal laws already protect doctors from having to perform abortions, or give any other treatment that goes against their beliefs, Kavanaugh wrote. "The plaintiffs have not identified any instances where a doctor was required, notwithstanding conscience objections, to perform an abortion or to provide other abortion-related treatment that violated the doctor's conscience since mifepristone's 2000 approval," he wrote.

In the end, Kavanaugh wrote, the anti-abortion doctors went to the wrong forum and should instead direct their energies to persuading lawmakers and regulators to make changes.

Abortion rights advocates mainly breathed a sigh of relief after the decision, but they echoed Biden about the impact of the decision two years ago.

"In the end, this ruling is not a 'win' for abortion — it just maintains the status quo, which is a dire public health crisis in which 14 states have criminalized abortion," Nancy Northup, president and CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights, said in a statement.

The mifepristone case began five months after the Supreme Court overturned Roe. Abortion opponents initially won a sweeping ruling nearly a year ago from U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk, a Trump nominee in Texas, which would have revoked the drug's approval entirely. The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals left intact the FDA's initial approval of mifepristone. But it would reverse changes regulators made in 2016 and 2021 that eased some conditions for administering the drug.

The Supreme Court put the appeals court's modified ruling on hold, then agreed to hear the case, though Justices Samuel Alito, the author of the decision overturning Roe, and Clarence Thomas would have allowed some restrictions to take effect while the case proceeded. But they, too, joined the court's opinion Thursday.

The push to restrict abortion pills likely won't stop with the Supreme Court's ruling, said the lawyer who represented anti-abortion doctors and their organizations in the case.

The decision that the doctors don't have the legal right to sue leaves open the way for lawsuits from others, including three other states that Kacsmaryk had previously allowed to join the case, said Erin Hawley, an attorney for the group Alliance Defending Freedom.

Hawley said she expects Idaho, Kansas and Missouri to continue the lawsuit originally filed in Texas. Kansas Attorney General Kris Kobach, a Republican, asserted in a statement that the states have "standing that the doctors did not," confirming that he will press ahead with the case in Kacsmark's court.

Justice Clarence Thomas took more trips paid for by donor Harlan Crow, Senate panel reveals

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Dick Durbin says his committee has uncovered at least three additional trips given to Justice Clarence Thomas by GOP megadonor Harlan Crow as part of the panel's ethics investigation into the Supreme Court.

Durbin, D-Ill., said Thursday the committee obtained information from Crow that Thomas took three trips, and at least six flights, on Crow's private jet in 2017, 2019 and 2021. The panel also found evidence of private jet travel during trips to Indonesia and California that Thomas recently disclosed in an amendment to a 2019 financial disclosure report.

The Democratic-led Judiciary panel launched the investigation last year after several reports that Thomas had for years received undisclosed expensive gifts, including international travel, from Crow. The committee has since pushed the Supreme Court to adopt a stronger ethics code as trips by Thomas and Justice Samuel Alito came to light, along with six-figure book deals received by other justices.

The new information "makes it crystal clear that the highest court needs an enforceable code of conduct, because its members continue to choose not to meet the moment," Durbin said in a statement.

There was no immediate comment from the court on the Senate report. In the past, Thomas has maintained that he is not required to disclose the many trips he and his wife took that were paid for the Texas megadonor because Crow and his wife Kathy are "among our dearest friends," Thomas said in an April 2023 statement that he was advised by colleagues on the nation's highest court and others in the federal judiciary that "this sort of personal hospitality from close personal friends, who did not have business before the Court, was not reportable."

Thomas, 75, and his wife, Virginia, have traveled on Crow's yacht and private jet in Indonesia as well as stayed at his private resort in New York's Adirondack Mountains, ProPublica reported last year. ProPublica wrote that it could have cost more than \$500,000 had Thomas chartered a plane and yacht himself.

Last week, Thomas said in his annual financial disclosure that Crow paid for a hotel room in Bali, Indonesia, for a single night in 2019, and food and lodging at a private club in Sonoma County, California, the same year. But he did not report the plane flights or the stay on Crow's yacht.

In a statement released minutes after the Judiciary panel released its report, Crow's office said he reached an agreement with the committee to provide information responsive to its requests going back seven years, "despite his serious and continued concerns about the legality and necessity of the inquiry." The panel voted in November to authorize a subpoena for Crow as part of the probe, despite protests from all committee Republicans.

Crow, a longtime GOP donor based in Dallas, has maintained that he has never spoken with his friend about pending matters before the court.

The Judiciary panel said it will release a full report later this year. But among the details Durbin released Thursday were a 2017 trip Thomas took on Crow's jet from St. Louis to Montana, along with a return flight from Montana to Dallas; round trip private jet travel in 2019 from Washington to Savannah, Ga., and a round trip flight on a private jet from Washington to San Jose, California, in 2021.

The committee said it also has evidence of private jet travel for the 2019 trip to Indonesia, along with documentation of the eight-day yacht excursion.

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

Starting last year, the justices also must report private plane travel that is given to them. Thomas has declined to report trips he took before those rules went into effect.

Biden and Zelenskyy sign security deal as Ukraine's leader questions how long the unity will last

By COLLEEN LONG and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

FASANO, Italy (AP) — President Joe Biden and Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a 10-year security agreement Thursday that they hailed as a milestone in relations between their countries, but that alone was not enough to stop Zelenskyy from wondering how much longer he could count on America's support.

Zelenskyy also said his country "urgently" needed additional air defense systems to protect Ukrainians and the nation's infrastructure from Russia's continued bombardment.

The leaders signed the agreement on the sidelines of the annual Group of Seven summit, held this year in Italy, and Biden said the goal "is to strengthen Ukraine's defense and deterrence capabilities."

Zelenskyy said at a joint news conference that the signing made for a "truly historic day," but he also wondered about the durability of support from the United States and other allies.

Ukraine's president said the right question to ask is "for how long the unity in the world will remain? The unity in the U.S., together with European leaders" and how it will be influenced by the outcome of elections this year in many of those countries.

Topping that list is voting in the U.S. in November in a campaign that could see the return of Republican Donald Trump to the presidency. Trump has been skeptical of providing additional military aid to Ukraine, at one point criticizing the "endless flow of American treasure." He more recently has expressed openness to lending money instead and has said Ukraine's independence is important to the United States.

Biden said the U.S. has commitments from five countries that he did not name to provide Patriot missile and other air defense systems to Ukraine. He said countries that have been expecting the same weapons from the U.S. have been told they will have to wait because "everything we have is going to go to Ukraine until their needs are met."

Zelenskyy said he "urgently" needed seven Patriot systems. Biden then told him, "You'll have some relatively quickly."

Germany is one of the five countries that have promised an additional Patriot system for Ukraine.

Zelenskyy went on to deliver a stark warning about Russian aggression, saying that "if Ukraine does not withstand, the democracy of many countries, I am sure, won't withstand either."

The U.S. and European countries also agreed to keep sanctioned Russian assets locked up until Moscow pays reparations for its invasion of Ukraine, clearing the way for a \$50 billion loan package for Ukraine. Combined with new sanctions against Russia announced earlier in the week, Biden said the series of actions to support Ukraine show Putin that "he cannot wait us out. He cannot divide us."

The highly anticipated agreement will leverage interest and income from more than \$260 billion in frozen Russian assets, largely held in Europe, to secure a \$50 billion loan from the U.S. and additional loans from other partners. Ukraine will receive the first payments sometime this year, a U.S. official said. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to preview the agreement, which will be included in the G7 leaders' statement on Friday.

Ukraine will be able to spend the money in several areas, including military, economic, humanitarian and reconstruction needs, the official said.

The leaders' statement on Friday will also preserve the option of confiscating the Russian assets entirely, for which the allies have yet to secure the political will, largely citing legal and financial stability concerns.

Biden and Zelenskyy met Thursday for the second time in two weeks to discuss the security agreement as the group of wealthy democracies has been looking for new ways to bolster Ukraine's defenses against Russia.

The agreement on using frozen Russian assets to benefit Ukraine comes several months after the White

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House broke through a logjam in Congress that had stalled approval of some \$60 billion in U.S. aid for Ukraine. The delay gave Russia time to make up ground on the battlefield. Biden publicly apologized to Zelenskyy for the holdup when they met last week in France.

The security agreement does not commit U.S. troops directly to Ukraine's defense against Russia. Biden does not want the U.S. to be pulled into a direct conflict with nuclear-armed Moscow.

The pact, which would remain in effect for 10 years, does not offer Ukraine any new money but includes a commitment by the U.S. to work with Congress on a source of sustainable funding for the future. Text of the agreement released by the White House also describes how the U.S. will coordinate with Ukraine and other U.S. allies and partners to make sure Ukraine has the military, intelligence and other means necessary to defend itself and deter Russian aggression.

The U.S. and Ukraine would also consult "at the highest levels" in the event of a future armed attack by Russia against Ukraine. Either side can terminate the agreement in writing with six months' notice, which means a future U.S. president, including Trump if elected in November, could cancel the arrangement.

Scores of countries and organizations are set to meet over the weekend in Switzerland to discuss peace for Ukraine. Biden is not attending the summit, which has disappointed Zelenskyy. Vice President Kamala Harris will represent the U.S. instead while the Democratic president attends a campaign fundraiser in Los Angeles.

It wasn't just Ukraine that occupied the allies' attention.

Biden announced that Italy was joining a G7 initiative to provide development assistance to Africa, which is meant as a bulwark against growing Chinese influence on the continent. Biden said \$60 billion mobilized by the U.S. and the G7 is proof "democracies can deliver," as the U.S. and its allies warn that China's investments come attached with geopolitical and economic demands.

The annual summit opened Thursday in Italy's picturesque Puglia region in the south, with leaders meeting in private to discuss the wars in Gaza and Ukraine and other mutual concerns.

The Group of Seven industrialized democracies — the U.S., Britain, Canada, France, German, Italy and Japan, plus European governing bodies — meets annually. Italy holds the rotating presidency this year, and Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni is hosting her counterparts.

Atlanta Falcons forfeit fifth-round pick, fined for tampering with Kirk Cousins

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

The Atlanta Falcons were stripped of a fifth-round pick in next year's draft on Thursday for violating the NFL's anti-tampering rules prior to signing quarterback Kirk Cousins, wide receiver Darnell Mooney and tight end Charlie Woerner in free agency in March.

The NFL also fined the team \$250,000, while general manager Terry Fontenot has been fined \$50,000.

The Falcons and Cousins agreed on a four-year, \$180 million contract with \$100 million guaranteed shortly after the league's 52-hour legal tampering window opened on March 11. Woerner agreed on a \$12 million, three-year deal later that day and Mooney agreed on a \$39 million, three-year deal a day later.

The league didn't penalize the Philadelphia Eagles for having impermissible contact with running back Saquon Barkley, saying its investigation "did not discover sufficient evidence to support a finding that the anti-tampering policy was violated."

It's normal for teams and players to reach agreements quickly and there were other players who agreed to deals even before Cousins. But Cousins' comments at his introductory news conference raised questions that led to the NFL's investigation.

Cousins, who is returning from a torn right Achilles tendon that ended his 2023 season after eight games, indicated he spoke to the team's medical staff before they were permitted to have contact.

"There's great people here," Cousins said. "And it's not just the football team. I mean, I'm looking at the support staff. Meeting — calling, yesterday, calling our head athletic trainer, talking to our head of PR. I'm

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thinking, we got good people here. And that's exciting to be a part of."

Teams are allowed to talk directly with agents — but not the players — during that two-day negotiation period unless the player represents himself.

"While the policy permits clubs to engage with and negotiate all aspects of an NFL player contract with the certified agent of any prospective unrestricted free agent during the two-day negotiating period, any direct contact between the player and an employee or representative of the club is prohibited," the league said in a statement. "This includes discussion of travel arrangements or other logistical matters, which the club acknowledges took place with regard to these three players."

Barkley bolted the New York Giants for division rival Philadelphia, agreeing on a three-year, \$37.75 million deal with \$26 million guaranteed, a couple hours into the legal tampering period. Comments by Penn State coach James Franklin sparked the league's investigation.

Franklin, who coached Barkley for three seasons, indicated that Eagles general manager Howie Roseman and Barkley had a phone conversation.

"For him now to come back and be able to play within the state in Philadelphia, (Barkley) said that was one of the first things Howie (Roseman) said to him on the phone as part of his sales pitch to him," Franklin said. "Not only the Philadelphia Eagles but obviously the connection with Penn State and the fan bases as well."

The league says it reviewed phone logs, text messages and other documents related to Philadelphia's free agency strategy and decision to sign Barkley. The NFL also interviewed several members of the organization, including Roseman and coach Nick Sirianni, along with Barkley and Franklin.

"As with every review, should new evidence be uncovered, the league may reopen the investigation," the NFL's statement said.

The league has cracked down on tampering in the past with the Miami Dolphins receiving the most severe penalty in 2022.

The Dolphins forfeited a first-round pick and a third-round selection for tampering with Tom Brady and coach Sean Payton. Dolphins owner Stephen Ross also received a suspension and was fined \$1.5 million and executive Bruce Beal was fined \$500,000.

In 2016, the Kansas City Chiefs forfeited third and sixth-round picks for tampering with wide receiver Jeremy Maclin. The team was also fined \$250,000 while coach Andy Reid was fined \$75,000, and then-general manager John Dorsey was fined \$25,000.

The New York Jets were fined \$100,000 in 2015 for tampering with New England Patriots cornerback Darrelle Revis before signing him.

Washington's Makah Tribe could once again harpoon whales as US waives conservation law

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — The United States granted the Makah Indian Tribe in Washington state a long-sought waiver Thursday that helps clear the way for its first sanctioned whale hunts since 1999 and sets the stage for renewed clashes with animal rights activists.

The Makah, a tribe of 1,500 people on the northwestern tip of the Olympic Peninsula, is the only Native American tribe with a treaty that specifically mentions a right to hunt whales. But it has faced more than two decades of court challenges, bureaucratic hearings and scientific review as it seeks to resume hunting for gray whales.

The decision by NOAA Fisheries grants a waiver under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, which otherwise forbids harming marine mammals. It allows the tribe to hunt up to 25 Eastern North Pacific gray whales over 10 years, with a limit of two to three per year. There are roughly 20,000 whales in that population.

The tribe celebrated the decision but said it took far too long.

"Whaling remains central to the identity, culture, subsistence, and spirituality of the Makah people, and we regard the Gray Whale as sacred," Makah Tribal Council Chairman Timothy J. Greene Sr. said in a writ-

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ten statement. "In the time since our last successful hunt in 1999, we have lost many elders who held the knowledge of our whaling customs, and another entire generation of Makahs has grown up without the ability to exercise our Treaty right or experience the connections and benefits of whaling that our ancestors secured for us."

The hunts will be timed in an effort to avoid harming endangered Western North Pacific gray whales that sometimes visit the area — about 200 to 300 remain — as well as a group of about 200 gray whales that generally spend summer and fall feeding along the Northwest coast.

Nevertheless, some hurdles remain. The tribe must enter into a cooperative agreement with the agency under the Whaling Convention Act, and it must obtain a permit to hunt, a process that involves a month-long public comment period.

Animal rights advocates, who have long opposed whaling, could also challenge NOAA's decision in court. DJ Schubert, a senior wildlife biologist with the Washington, D.C.-based Animal Welfare Institute, said his organization would object to the issuance of the hunt permit but likely wait until final approvals are given before deciding whether to sue.

He noted that while the Eastern North Pacific gray whale population appears healthy now, it has fluctuated wildly in recent years, and no one knows how the whales will fare as climate change continues to affect the Arctic. Scientists estimate that as much as 40% of the population died off from 2018 to last year before it began to recover.

"We completely respect the tribe's cultural practices and traditions," Schubert said. "We just fundamentally disagree that they need to hunt whales to continue those traditions. We hope that as this decision-making process plays out, perhaps the Makah Tribe and the government could reconsider the need to hunt whales and advocate for protection instead of persecution."

Archeological evidence shows that Makah hunters in cedar canoes killed whales for sustenance from time immemorial, a practice that ceased only in the early 20th century after commercial whaling vessels depleted the population.

By 1994, the Eastern Pacific gray whale population had rebounded, and they were removed from the endangered species list. Seeing an opportunity to reclaim its heritage, the tribe announced plans to hunt again.

The Makah trained for months in the ancient ways of whaling and received the blessing of federal officials and the International Whaling Commission. They took to the water in 1998 but didn't succeed until the next year, when they harpooned a gray whale from a hand-carved cedar canoe. A tribal member in a motorized support boat killed it with a high-powered rifle to minimize its suffering.

It was the tribe's first successful hunt in 70 years.

The hunts drew protests from animal rights activists, who sometimes threw smoke bombs at the whalers and sprayed fire extinguishers into their faces. Others veered motorboats between the whales and the tribal canoes to interfere with the hunt. Authorities seized several vessels and made arrests.

After animal rights groups sued, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals overturned federal approval of the tribe's whaling plans. The court found that the tribe needed to obtain a waiver under the 1972 Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Eleven Alaska Native communities in the Arctic have such a waiver for subsistence hunts, allowing them to kill bowhead whales — even though bowheads are listed as endangered.

The Makah Tribe applied for a waiver in 2005. The process repeatedly stalled as new scientific information about the whales and the health of their population was uncovered.

Some of the Makah whalers became so frustrated with the delays that they went on a rogue hunt in 2007, killing a gray whale that got away from them and sank. They were convicted in federal court.

The Latest | The US Supreme Court rules to preserve access to the abortion pill mifepristone

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Supreme Court on Thursday ruled unanimously to preserve access to the drug most commonly used in medication abortion. The nine justices found that abortion opponents lacked the legal right to sue over the Food and Drug Administration's approval of mifepristone and the FDA's subsequent actions to ease restrictions on getting it.

The medication was used in nearly two-thirds of all abortions in the United States last year.

The ruling is the court's first abortion decision since conservative justices overturned *Roe v. Wade* two years ago.

Justice Brett Kavanaugh, who was part of the majority to overturn *Roe*, wrote for the court that "federal courts are the wrong forum for addressing the plaintiffs' concerns about FDA's actions."

The case had threatened to restrict access to mifepristone across the country, including in states where abortion remains legal.

While the ruling drew praise from reproductive rights groups and many Democrats, some people suggested the fight over abortion rights and women's health care was not over.

U.S. President Joe Biden said the ruling "does not change the fact that the right for a woman to get the treatment she needs is imperiled if not impossible in many states."

Meanwhile, the attorney who represented anti-abortion doctors and their organizations in the case said the push to restrict abortion pills likely won't stop.

Currently:

- Read the full ruling from the Supreme Court [here](#)

- The U.S. Supreme Court just ruled on Mifepristone. How safe is the abortion pill?

- What is the case about? The central dispute was whether the FDA overlooked serious safety problems when it made mifepristone easier to obtain

- Key takeaways: Several justices pressed for real-life examples, and other key moments from arguments in March

- Check out the status of abortion rights state by state

Here's the latest:

Survey: 8,000 women a month got abortion pills despite their states' bans or restrictions. Thousands of women in states with abortion bans and restrictions are receiving abortion pills in the mail from states that have laws protecting prescribers, a new report showed.

The release of the #WeCount survey shows about 8,000 women a month in states that severely restrict abortion or place limits on having one through telehealth services were getting the pills by mail by the end of 2023, the first time a number has been put on how often the medical system workaround is being used.

The research was conducted for the Society of Family Planning, which supports abortion rights.

How do state laws impact access to mifepristone? Access to mifepristone largely depends on the laws in the state where a patient lives and in the case of states banning or restricting mifepristone, what steps people are willing to take to circumvent them.

About half of all U.S. states allow online prescribing and mail delivery of mifepristone, conforming to the Food and Drug Administration's label for the drug.

Currently, 14 states are enforcing bans on abortion at all stages of pregnancy. Another dozen or so states have laws specifically limiting how mifepristone can be prescribed, such as requiring an in-person visit with a physician or separate counseling about the potential risks and downsides of the drug.

Those steps are not supported by major medical societies, including the American Medical Association.

The fight over mifepristone won't end with this ruling. Although the U.S. Supreme Court ruled to protect access to the abortion medication mifepristone on Thursday, finding that the plaintiffs did not have the legal right to sue over the Food and Drug Administration's approval of the drug, the legal claims in the case could be revived.

Three states previously joined the case seeking to restrict access to mifepristone, putting them in a

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position to now revive legal claims against it.

One of those states was Kansas, where state Attorney General Kris Kobach said in a statement Thursday that the states are better positioned to challenge access to the drug.

"It is essential that this case continue in order to ensure that the FDA operates within the law," he said in a statement.

Mifepristone was used in about two-thirds of all abortions in the U.S. last year and is sometimes used in combination with misoprostol to end a pregnancy.

Republicans remain largely silent on SCOTUS rulingAs anti-abortion groups quickly released statements expressing dismay over Thursday's abortion pill ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court, Republican lawmakers were largely quiet — marking a stark contrast to the flood of Democrats praising the ruling.

U.S. Rep. Mike Lawler, a moderate-leaning Republican running for reelection in New York City's northern suburbs, was one of the few GOP members to not only comment on the decision but also praise it.

"As I said when running for Congress, I do not support any efforts to establish a national ban on abortion, whether it be through Congress or through the judicial system," Lawler said in a statement. "The Supreme Court's decision today to preserve access to mifepristone is an important one and I am thankful that they heeded my call earlier this year to stand down on this issue."

Louisiana has classified mifepristone as a controlled dangerous substanceAt least one state has gone further to restrict access to abortion pills with an action that's not expected to be affected by Thursday's ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Louisiana last month adopted a law classifying mifepristone — and also misoprostol, a drug it's usually used in combination with — as controlled and dangerous substances, which could make it harder to prescribe and obtain them.

The law, which is to take effect Oct. 1, would exempt from prosecution pregnant women who obtain the drugs without a prescription for their own use.

Women's health 'remains under attack,' says top U.S. health officialDozens of Democrats and abortion rights groups released statements Thursday suggesting they were pleased to see the U.S. Supreme Court uphold the federal government's approval of mifepristone, the drug most commonly used in medication abortions.

But it was clear in the wake of the ruling that Election Day wasn't far from anyone's mind, with many of those statements reminding people of other ways abortion access is threatened around the United States.

Millions of women are still unable to access mifepristone in more than a dozen states that have nearly banned abortion.

"Today, this critical medication remains approved and available," said U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, the nation's top health official.

But, he added: "Let's be clear: women's health remains under attack. The overturning of Roe v. Wade paved the way for attacks on reproductive rights and women's ability to make their own decisions about abortion, birth control, and (in vitro fertilization). Every day, women in states across America are forced to live with the devastating consequences of these attacks on reproductive rights."

Democrats are hoping that the U.S. Supreme Court's 2022 decision to overturn the constitutional right to an abortion will give them a boost at the polls in this year's election, especially with women voters.

Pharmaceutical manufacturers react to the rulingThe New York-based Danco Laboratories, which makes mifepristone, said the U.S. Supreme Court decision on Thursday "safeguards access to a drug that has decades of safe and effective use." The drugmaker also said the ruling maintains "the stability of the (Food and Drug Administration) drug approval process, which is based on the agency's expertise and on which patients, healthcare providers and the US pharmaceutical industry rely."

The decision by a U.S. district court judge out of Texas last year that catapulted this case to the Supreme Court marked the first time a court had issued a decision to revoke approval of a drug the FDA had deemed safe.

An open letter signed by nearly 300 biotech and pharmaceutical company leaders last year slammed the Texas ruling as undermining Congress' delegated authority to the FDA to approve and regulate drugs. If

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justices can unilaterally overturn drug approvals, they said, "any medicine is at risk."

Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, a lobbying group representing U.S. pharmaceutical companies, applauded Thursday's ruling, saying, "We are pleased to see today's decision from the U.S. Supreme Court which helps provide innovative biopharmaceutical companies the certainty needed to bring future medicines to patients."

How 'judge shopping' may have shaped the mifepristone case U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk has been at the center of the battle over mifepristone since he sparked a legal firestorm last year by ruling to halt the Food and Drug Administration's approval of the pill.

This set off a chain of events that brought the case before the U.S. Supreme Court.

An appointee of former President Donald Trump, Kacsmaryk is also the only district court judge in the Texas panhandle city of Amarillo, which means all cases filed there land in front of him. The number of lawsuits by conservative groups that have been filed in Amarillo have led to accusations of "judge shopping," or purposefully seeking out a judge who's likely to rule in your favor.

Kacsmaryk was confirmed in 2019 amid fierce opposition by progressive groups for his record opposing LGBTQ+ groups. Since then, his decisions have restricted birth control access, and he has ruled against the Biden administration on issues including LGBTQ+ protections and immigration.

He is also a former federal prosecutor and lawyer for the conservative First Liberty Institute.

Vice President Harris points the finger at Trump In a statement, U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris used the decision to try to draw a contrast between President Joe Biden and his presumptive Republican opponent in the presidential election, former President Donald Trump.

"This ruling does not change the fact that millions of American women are today living under cruel abortion bans because of Donald Trump," Harris said. "Nor does this ruling change the threat to medication abortion. We know the Trump team has a plan to try to end access to medication abortion and carry out a Trump Abortion Ban in all 50 states, with or without Congress, if they get the chance. We cannot and will not let that happen."

Democrats react to the Court's ruling Democratic lawmakers celebrated Tuesday's U.S. Supreme Court ruling as a major win for reproductive rights but warned of continuing attacks on abortion rights from their conservative counterparts.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer expressed relief on the decision, but said, "We are not out of the woods," acknowledging that it was "based not on the merits, but on the lack of standing."

Former House minority leader Nancy Pelosi said it was "the right decision for millions of women nationwide."

Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts said the challenge to mifepristone "was meritless from the start."

Rep. Pramila Jayapal of Washington said, "This is a massive victory for abortion access, but there is no question — we must codify access to reproductive care nationwide."

Democratic Attorney General William Tong of Connecticut, one of 24 states that filed an amicus brief for the case, warned that anti-abortion advocates "have already started the process of coming back with new plaintiffs."

Push to restrict abortion pills likely won't end with SCOTUS ruling The push to restrict abortion pills likely won't stop with the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling, the lawyer who represented anti-abortion doctors and their organizations in the case said.

The justices' finding that the doctors don't have the legal right to sue leaves open possible arguments from others, including three other states who had previously been allowed to join the case, said Erin Hawley, an attorney for the group Alliance Defending Freedom.

Hawley said she expects Idaho, Kansas and Missouri to continue the lawsuit originally filed in Texas.

Attorneys general for those states did not immediately respond to requests for comment on whether and how they might continue to suit originally filed before U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk.

Biden: 'The stakes could not be higher for women' U.S. President Joe Biden celebrated Thursday's decision by the U.S. Supreme Court to preserve access to mifepristone, a pill used in the most common method of abortion. He reaffirmed the safety and efficacy of mifepristone, but — echoing the language of many

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abortion rights groups — said that the ruling “does not change the fact that the right for a woman to get the treatment she needs is imperiled if not impossible in many states.”

He warned that attacks on medication abortion would continue.

“The stakes could not be higher for women across America,” he said.

How mifepristone access impacts people of color Women of color advocating for abortion access have pointed out that restricting access to mifepristone could worsen racial health disparities. They argue that individuals of color and pregnant people from marginalized communities are more likely to face systemic barriers that limit their access to abortion and other reproductive health care. As a result, they rely on methods like medication abortion.

Monica Simpson, executive director of SisterSong, the nation’s largest organization dedicated to reproductive justice for women of color, said communities of color are more likely to live in reproductive health care deserts, use Medicaid or live in states with abortion bans.

“Having all of our options for abortion access is critically important for our community as attacks on mifepristone impact those who have historically been pushed to the margins the most,” she said.

Dr. Jamila Perritt, president and CEO of Physicians for Reproductive Health, said mifepristone is “critical” because of “its importance in expanding abortion access for our community members, especially those living at the intersections of systemic oppression disproportionately harmed by abortion bans and restrictions.”

Kavanaugh’s comments point to the stakes of the 2024 election Justice Brett Kavanaugh’s comments in the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling on access to the abortion medication mifepristone highlighted what’s at stake in the presidential 2024 election and the possibility that an FDA commissioner appointed by Republican Donald Trump, if he wins the White House, could consider tightening access to mifepristone.

The plaintiffs in the mifepristone case — anti-abortion doctors and their organizations — had argued in court papers that the Food and Drug Administration’s decisions in 2016 and 2021 to relax restrictions on getting the drug were unreasonable and would “jeopardize women’s health across the nation.”

Kavanaugh acknowledged what he described as opponents’ “sincere legal, moral, ideological, and policy objections to elective abortion and to FDA’s relaxed regulation of mifepristone.”

Federal laws already protect doctors from having to perform abortions, or give any other treatment that goes against their beliefs, Kavanaugh wrote.

“The plaintiffs have not identified any instances where a doctor was required, notwithstanding conscience objections, to perform an abortion or to provide other abortion-related treatment that violated the doctor’s conscience since mifepristone’s 2000 approval,” he wrote.

In the end, Kavanaugh wrote, the anti-abortion doctors went to the wrong forum and should instead direct their energies to persuading lawmakers and regulators to make changes.

Mifepristone ruling referenced another important abortion case Thursday’s U.S. Supreme Court ruling on access to mifepristone referenced another important abortion case the court is considering — the legality of Idaho’s abortion ban, which only allows doctors to perform abortions if the pregnant woman’s life is at risk.

U.S. President Joe Biden’s administration has argued that Idaho’s law conflicts with a longstanding federal law that has shaped emergency room care.

The Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act, also called EMTALA, requires emergency rooms to provide all patients who present at their hospital with stabilizing treatment, which might include abortions in extreme cases.

The court appeared sharply divided over the case when it heard arguments in April. But in the ruling released Thursday on mifepristone, the justices referred several times to EMTALA. The justices unanimously agreed with the Biden administration’s point that the federal law does not require doctors to perform an abortion if they object to it.

The law “neither overrides neither overrides federal conscience laws nor requires individual emergency room doctors to participate in emergency abortions,” the justices wrote.

That’s an important point for the justices to agree on, particularly for the conservative members who oppose abortion.

Anti-abortion groups decry Supreme Court ruling Following the U.S. Supreme Court’s Thursday ruling to

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preserve access to the abortion pill mifepristone, anti-abortion groups denounced the decision.

"It is a sad day for all who value women's health and unborn children's lives, but the fight to stop dangerous mail-order abortion drugs is not over," said Kate Daniel, state policy director for SBA Pro-Life America.

Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life of America: Hawkins called the decision "disappointing but not surprising," expressing concern for the "conscience rights of the pro-life doctors."

Reproductive rights groups call decision a small win Reproductive rights groups across the country expressed relief over Thursday's ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court, but almost all stressed that the decision marked but a small win in the long-term battle over abortion access.

"Even with this baseless challenge defeated, we must remain vigilant," said Destiny Lopez, acting co-CEO of the Guttmacher Institute. "The anti-abortion movement is ruthlessly pursuing its end goal of banning abortion nationwide."

Jennifer Dalven, director of the ACLU Reproductive Freedom Project, warned that attacks on medication abortion are still taking place even after the court's ruling, saying that "anti-abortion politicians are waiting in the wings to attempt to continue pushing this case before an extremist judge in Texas in an effort to deny people access to medication abortion care."

Many others pointed out that it was hard to celebrate the dismissal of the case when several states have enacted their own abortion restrictions.

"Despite the Supreme Court's decision today, millions of people will still have restricted access to the health care they deserve," The Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee said in a statement.

How safe is mifepristone? When the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments for the case in March, the safety of mifepristone was at the heart of the debate.

There are rare occasions when mifepristone can cause dangerous, excessive bleeding that requires emergency care. Because of that, the Food and Drug Administration imposed strict safety limits on who could prescribe and distribute it.

The doctors also had to be capable of performing emergency surgery to stop excess bleeding and an abortion procedure if the drug didn't end the pregnancy. Over the years, the FDA reaffirmed mifepristone's safety and repeatedly eased restrictions, culminating in a 2021 decision doing away with any in-person requirements and allowing the pill to be sent through the mail.

Abortion rights groups respond to abortion pill ruling Nancy Northup, president and CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights, expressed relief at Thursday's decision by the U.S. Supreme Court on access to mifepristone but also expressed frustration that the case made it the court at all, calling it "meritless."

"Unfortunately, the attacks on abortion pills will not stop here — the anti-abortion movement sees how critical abortion pills are in this post-Roe world, and they are hell-bent on cutting off access," she added.

Mini Timmaraju, president and CEO of the national abortion rights group Reproductive Freedom for All, echoed similar feelings. While expressing relief she also said, "This baseless push to block abortion access should never have been heard by them in the first place."

How the case ended up at the US Supreme Court The mifepristone case began five months after the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade. Abortion opponents initially won a sweeping ruling nearly a year ago from U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk, a Trump nominee in Texas, that would have revoked the drug's approval entirely.

The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals left intact the FDA's initial approval of mifepristone, but it would reverse changes regulators made in 2016 and 2021 that eased some conditions for administering the drug.

The Supreme Court put the appeals court's modified ruling on hold and agreed to hear the case. However, Justices Samuel Alito — the author of the decision overturning Roe — and Clarence Thomas would have allowed some restrictions to take effect while the case proceeded.

Here's what each side argued in the case Health care providers have said that if mifepristone is no longer available or is too hard to obtain, they would switch to using only misoprostol, which is somewhat less effective in ending pregnancies.

U.S. President Joe Biden's administration and drug manufacturers had warned that siding with abortion opponents in the case could undermine the FDA's drug approval process beyond the abortion context by

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inviting judges to second-guess the agency's scientific judgments. The Democratic administration and New York-based Danco Laboratories, which makes mifepristone, argued that the drug is among the safest the FDA has ever approved.

The abortion opponents argued in court papers that the FDA's decisions in 2016 and 2021 to relax restrictions on getting the drug were unreasonable and "jeopardize women's health across the nation."

What is mifepristone? More than 6 million people have used mifepristone since 2000. Mifepristone blocks the hormone progesterone and primes the uterus to respond to the contraction-causing effect of a second drug, misoprostol. The two-drug regimen has been used to end a pregnancy through 10 weeks gestation.

US Supreme Court rules to preserve access to abortion medication The Supreme Court on Thursday unanimously preserved access to a medication that was used in nearly two-thirds of all abortions in the U.S. last year, in the court's first abortion decision since conservative justices overturned Roe v. Wade two years ago.

The justices ruled that abortion opponents lacked the legal right to sue over the federal Food and Drug Administration's approval of the medication, mifepristone, and the FDA's subsequent actions to ease access to it.

The case had threatened to restrict access to mifepristone across the country, including in states where abortion remains legal.

Supreme Court rules California man can't trademark 'Trump too small'

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Thursday unanimously ruled against a man who wants to trademark the suggestive phrase "Trump too small."

The justices upheld the government's decision to deny a trademark to Steve Elster, a California man seeking exclusive use of the phrase on T-shirts and potentially other merchandise. It is one of several cases at the court relating to former President Donald Trump, including major cases related to the violent attack on the Capitol in 2021. Earlier this term, the court laid out standards for when public officials can be sued for blocking critics from their social media accounts. These cases were also related to Trump.

The Justice Department supported President Joe Biden's predecessor and presumptive opponent in the 2024 election. Government officials said the phrase "Trump too small" could still be used, just not trademarked because Trump had not consented to its use. Indeed, "Trump too small" T-shirts can already be purchased online.

Elster's lawyers had argued that the decision violated his free speech rights, and a federal appeals court agreed.

At arguments, Chief Justice John Roberts said that if Elster were to win, people would race to trademark "Trump too this, Trump too that."

Although all nine justices agreed in rejecting Elster's First Amendment claim, they used differing rationales that stretched over 53 pages of opinions.

Twice in the past six years, the justices have struck down provisions of federal law denying trademarks seen as scandalous or immoral in one case and disparaging in another.

Elster's case dealt with another measure calling for a trademark request to be refused if it involves a name, portrait or signature "identifying a particular living individual" unless the person has given "written consent."

The phrase at the heart of the case is a reference to an exchange Trump had during the 2016 presidential campaign with Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, who was then also running for the Republican presidential nomination.

Rubio began the verbal jousting when he told supporters at a rally that Trump was always calling him "little Marco" but that Trump — who says he is 6 feet and 3 inches tall — has disproportionately small hands. "Have you seen his hands? ... And you know what they say about men with small hands," Rubio said. "You can't trust them."

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Trump then brought up the comment at a televised debate on March 3, 2016.

"Look at those hands. Are they small hands? And he referred to my hands — if they're small, something else must be small. I guarantee you there's no problem. I guarantee you," he said.

US submarine pulls into Guantanamo Bay a day after Russian warships arrive in Cuba

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A U.S. Navy submarine has arrived in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in a show of force as a fleet of Russian warships gather for planned military exercises in the Caribbean.

U.S. Southern Command said the USS Helena, a nuclear-powered fast attack submarine, pulled into the waters near the U.S. base in Cuba on Thursday, just a day after a Russian frigate, a nuclear-powered submarine, an oil tanker and a rescue tug crossed into Havana Bay after drills in the Atlantic Ocean.

The stop is part of a "routine port visit" as the submarine travels through Southern Command's region, it said in a social media post.

Other U.S. ships also have been tracking and monitoring the Russian drills, which Pentagon officials say do not represent a threat to the United States.

"This is not a surprise. We've seen them do these type of port calls before," Pentagon spokeswoman Sabrina Singh said Wednesday when asked about the Russian drills. "We of course take it seriously, but these exercises don't pose a threat to the United States."

The exercises, however, come 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. Russian President Vladimir Putin then suggested his military could respond with "asymmetrical steps" elsewhere in the world.

Singh said it wouldn't be a surprise to see more Russian activity around the United States in such global exercises. The drills are in international waters, and 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.

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.

The Stanley Cup Final in American Sign Language is a welcome addition for Deaf community

By LARRY LAGE AP Sports Writer

GENOA TOWNSHIP, Mich. (AP) — Bob Madden's eyes darted from right to left, watching Game 2 of the Stanley Cup Final from a couch with his son, Jonathan, at his side and the family dog, Ruby, at their feet.

Madden, who is deaf, was enjoying the view with access to the commentary delivered in American Sign Language in what is believed to be a first for a major sports league game broadcast.

"I think I'm starting to like this," the 68-year-old Madden said Monday night in his home about 50 miles northwest of Detroit. "It's something new for the Deaf community. When I was a boy, we didn't even have closed captioning."

Closed captioning has been around since 1980, but the boxes of text in English do not provide true access to viewers in the Deaf community, whose first language is ASL.

The NHL became the first major sports league to offer play by play and analysis in ASL during a live broadcast last week when Florida hosted Edmonton in the Cup Final opener on Saturday night. ESPN+ and Sportsnet+ will feature the groundbreaking platform again Thursday night for Game 3, with the Oilers

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down 0-2 in the best-of-seven series.

"It's a proud moment for our sport and it's a great example of what can be done to support all communities," said Kim Davis, the NHL's senior executive VP of social impact, growth initiatives and legislative affairs. "Authentically demonstrating that the Deaf community is an important fan base, a fan-in-waiting fan base, is the essence of what inclusion is all about."

A company that works to improve access to ASL in sports partnered with the NHL to deliver play-by-play and commentary for the underserved community: PXP Chief Operating Officer Jason Altmann, who is deaf, and Noah Blankenship from Denver's Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services appear on the right side of a split screen next to live coverage of the games.

"I grew up watching sports with my dad and it was our way to bond," Altmann said via FaceTime in ASL in an interview with The Associated Press a day after Game 2. "I remember watching ESPN with Chris Berman and Dan Patrick and saying, 'I wish I could do that, but I am deaf and it would be difficult in this world.' While this is a full-circle moment for me, I don't view it as an opportunity for me. This is an opportunity for the Deaf community to be elevated and provided access.

"The Deaf community is so often pushed aside and the NHL ASL project is an opportunity to show how vibrant the community is with a rich history and language," he added. "We have gotten feedback from deaf children, who have said how happy they are to see deaf people on TV and to say that they feel like they're being seen. That's the best part about this job."

And, the job is difficult for Altmann, Blankenship and viewers.

Hockey, especially at the NHL level with a championship at stake, does not provide many pauses in the frantic, end-to-end action for the commentators to share insights in ASL.

"The challenge is to find the right time to tell a short story or provide analysis as an added value to the viewers," Altmann said.

Madden, meanwhile, had the challenge of watching the game and the commentary at the same time on a screen that also included other potential distractions. Graphics such as ice time for the players on the ice, statistics, play by play and a crowd intensity meter that measures crowd noise were also shown.

"It's hard to watch with one eye going on way and one eye going the other," Madden said. "It's the same challenge with closed captioning, but this is better in ASL."

Hearing commentators are not heard during the NHL ASL broadcasts, which includes only sounds that would be heard in the arena such as the officials calling a penalty, blowing a whistle, skates cutting through ice and sticks hitting pucks.

"This is the first time we have done this for the Deaf community," Altmann said. "I have high expectations, but I have told my colleagues, we need to give ourselves some grace."

The initiative allows the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities to enjoy the "excitement and intricacies of the game on an equal footing," said Bobbie Beth Scoggins, the interim CEO of the National Association of the Deaf.

"The inclusion of American Sign Language coverage during NHL hockey games is a groundbreaking and historic moment for our Deaf communities," Scoggins said. "This initiative marks a significant step towards inclusivity and equal access in sports broadcasting."

Italy's G7 venue is a faux medieval luxury resort far from public view

By PAOLO SANTALUCIA and COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

BORGO EGNAZIA, Italy (AP) — Leaders of the Group of Seven rich democracies are meeting in a faux medieval town constructed as a luxury resort on the heel of Italy's boot.

Borgo Egnazia, nestled amid olive groves and prickly pear cacti in the southern Puglia region, has reportedly hosted Madonna and the Beckhams. Jessica Biel and Justin Timberlake got married there.

On Thursday, Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni waited near the arched entrance and in front of one of Puglia's famed olive trees to greet the other G7 leaders.

The summit venues have been located far from population centers since police clashed with anti-glo-

balization protesters at the 2001 G8 summit in the northern port city of Genoa. This time, the main press center is in the city of Bari, in a different province two hours away with security checks.

Located next to an archaeological park, Borgo Egnazia features narrow streets of pink-hued cobblestones, villas, restaurants and a town square complete with a clock tower — but has no mayor or postal code.

The borgo, or Italian for village, is constructed out of Lecce stone, a unique limestone called the “marble of the poor,” giving it the same gold and cream glint of the Baroque center of nearby Lecce. The meandering streets are so convincing that visitors have reported having trouble finding their way back from the breakfast dining room.

But this is no medieval town. It was built in 2010, helping to drive Puglia’s tourism boom thanks in part to its 18-hole golf course, which overlooks the Adriatic sea.

Anyone wishing to visit the venue after the leaders leave can book a superior double, with breakfast included, starting at 1,230 euros a night, according to aggregator sites. Guests enjoy two swimming pools, a spa and wellness center as well as three tennis courts. A private beach club is reserved for the resort in Savelletri, 1.5 kilometers (a mile) away.

Newtown High graduates told to honor 20 classmates killed as first-graders ‘today and every day’

NEWTOWN, Conn. (AP) — It was an emotional graduation ceremony for high school seniors in Newtown, Connecticut, who observed a moment of silence for their 20 classmates who were shot to death at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Principal Kimberly Longobucco read the names of the first graders who were killed on Dec. 14, 2012 along with six educators as the class of 2024 and their families looked on Wednesday, Hearst Connecticut Media reported.

“We remember them for their bravery, their kindness and their spirit,” Longobucco said. “Let us strive to honor them today and every day.”

Newtown Schools Superintendent Chris Melillo told the 335 graduates, “Life is too short to do something that doesn’t ignite your soul — something that doesn’t fill you with purpose and meaning. Never settle for anything less than what sets your heart afire.”

About 60 of the Newtown High graduates attended Sandy Hook Elementary School and are survivors of one of the deadliest school shootings in U.S. history.

Wednesday’s graduation ceremony was closed to the media except for two local news organizations.

Sandy Hook survivors who spoke to The Associated Press in advance of their graduation said their fallen classmates were in their thoughts.

“I am definitely going to be feeling a lot of mixed emotions,” said Emma Ehrens, 17. “I’m super excited to be, like, done with high school and moving on to the next chapter of my life. But I’m also so ... mournful, I guess, to have to be walking across that stage alone. ... I like to think that they’ll be there with us and walking across that stage with us.”

Some Sandy Hook survivors have spoken of their community as a “bubble” protecting them from the outside world.

Class salutatorian Grace Chiriatti said during the ceremony that part of her wishes that things could stay the same because of the “level of comfort we have” as graduating seniors.

“Everything seems so perfect surrounded by people I love... it’s difficult to leave just as I have everything figured out,” Chiriatti said. “But by starting something new we don’t have to start over.”

The UK Green Party struggles to be heard in an election where climate change is on the back burner

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

BRIGHTON, England (AP) — There's lots of talk of change in Britain's election campaign, but little talk about climate change.

The U.K.'s July 4 vote to choose a new government comes after one of the wettest and warmest winters on record, part of trends that scientists attribute to global warming. But discussion of climate and the environment has taken a back seat to Britain's sluggish economy, high cost of living and creaking health care system — and whether, as polls suggest, the governing Conservatives' time is up after 14 years in power.

That frustrates the Green Party, which is battling a political system that makes it hard for small parties to win seats in Parliament, and a political climate that discourages expensive, long-term environmental promises.

"I think they are very wrong, the other parties, to ignore climate change and the big investment that's needed," said Sian Berry, one of 574 Green candidates running in England and Wales for the 650-seat House of Commons — and one of the few with a good chance of winning. The party held just one seat in Parliament before the election.

"I think people these days do recognize that to solve climate change is not something you do on the side, it has to be part of all your policies," Berry said over the sound of screeching seagulls in the seaside city of Brighton on England's south coast.

The governing Conservatives boast that Britain is a leader in embracing renewable energy and cutting the carbon emissions that fuel climate change. U.K. greenhouse gas emissions have fallen by half from 1990 levels, mainly because coal has largely been eliminated from electricity generation.

But environmentalists say the U.K. has recently gone into reverse.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, who is battling to close a polling gap with the opposition Labour Party, has criticized "unaffordable eco-zealotry," approved new North Sea oil drilling and pledged to build more gas-fired power plants, while insisting the U.K. can still meet its goal of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Labour leader Keir Starmer has scrapped the party's pledge to invest 28 billion pounds (\$36 billion) a year in green projects if elected, replacing it with a smaller commitment. He blames the parlous state in which the Conservatives have left the public finances.

The lack of action alarms climate scientists, more than 400 of whom wrote to the political parties to warn that any leader "who does not make stronger climate action a priority for the next five years and beyond will place the prosperity and well-being of the British people at severe risk."

The Green Party embraces that message, but faces a struggle to be heard, and to convince voters that it's not just about the environment. The party's 44-page election manifesto, released on Wednesday, includes policies on housing, health care, education, employment and defense as well as green issues.

Its pledges are expensive, including 24 billion pounds a year to insulate homes and 40 billion pounds a year invested in the green economy. The party is upfront about the tax increases needed to pay for them, including a carbon tax, a wealth tax on the very rich and an income tax hike for millions of higher earners.

The Greens' challenge is that while research suggests climate ranks among voters' top five priorities, it often comes well behind everyday issues like housing costs or healthcare waiting lists.

War in Ukraine and surging migration also have elbowed the green agenda aside in Britain and beyond. Green parties lost ground in countries including France and Germany in elections for the European Parliament this month, amid a surge for the far right.

In the town of Dartford, southeast of London, 27-year-old construction worker Harry Colville said he thinks climate change is important, but "I'm more worried about my life right now. More about the near future for myself."

Emma Jade Larsson, who is about to graduate in medical neuroscience from the University of Sussex in Brighton, said she understands why the cost of living is a top concern.

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"Food banks are becoming more and more of a need in this country," she said. "A lot of people are going through really difficult times right now. So I do understand the focus on it, but I think there is also definitely a need to focus on more than one issue at this moment, and look after people now but also people to come."

Unlike many European countries, the U.K. does not use a system of proportional representation. Its first-past-the-post electoral system, in which the candidate who gets the most votes in a constituency wins, favors the two big parties. The Greens got just 2.7% of votes cast in the 2019 election.

Even so, Greens have won hundreds of seats on local councils, and are targeting up to four seats in Parliament, including Berry's constituency of Brighton Pavilion. Part of a city renowned for its pebbly beach, independent streak and vibrant alternative culture, it was represented for 14 years by Britain's first -- and so far only -- Green lawmaker, Caroline Lucas.

When Berry visits the steep streets of Brighton's Round Hill district, many of the Victorian houses have Vote Green signs in their windows.

Roger Ballance, a university worker who has voted both Labour and Green in the past, said the Greens "present a different side, it's refreshing."

"You need diverse voices in Parliament," he said. "If it's just binary, it lets both of them be way too narrow in their political thinking."

Matt Brown is skeptical that Britain's politicians are grasping the scale of the environmental challenge. He's new projects director at the Brighton Energy Cooperative, which installs rooftop solar panels on schools, businesses, soccer stadiums and other businesses.

It's a growing business, but Brown says "it's literally a drop in the ocean."

"We need gigawatts and gigawatts of power. We need to generate it in a renewable manner, and we need to do it now," he said.

"I would like to see the upcoming government grab the issue by the horns," he added. "We're staring down the barrel of a gun, and we need to do something about it."

Today in History: June 14

Continental Army, forerunner of the US Army, is created

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, June 14, the 166th day of 2024. There are 200 days left in the year. This is Flag Day.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 14, 1775, the Continental Army, forerunner of the United States Army, was created.

On this date:

In 1777, the Second Continental Congress approved the design of the original American flag.

In 1846, a group of U.S. settlers in Sonoma proclaimed the Republic of California.

In 1911, the British ocean liner RMS Olympic set out on its maiden voyage for New York, arriving one week later. (The ship's captain was Edward John Smith, who went on to command the ill-fated RMS Titanic the following year.)

In 1919, John Alcock and Arthur Whitten Brown embarked on the first non-stop flight across the Atlantic Ocean.

In 1940, German troops entered Paris during World War II; the same day, the Nazis began transporting prisoners to the Auschwitz concentration camp in German-occupied Poland.

In 1943, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, ruled 6-3 that public school students could not be forced to salute the flag of the United States.

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a measure adding the phrase "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance.

In 1967, California Gov. Ronald Reagan signed a bill liberalizing his state's abortion law.

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In 1972, the Environmental Protection Agency ordered a ban on domestic use of the pesticide DDT, to take effect at year's end.

In 1982, Argentine forces surrendered to British troops on the disputed Falkland Islands.

In 1993, President Bill Clinton nominated Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 2005, Michelle Wie, 15, became the first female player to qualify for an adult male U.S. Golf Association championship, tying for first place in a 36-hole U.S. Amateur Public Links sectional qualifying tournament.

In 2013, The Associated Press reported Minnesota resident Michael Karkoc (KAHR'-kahts) had been a top commander of a Nazi SS-led unit accused of burning villages filled with women and children, then lied to American immigration officials to get into the United States after World War II.

In 2017, fire ripped through the 24-story Grenfell Tower in West London, killing 71 people.

In 2018, a Justice Department watchdog report on the FBI's handling of the Hillary Clinton email probe criticized the FBI and its former director, James Comey, but did not find evidence that political bias tainted the investigation.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Marla Gibbs is 93. House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., is 85. Country-rock musician Spooner Oldham is 81. Rock singer Rod Argent (The Zombies; Argent) is 79. Former President Donald Trump is 78. Singer Janet Lennon (The Lennon Sisters) is 78. Rock musician Barry Melton is 77. Actor Will Patton is 70. Olympic gold medal speed skater Eric Heiden (HY'-dun) is 66. Jazz musician Marcus Miller is 65. Singer Boy George is 63. Rock musician Chris DeGarmo is 61. Actor Traylor Howard is 58. Actor Yasmine Bleeth is 56. Actor Faizon Love is 56. Actor Stephen Wallem is 56. International Tennis Hall of Famer Steffi Graf is 55. Actor Sullivan Stapleton is 47. Screenwriter Diablo Cody is 46. Classical pianist Lang Lang is 42. Actor Lawrence Saint-Victor is 42. Actor Torrance Coombs is 41. Actor J.R. Martinez is 41. Actor-singer Kevin McHale is 36. Actor Lucy Hale is 35. Pop singer Jesy Nelson (Little Mix) is 35. Country singer Joel Crouse is 31. Actor Daryl Sabara is 32.