

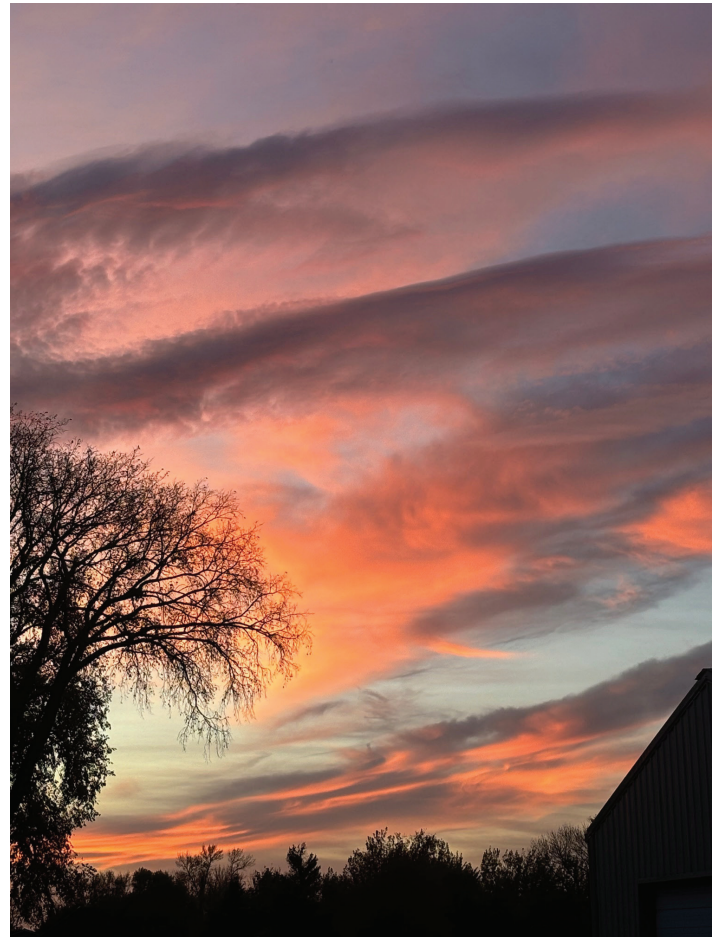
# Groton Daily Independent

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## Tuesday, Oct. 22

Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, peas and carrots, strawberry ambrosia, buttermilk biscuit.  
School Breakfast: Scones.  
School Lunch: Sloppy joes, smiley fries.  
End of First Quarter  
Flu Shot Clinic, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Groton Area Elementary School  
Volleyball at Northwestern (\*Volley for a Cure) (7th at 5 p.m., 8th/JV at 6 p.m., varsity to follow)  
Common Cents Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., 209 N Main.  
Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Groton Community Center  
United Methodist Bible Study, 10 a.m.



Sunset photo from last night by Jeslyn Kessel.

## Wednesday, Oct. 23

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, oriental blend, apple, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: Oatmeal.  
School Lunch: Baked potato bar with toppings.  
Community Coffee Hour at United Methodist Church, 9:30 a.m.  
Groton C&MA: Kids' Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study at 7 pm.  
St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 6 p.m. (Service event)

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

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# 1440

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

## **Penny Trial Begins**

Jury selection began yesterday for the trial of Daniel Penny, the former Marine charged with second-degree manslaughter and criminally negligent homicide in the death of Jordan Neely on a New York City subway train in May 2023.

Prosecutors allege then-24-year-old Penny "recklessly caused the death" of 30-year-old Neely, who was reportedly shouting and acting erratically before Penny, along with two passengers, placed Neely in a chokehold for about six minutes. Police officers said they felt a faint pulse and administered the opioid-overdose medication Narcan before performing CPR. Neely died later at the hospital.

Prosecutors say Penny's use of force was unjustifiable and reckless. The defense argues Penny acted to protect other passengers and only intended to hold Neely until police arrived, not to kill him. Penny faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted of second-degree manslaughter and up to four years for negligent homicide.

Separately, opening statements began in the retrial of former Louisville, Kentucky, officer Brett Hankison over charges related to the 2020 police raid that led to Breonna Taylor's death.

## **Cuba's Crisis Continues**

Cuba is experiencing its longest blackout in decades, with the island under its fourth day without power yesterday. The grid's collapse—predicted for years—came as the island's 10 million residents were also hit by a hurricane. Schools are closed through at least tomorrow.

Cuba's 50-year-old electrical grid has been blamed partly for the crisis, along with its reliance on dwindling oil imports. Cuba's grid (including eight power plants) runs on crude oil, with the island relying on most of its imports from allies like Venezuela, Russia, and Mexico to cover its energy deficit. As the US temporarily eased sanctions on Venezuela this year, the country prioritized exports to US companies. Meanwhile, Mexico's oil production fell to its lowest level in 45 years, exacerbating Cuba's energy deficit.

As some Cubans have turned out to protest, the government has warned against civil disobedience; the last major energy crisis in Cuba, in 2021, led to a wave of historic protests and the emigration of roughly half a million Cubans to the US.

## **NBA Tips Off**

The 2024-25 NBA season gets into full swing tonight. The action begins with the New York Knicks traveling to the reigning champion, the Boston Celtics (7:30 pm ET, TNT), followed by the Los Angeles Lakers hosting the Minnesota Timberwolves (10 pm ET, TNT).

Top storylines entering the season include whether the Celtics will defend their title and secure a 19th championship; if Nikola Jokić will win a fourth MVP in five years; how father-and-son duo LeBron and Bronny James will fare; and how offseason moves, like four-time NBA champion Klay Thompson signing with the Dallas Mavericks, will shape the league landscape. See all the storylines here.

This season will also feature the second annual in-season tournament—a monthlong round-robin competition, which includes all 30 teams and counts toward teams' regular season records. Games begin Nov. 12, culminating with the NBA Cup awarded Dec. 17 in Las Vegas.

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## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Sean "Diddy" Combs faces seven new civil lawsuits, which include allegations of raping a 13-year-old girl; Combs is currently in jail in New York on racketeering and sex trafficking charges.

Producer of "Blade Runner 2049" sues Elon Musk, Tesla, and Warner Bros. Discovery for using images of the film without permission during Tesla's Cybercab promo event.

Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy's upstart tech-infused golf league TGL sets Jan. 7 launch date with the first team match broadcast on ESPN.

## Science & Technology

Wall Street Journal, NY Post, and others sue AI platform Perplexity, claiming its chatbot violates copyright law.

Microsoft to unveil tools to build customizable AI agents—bots designed for specific tasks—in its Copilot Studio.

Paleontologists discover smallest fossilized dinosaur eggs found to date; 80-million-year-old specimens likely laid by an undiscovered type of dinosaur.

Deep brain stimulation may be effective at treating depression, new clinical study suggests; test uses a wearable cap to deliver gentle electrical voltages at home.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 -0.2%, Dow -0.8%, Nasdaq +0.3%).

Shares of Kenvue—the maker of Tylenol and Listerine—close up 5% after activist investor Starboard Value reportedly takes large stake.

The Walt Disney Co. to appoint outgoing CEO Bob Iger's successor in early 2026, taps Morgan Stanley veteran James Gorman as chair.

Payments giant Stripe acquires stablecoin payments company Bridge for \$1.1B.

Stablecoins are cryptocurrencies tied to the value of a traditional currency.

## Politics & World Affairs

Biden administration proposes rule to expand access to contraceptive products, including requiring health insurance companies to cover recommended over-the-counter birth control.

Student loan repayments paused for six additional months for 8 million borrowers under the SAVE plan.

Moldovans vote in favor of the country joining the European Union by thin margin, with 99% of the votes counted and 50.46% voting "yes" to the referendum; Moldova, once part of the Soviet Union, lies between Ukraine and Romania.

Fethullah Gülen, a US-based Turkish cleric accused of orchestrating 2016 coup attempt against Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, dies at age 83.

US activist Thelma Mothershed-Wair, member of Little Rock Nine, dies at age 83.



## Poll: Support slips for abortion, open primaries, grocery tax measures

By STU WHITNEY

South Dakota News Watch

Support for ballot measures on abortion rights, open primaries and repealing the state food tax has dipped since May, according to a statewide poll co-sponsored by South Dakota News Watch.

The Chiesman Center for Democracy at the University of South Dakota also sponsored the Oct. 12-16 scientific survey of 500 registered voters by Mason-Dixon Polling and Strategy. Those interviewed were selected randomly from a telephone-matched state voter registration list that included landline and cell numbers. Quotas were assigned to reflect voter registration by county.

One of the main takeaways is that a high-stakes battle over abortion access in South Dakota is too close to call.

### Those opposed to Amendment G on the rise

Amendment G, a citizen-led effort to enshrine abortion rights in the state constitution, is supported by half (50%) of South Dakota's registered voters and opposed by nearly as many (47%), with about two weeks left until the Nov. 5 election; 3% are undecided.

That's within the margin of error of 4.5 percentage points and a major shift from a similar poll in May, which found a nearly 20-point margin with 53% favoring Amendment G and 35% opposed, with 11% undecided.

If passed, the amendment would reverse a South Dakota abortion ban enacted when the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in 2022, leaving states to determine reproductive rights.

The jump in opposition could be a sign that efforts by anti-abortion groups to characterize Amendment G as "too extreme" have resonated with previously undecided voters.

"One of the main points is that voters are now more clear on their stances," said Julia Hellwege, an associate political science professor at USD and director of the Chiesman Center. "A willingness to be undecided on an issue in May has now formed into a stance as the election approaches."

The co-founders of Life Defense Fund, an anti-abortion group formed to provide organized opposition to the amendment, said in a statement to News Watch following the poll in May that more information would



**Hundreds block a portion of Phillips Avenue in downtown Sioux Falls, S.D., to protest the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* on June 29, 2022. South Dakotans will have a chance to vote on Amendment G, a citizen-led effort to enshrine abortion rights in the state constitution.** (Photo: Argus Leader)



lead to shifting opinions.

"The more people learn that this extreme amendment approves late-term abortion and bans physical health protections for mothers, the more they will reject it," Republican state legislator Jon Hansen and longtime anti-abortion advocate Leslee Unruh said in the statement.

Dakotans for Health, the grassroots organization that sponsored the measure, pushed back by saying the amendment uses the same trimester framework as *Roe v. Wade*, an opinion shared by Hannah Haksgaard, a professor at the University of South Dakota Knudson School of Law.

"The proposed amendment is very closely aligned with the original *Roe v. Wade* framework," Haksgaard told News Watch in 2023. "The language mimics the trimester framework of *Roe v. Wade* and nothing in this amendment indicates any abortion rights more extreme than that."

The amendment establishes that no regulation would be allowed in the first trimester, regulation must be reasonably related to the physical health of the pregnant woman in the second trimester, and in the third trimester regulation or prohibition of abortion would be allowed except in those cases where the abortion is necessary to preserve the life or health of the pregnant woman.

In the News Watch poll, just 26% of Republican respondents said they plan to vote for Amendment G, with 72% opposed and 2% undecided. That's a sizable drop in support from the May survey, which saw 46% of Republicans in favor, 41% opposed and 14% undecided.

It's a sign that moderate or otherwise undecided GOP voters have "come home" on the issue after an acrimonious campaign that included protests at petition sites and a still-pending lawsuit over how signatures were gathered.

Statewide, 55% of female respondents said they support the abortion measure, compared to 44% of males.

Support was also strongest among the youngest age group (18-34) at 60%, followed by age 35-49 with 53%, age 50-64 with 49% and age 65-older with 40%.

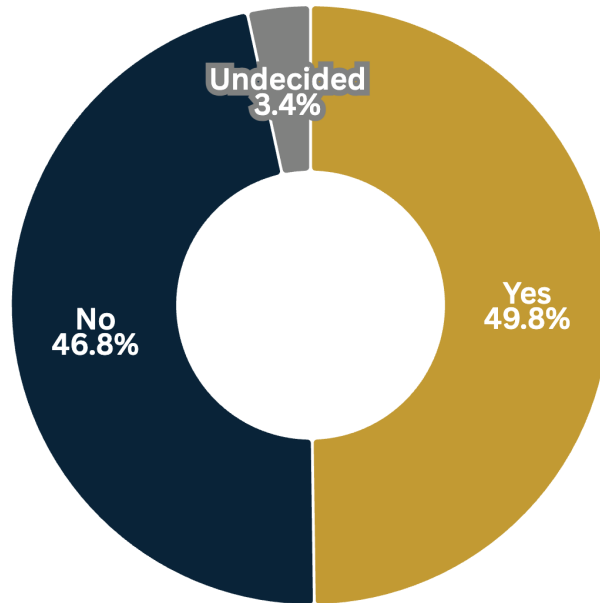
South Dakota law makes it a Class 6 felony for anyone "who administers to any pregnant female or prescribes or procures for any pregnant female" a means for an abortion, except to save the life of the mother. South Dakota is one of 14 states whose abortion law does not include exceptions for rape and incest.

### Amendment H: Open primaries opposed by 56%

The News Watch poll showed that South Dakotans have begun to sour on Amendment H, a citizen-led proposal to change the way the state conducts primary elections.

The survey showed that just 40% of statewide respondents plan to vote for the amendment, which would establish "top-two" primaries for governor, Congress and state legislative and county races rather

### Amendment G poll: How will you vote on abortion measure?



Source: South Dakota News Watch and the Chiesman Center for Democracy at USD / Mason-Dixon Polling & Strategy (Margin of error: +/-4.5%) • 500 registered voters polled Oct. 12-16  
Graphic: Michael Klinski / South Dakota News Watch

than having parties hold separate primary contests. Opposition polled at 56%, with 4% undecided.

The results are a major downturn from the May survey, when 55% of respondents supported Amendment H, compared to 33% opposed and 12% undecided.

South Dakota Open Primaries chairman Joe Kirby has framed the issue as one of fairness, pointing to the fact that all registered voters would be eligible to participate under the new primary model. Currently, Independent voters in South Dakota can vote in Democratic primaries but not Republican contests.

Supporters also said that open primaries will produce officeholders more reflective of the general electorate, rather than incentivizing candidates to take extreme positions to win a partisan primary.

The campaign's message has been well-received by Independents, 58% of whom favor the amendment in the most recent poll, roughly the same as the May survey (59%).

But support has dipped among Republicans (40% in May to 26% in October) and Democrats (82% in May to 56% in October) as both the Republican and Democratic state parties formally opposed the measure.

South Dakota Democratic Party executive director Dan Ahlers said open primaries would be a "permanent, untested revision" to the state constitution and referenced California and Washington, the only other two states with top-two primaries for statewide elections.

"In those states, the minority parties are regularly locked out of elections and there is no evidence to suggest that the change has improved the quality of candidates or increased voter turnout," Ahlers said.

Kirby countered that the "party bosses don't like Amendment H because it would take political power back from them and return it to the voters where it belongs."

### IM 28: Support slipping for grocery tax repeal

Another ballot measure with sinking support is Initiated Measure 28, which would prohibit the state from collecting sales tax on "anything sold for human consumption, except alcoholic beverages and prepared food."

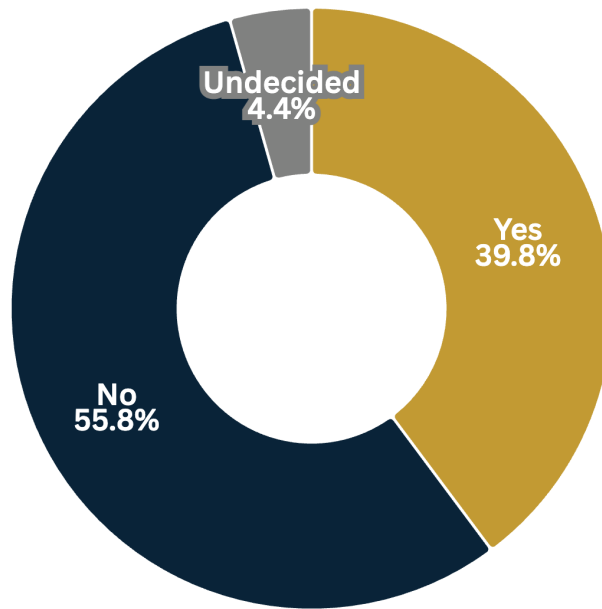
The News Watch poll showed that 49% of statewide respondents plan on voting for IM 28, compared to 45% who are opposed, with 6% undecided.

Those numbers, within the margin of error, are a striking change from the May survey, which showed 66% of voters supporting the grocery tax repeal, with 26% opposed and 7% undecided.

The measure still has support from 56% of Democratic and 58% of Independent registered voters, but just 26% of Republicans said they plan on voting for it, a significant decline from the May survey, when 56% were in favor.

The polling shift reflects a coordinated opposition campaign by groups such as the South Dakota Retailers Association and South Dakota Municipal League to raise doubts about the fiscal impact of the measure.

### Amendment H poll: How will you vote on open primaries measure?



Source: South Dakota News Watch and the Chiesman Center for Democracy at USD / Mason-Dixon Polling & Strategy (Margin of error: +/-4.5%) • 500 registered voters polled Oct. 12-16  
Graphic: Michael Klinski / South Dakota News Watch

Supporters call the measure a long-overdue effort to take the burden off low-income families and individuals by repealing the state's 4.2% sales tax on groceries. South Dakota is one of just two states, along with Mississippi, that fully taxes food without offering credits or rebates.

Families and individuals who qualify for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, also known as food stamps, are not taxed on purchases made through that federal program.

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

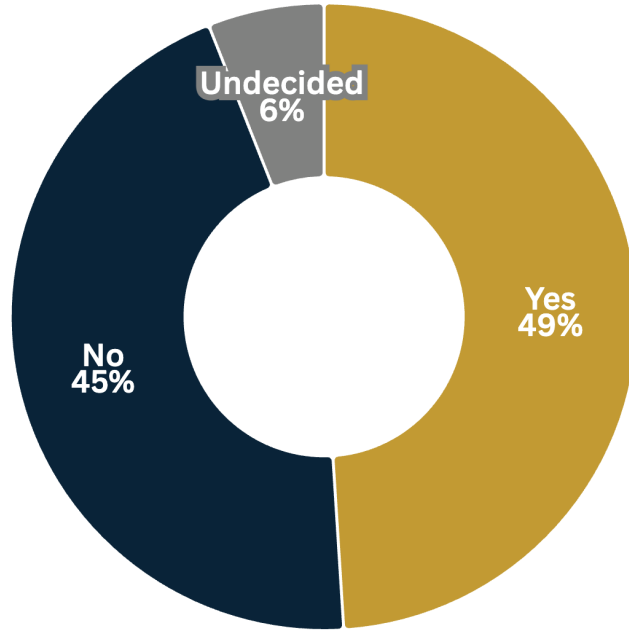
Estimates for the loss of state revenue range from \$124 million to \$646 million annually. Attorney General Marty Jackley stated in his ballot explanation that "judicial or legislative clarification of the measure will be necessary."

### IM 29: Majority opposes recreational pot

The latest attempt to legalize recreational marijuana in South Dakota has seen a slight uptick in support among registered voters, but more than half of those polled still oppose the measure.

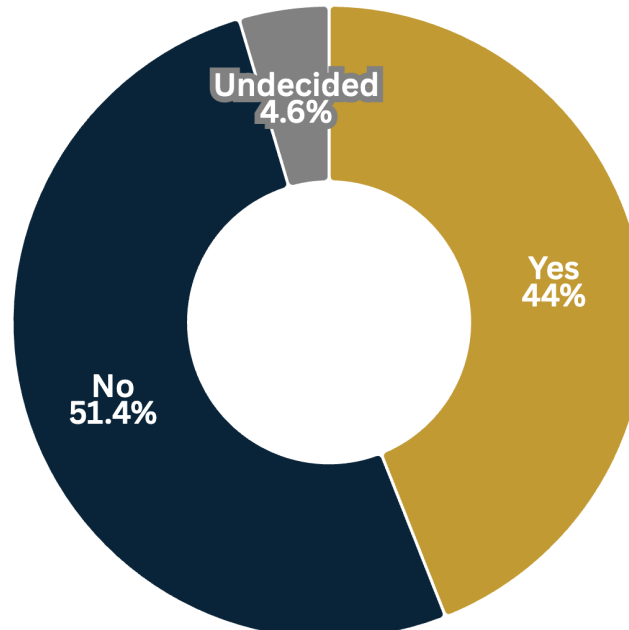
Initiated Measure 29 would allow people 21 and older to "possess, grow, ingest, and distribute marijuana or marijuana paraphernalia." Possession would be allowed up to 2 ounces in a form other than marijuana concentrate or other marijuana

### IM28: How will you vote on grocery tax repeal?



Source: South Dakota News Watch and the Chiesman Center for Democracy at USD / Mason-Dixon Polling & Strategy (Margin of error: +/-4.5%) • 500 registered voters polled Oct. 12-16  
Graphic: Michael Klinski / South Dakota News Watch

### IM29 poll: How will you vote on recreational marijuana measure?



Source: South Dakota News Watch and the Chiesman Center for Democracy at USD / Mason-Dixon Polling & Strategy (Margin of error: +/-4.5%) • 500 registered voters polled Oct. 12-16  
Graphic: Michael Klinski / South Dakota News Watch



products.

The News Watch poll showed that 44% of statewide respondents plan on voting yes, while 51% oppose IM 29 and 5% are undecided. That's slightly more support than the 42% who indicated yes in the May survey, while opposition remained a slim majority, moving from 52% to 51%.

While 75% of Democrats and 56% of Independents support legalization, just 26% of Republicans said they will be voting for IM 29, a metric that hasn't moved much since the May survey, when GOP support was 23%.

Recreational marijuana is legal in 23 states and the District of Columbia, with supporters pointing to economic advantages to the state economy from tax revenue. States collected nearly \$3 billion in marijuana revenues in 2022, according to the Tax Foundation.

Opponents cite potential social costs and health risks such as a higher risk of cardiovascular problems from marijuana use, as outlined in a recent study in the Journal of the American Heart Association.

Both sides have accused the other of exaggerating the benefits or pitfalls of legalization. But South Dakotans should be well-versed on an issue that is on the state ballot for a third consecutive election cycle.

In 2020, pro-legalization Amendment A passed with 54% of the vote, clearing the way for recreational marijuana to be implemented in the state. Medicinal pot was also approved by voters that year in an initiated measure.

Gov. Kristi Noem's administration challenged the recreational marijuana amendment, saying it violated the state's requirement that constitutional amendments deal with just one subject. That argument prevailed in the South Dakota Supreme Court.

Supporters tried to pass recreational cannabis again in 2022 and South Dakotans rejected that effort, with 53% of voters against it.

## Amendment E: Voters oppose changing male-only references

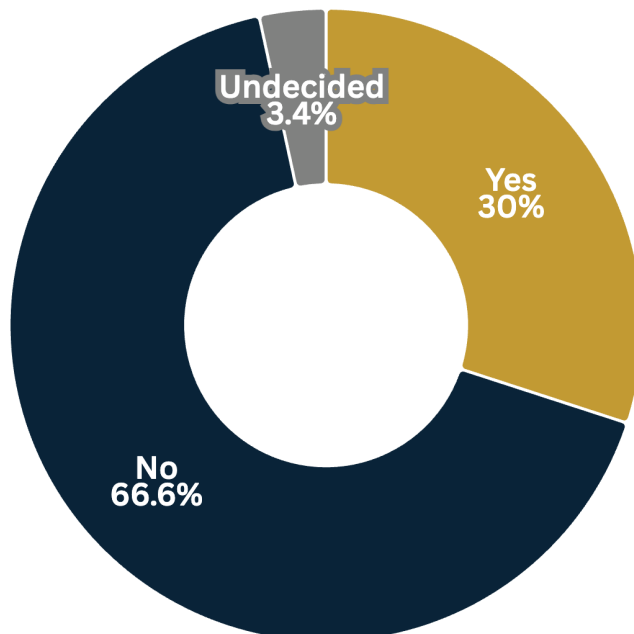
Amendment E, a legislative effort to change outdated male-only references to South Dakota's governor and other officials in the state constitution, is not faring well with registered voters in the state.

The News Watch poll showed that 66% of statewide respondents oppose the amendment, compared to 30% in favor and just 3% undecided.

The attorney general's explanation offers the following example: When referencing the governor, instead of saying "he shall be commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the state," the text will be changed to read "the governor shall be commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the state."

The amendment also includes references to officeholders such as lieutenant governor, Supreme Court justices, and Circuit Court judges as well as general classes of people such as persons, electors and public officers.

### Amendment E poll: How will you vote on removing male-only references in constitution?



Source: South Dakota News Watch and the Chiesman Center for Democracy at USD / Mason-Dixon Polling & Strategy (Margin of error: +/-4.5%) • 500 registered voters polled Oct. 12-16  
Graphic: Michael Klinski / South Dakota News Watch

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Some Republicans have alluded to national conversations about gender pronouns in opposing what is largely a procedural change. The poll found that just 14% of Republican respondents support the measure, compared to 53% of Democrats.

In the secretary of state's ballot question pamphlet, Rep. Liz May, R-Kyle, called the current use of generic male pronouns "proper style and form" and said that the usage does not prevent women from holding public office.

"While this seems like a minor change now, opening up the constitution in order to correct pronouns will not accomplish anything substantive, but will cost taxpayer dollars to reprint materials that are already effective in their current form," May said.

Sen. Erin Tobin, R-Winner, countered that "South Dakota has a long history of strong female representation in all three branches of government, and the Constitution should accurately reflect these esteemed members of our government."

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

Coming up on [GDILIVE.COM](http://GDILIVE.COM)

Groton Area  
Tigers  
**GT**



Tuesday, Oct. 22

Volleyball

Groton Area

at

Northwestern Area

JV at 6 p.m.

Sponsored by

Adam & Nicole Wright

Varsity to follow

**\$5 ticket or**

**GDI Subscription**

**required to watch the games.**

**We'll be publishing each ballot measure in the GDI.  
Today it's Initiative Measure 29**

## 2024 Statewide Ballot Measures

Underscores indicate new language.

~~Overstrikes~~ indicate deleted language.

### Initiative Measure 29

**Title:** An Initiated Measure Legalizing the Recreational Use, Possession, and Distribution of Marijuana.

**Attorney General Explanation:** This initiated measure allows individuals 21 years of age or older to possess, grow, ingest, and distribute marijuana or marijuana paraphernalia. Individuals may possess up to two ounces of marijuana in a form other than marijuana concentrate or other marijuana products. Individuals may possess up to six marijuana plants with no more than twelve plants per household. The measure also places limits on the possession of other forms of marijuana and marijuana products.

Under the measure, the possession, ingestion, and distribution of marijuana and marijuana paraphernalia remains illegal for individuals under the age of 21. Driving under the influence of marijuana remains illegal.

The measure restricts where individuals may possess or consume marijuana, such as schools or where tobacco is prohibited.

The measure allows employers to restrict an employee's use of marijuana. Property owners may also regulate the use of marijuana on their property.

The measure does not affect State laws dealing with hemp. It also does not change laws concerning the State's medical marijuana program.

The measure legalizes marijuana-derived substances considered felony-controlled substances under State law. Marijuana remains illegal under federal law.

Judicial or legislative clarification of this measure may be necessary.

Vote "Yes" to adopt the initiated measure.

Vote "No" to leave South Dakota law as it is.

**Fiscal Note:** The state and municipalities would collect minimal additional sales tax revenue, as the measure would not decriminalize the sale of cannabis but would decriminalize the sale of cannabis accessories. Counties could see incarceration expenses reduced by \$581,556 every year.

### **Full Text of Initiated Measure 29:**

Be it enacted by the people of South Dakota.

**Section 1.** That title 34 be amended by adding a NEW SECTION to read:

Terms used in this chapter mean:

(1) "Local government," a county, municipality, town, or township;

(2) "Cannabis," the plant of the genus Cannabis, and any part of that plant, including the resin extracted from any part of the plant, and every compound, manufacture, salt, derivative, mixture, or preparation of the plant, or the plant's resin, including hash and marijuana concentrate. The term includes an altered state of marijuana absorbed into the human body. The term does not include hemp, as defined in § 38-35-1 or fiber produced from the stalks, oil or cake made from the seeds of the plant, sterilized seed of the plant which is incapable of germination, or the weight of any other ingredient combined with marijuana to prepare topical or oral administration, food, drink, or any other product;

(3) "Cannabis accessory," any equipment, product, or material that is specifically designed for use in planting, propagating, cultivating, growing, harvesting, manufacturing, compounding, converting, producing, processing, preparing, testing, analyzing, packaging, repackaging, storing, containing, ingesting, inhaling, or otherwise introducing cannabis into the human body; and

(4) "Possession limit," the following amounts of cannabis:

(a) Two ounces of cannabis in a form other than concentrated cannabis or cannabis products;

(b) Sixteen grams of concentrated cannabis, which includes hashish and cannabis extracts; and

(c) Cannabis products, other than concentrated cannabis, containing one thousand six hundred



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milligrams of tetrahydro-cannabinol.

**Section 2.** That title 34 be amended by adding a NEW SECTION to read:

Subject to the limitations in this chapter, and notwithstanding any other law, the following acts, if done by a person at least twenty-one years of age, may not be an offense under state or local law, regulation, or ordinance; be subject to a civil fine, penalty, or sanction; be a basis for detention, search, or arrest; be a basis for the denial of any right or privilege; or be a basis for asset seizure or forfeiture:

(1) Possessing, using, ingesting, inhaling, processing, or transporting not more than the possession limit of cannabis; or transferring without consideration not more than the possession limit of cannabis to a person who is twenty-one years of age or older;

(2) Possessing, planting, cultivating, harvesting, drying, processing, or manufacturing not more than six cannabis plants and possessing and processing the cannabis produced by the plants, provided that the plants and any cannabis produced by the plants in excess of the possession limit are kept at one private residence only, are in a locked space at the private residence, are not visible by normal, unaided vision from a public place; and that the total number of plants at the private residence may not exceed twelve, even if more than two people who are twenty-one years of age or older live in the residence;

(3) Possessing, using, or manufacturing any cannabis accessory;

(4) Delivering, distributing, transferring, or selling a cannabis accessory to a person twenty-one years of age or older;

(5) Allowing the person's property to be used for any of the acts permitted by this chapter; and

(6) Any combination of the acts allowed by this section.

**Section 3.** That title 34 be amended by adding a NEW SECTION to read:

Nothing in this chapter affects a law prohibiting:

(1) The delivery or distribution of cannabis or a cannabis accessory, with or without consideration, to a person younger than twenty-one years of age;

(2) The purchase, possession, use, or transport of cannabis or cannabis accessories by a person younger than twenty-one years of age;

(3) The consumption of cannabis by a person younger than twenty-one years of age;

(4) The operation of or being in physical control of any motor vehicle, train, aircraft, motorboat, or other motorized form of transport while under the influence of cannabis;

(5) The consumption of cannabis while operating or being in physical control of a motor vehicle, train, aircraft, motorboat, or other motorized form of transport, while it is being operated;

(6) The smoking of cannabis within a motor vehicle, aircraft, motorboat, or other motorized form of transport, while it is being operated;

(7) The possession or consumption of cannabis or possession of cannabis accessories on the grounds of a public or private preschool, elementary school, or high school, in a school bus, or on the grounds of any correctional or juvenile detention facility;

(8) The smoking of cannabis in a location where smoking tobacco is prohibited;

(9) The smoking of cannabis in a public place;

(10) The undertaking of any task under the influence of cannabis, if doing so would constitute negligence or professional malpractice; or

(11) Performing solvent-based extractions on cannabis using solvents other than water, glycerin, propylene glycol, vegetable oil, or food grade ethanol.

**Section 4.** That title 34 be amended by adding a NEW SECTION to read:

This chapter does not:

(1) Require an employer to permit or accommodate an employee to engage in conduct allowed by this chapter;

(2) Affect an employer's ability to restrict the use of cannabis by an employee;

(3) Limit the right of a person who occupies, owns, or controls private property from prohibiting or otherwise regulating conduct permitted by this chapter on or in that property; or

(4) Limit the ability of the state or a local government to prohibit or restrict any conduct otherwise permitted under this chapter within a building owned, leased, or occupied by the state or the local government.

## 2025 DOG LICENSES DUE BY 12/31/2024



Licenses due by December 31, 2024

Fines start January 1, 2025

Spayed/Neutered dogs are \$5 per dog,  
otherwise \$10 per dog

Proof of rabies shot information is REQUIRED!!

Email proof to [city.kellie@nvc.net](mailto:city.kellie@nvc.net)

fax to (605) 397-4498 or bring a copy to City Hall!!

Please contact City Hall as soon as possible if you no longer have a dog(s) that  
were previously licensed!

Questions call (605) 397-8422

## Darling gets 1,000th career dig; Tigers beat Lions in volleyball

Eliana Darling got her 1,000 career dig Monday in volleyball action played in Groton. Very early in the match she got to the milestone, but the Langford Area Lions lost the match to Groton Area, 25-12, 25-13 and 25-17.

Chesney Weber led Groton Area with 12 kills, 10 ace serves and nine assists. Taryn Traphagen had six kills and one assisted block. Rylee Dunker had six kills. Faith Traphagen three kills. Elizabeth Flihs two ace serves, one kill and 15 assists. Jaedyn Penning had three kills, one ace serve and 17 digs. Laila Roberts had one kill, one ace serve and nine digs. Sydney Locke had one ace serve. Jerica Locke had two ace serves and Emma Kutter had one kill and one assisted block.

For the Lions, Emily Olson had four kills and three blocks; Eliana Darling had three kills, one ace serve, 11 digs and one block; Paytyn Marlow had two kills and eight assists; Mariah Tosse had one kill; Lizzie Gustafson had three kills; Autumn Wegleitner had two kills and one ace serve; Clarissa Guy had five assists and eight digs and Alexandria Darling had one kill, one ace serve and 12 digs.

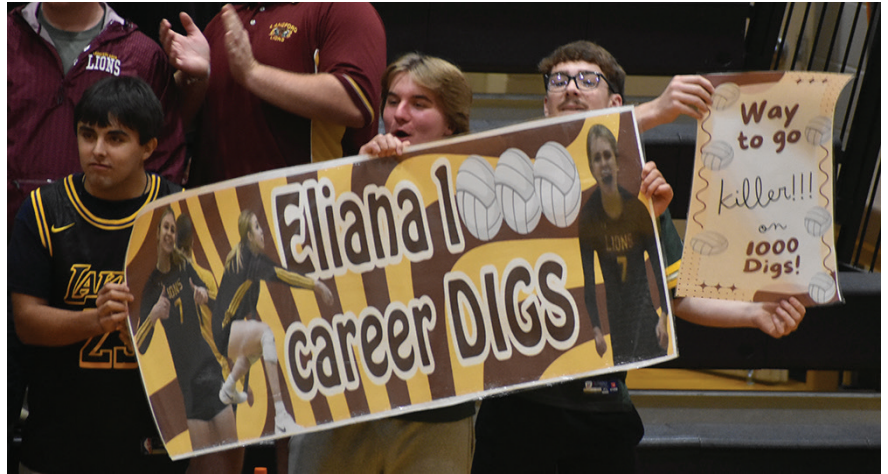
Groton Area won the junior varsity match, 2-1. The first set was tied 17 times and there were seven lead changes before the Lions rallied to take the set in extra points, 27-25. Groton Area would then go on to win the next two sets, 25-7 and 15-10.

MaKenna Krause had eight kills and one ace serve, Kella Tracy had seven kills and one ace serve, Emerlee Jones had four kills, Libby Cole had three kills, Sydney Locke had three ace serves, Talli Wright had two kills and one ace serve, Liby Althoff had two ace serves and one kill and McKenna Tietz had one kill.

Sophie Rodriguez led Langford Area with two kills and one ace serve while Aubrey Craig and Regan Bruns each had two kills, Brooklynn West had one ace serve and one kill, Brooke Dwight and Kaytlyn Shepherd each had one ace serve and Josie Vander Vorst and Brynn Samson each had one kill.

The varsity match was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Agtegra, Avantara Groton, Bierman Farm Service, BK Custom T's & More, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Fans of Jaedyn Penning, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Jungle Lanes & Lounge, Krueger Brothers, R&M Farms/Rix Farms and The Meathouse in Andover. The junior varsity match was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Adam and Nicole Wright.

Groton Area, now 16-5, will travel to Northwestern and Langford Area, now 8-17, will host Webster Area. Both of those matches are tonight.



The boys hold up a sign reflecting that Eliana Darling got her 1,000 career dig at the volleyball match held Monday in Groton. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Senior members of the Groton Area volleyball program were recognized last night. (Photo by

Paul Kosel)

- Paul Kosel



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**Rylee Dunker**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



**Eliana Darling**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



**Lizzie Gustafson**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



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**Clarissa Guy**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



**Jerica Locke**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



**Alexandria Darling**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



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**Emma Kutter with her kill.**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



**Laila Roberts**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



**Jaedyn Penning**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



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**Taryn Traphagen**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



**Autumn Wegleitner along with Emily Olson (11) and Paytyn Marlow (6)**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



**Chesney Weber**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



**Elizabeth Fliehs along with Chesney Weber.**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



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### DISTRICT 1

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**General Election - Nov. 5**  
**Absentee Voting has begun**

## Northwestern Middle School Music Festival

On Tuesday October 15h, nine Middle School Band Students attended the Northwestern Middle School Music Festival. An impressive fifteen schools attended this event. The band students are chosen from nominations from band directors and then these chosen students spend time working with this year's guest director Toby Rath, Former Band Director from Groton. The choir students were accompanied by Mr. Reid Johnson, also Former Band Director from Groton. Novalea, Wesley, and Liam J. were chosen as first chair section leaders. Aspen and Novalea are also this year's festivals three year members. The students had a wonderful experience, and performed an impressive concert to a gym completely filled with an audience.



**3 year members: (L to R): Aspen Beto and Novalea Warrington**



**Front row (L to R): Ayce Warrington, trombone; Liam Lord, Tuba; Liam Johnson, Alto Sax; Hudson Eichler, Percussion; Bella Barrera, French Horn; and Mr. Reid Johnson (Accompanist)  
Back row (L to R): Novalea Warrington, Flute; Aspen Beto, Clarinet; Wesley Borg, Tenor Sax; Kyrie Yeigh, Clarinet; and Mrs. Desiree Yeigh (Director)**





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

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### Legislators vote to subpoena officials over alleged vehicle titling crimes in their department

**Revenue secretary cites prosecutions and potential lawsuits as reasons to withhold information, even in closed session**

**BY: JOHN HULT - OCTOBER 21, 2024 6:25 PM**

The refusal of a state department director to explain what's changed after a recent vehicle titling scandal sparked a rare subpoena request from a legislative committee on Monday.

Department of Revenue Secretary Michael Houdyshell appeared before the Legislature's Government Operations and Audit Committee in Pierre to discuss a new software system and other internal control measures he said will prevent further vehicle titling troubles. Two former Revenue Department employees are criminally charged in a fake vehicle-titling scheme, following an investigation into similar allegations against a deceased former employee.

But Houdyshell refused, even during an hourlong, closed-door executive session, to offer details on the new internal controls. Houdyshell cited the criminal prosecutions and the possibility of future lawsuits, and said rules direct practicing attorneys to avoid making public statements about a case.

When the committee reconvened publicly, Sen. David Wheeler, R-Huron, told his fellow committee members that he disagrees with Houdyshell's interpretation of that rule.

Wheeler and Houdyshell are both attorneys. Wheeler argued that rules barring public statements about a case can't logically apply to statements offered behind closed doors.

He also said there is no active case involving the deceased former employee, who can't be prosecuted but whose actions could land the state in a lawsuit.

The senator said it's a pattern from the executive branch, and one that prevents lawmakers with oversight authority from doing their jobs.

"We need some sort of resolution to this, because this is the answer we always get. It's occurred in the past when we've had controversial matters before this committee," Wheeler said. "Officials say 'there's pending litigation, there's a threat of litigation,' therefore there's no response."

The committee voted 7-2 to support subpoenas for Houdyshell and Rosa Yaeger, director of the Revenue Department's Motor Vehicle Division. A subpoena is a legal order requiring someone to offer testimony or produce evidence.

The subpoenas would need approval from the Legislature's Executive Board.

Lawmakers tried and failed in 2023 to pass a bill that would have granted subpoena powers to the audit committee without that additional step.

The Executive Board is unlikely to be a hurdle in this situation, said its chairman, Watertown Republican Sen. Lee Schoenbeck. He told South Dakota Searchlight he intends to call a meeting for Oct. 29 to discuss the subpoenas.

"I'm going to honor the will of the audit committee," Schoenbeck said, adding that he'd expect the board's membership to agree to the subpoenas.

#### Revenue Department concerns

The Revenue Department's Motor Vehicle Division has been the focus of legislators since this summer, in light of the behavior of now-deceased former employee Sandra O'Day. O'Day worked for the division for

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decades. After her death, her family found suspicious financial records that ultimately led the state Division of Criminal Investigation to discover that O'Day had created 13 fake vehicle titles. She'd used them to secure loans, and Attorney General Marty Jackley said earlier this month that the banks victimized by her failure to repay those loans could file lawsuits against the state seeking damages.

Jackley's latest statements came during a press conference Oct. 9, at which he announced criminal complaints against two other former Revenue Department employees. Lynne Hunsley is facing seven counts for allegedly falsifying a vehicle title, in part to avoid excise taxes, and Danielle Degenstein faces a misdemeanor charge for allegedly notarizing the phony title and for her failure to come clean to law enforcement when confronted.

"I do want to start with a little caveat," Houdyshell said in the opening seconds of his committee appearance Monday. "Due to pending criminal proceedings and the threat of potential civil litigation, and at the advice of the attorney general, we're going to be limited as to what questions we can answer today."

A new system for vehicle and driver licensing in South Dakota should help prevent the kind of criminal behavior uncovered over the summer, he said. The department has also implemented a mandatory ethics training for employees, and has signaled its plans to hire an internal control officer.

That last move mirrors one from the state Department of Social Services. That agency also came under scrutiny recently for the alleged behavior of one of its former employees.

Lonna Carroll allegedly embezzled \$1.8 million from the state by creating and approving fraudulent financial support orders for children from 2010 through 2023. Carroll's jury trial is set to begin in December.

After about 10 minutes of public testimony Monday, Houdyshell and the committee members retired to a closed, executive session.

## Closed doors, closed mouths

Sen. Wheeler launched into an explanation of his reasons for wanting subpoenas shortly after the committee reconvened for its public meeting.

The audit committee is supposed to get answers to questions on agency operations, Wheeler said, and it can hold sessions outside the public eye if necessary.

It's not reasonable to expect lawmakers on the committee to sit on their hands for months or longer, he said, before attending to the business of oversight because of potential legal proceedings.

"We have to find a way for us to be able to do our job at the same time the judicial branch does its job," Wheeler said. "I think that's what this route allows us to do."

Sen. Tim Reed, R-Brookings, wondered what might stop departmental representatives from stonewalling in the face of a subpoena and citing the same rules for public statements from lawyers.

A subpoena could be challenged or modified in court, Wheeler said. If the Legislature's subpoenas survive a challenge and departmental employees still don't answer questions, he said, "it's actually a matter of contempt, which is in itself a class two misdemeanor."

The two committee members who opposed the subpoenas each expressed doubts prior to the vote. Rep. Drew Peterson, R-Salem, asked Houdyshell if the department intends to wait until every legal matter is finished before explaining new internal controls.

"We cannot delve into the details in this forum until any of the potential litigation has been resolved," Houdyshell said.

Sen. Dean Wink, R-Howes, suggested the potential to influence the courts is something that justifies waiting for answers.

"I don't think the Legislature has the authority to supersede the legal process in this situation," Wink said.

Sen. Jean Hunhoff, R-Yankton, said if all the audit committee can do is nod yes when a department head says "trust us, we've got it under control," committee members may as well stay home.

"It's not that I don't trust people, but I don't trust people anymore," Hunhoff said. "There's too many things that have happened in the last couple of months."

*John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering crimi-*



*nal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.*

## Lawmakers, prison officials shut out public during discussion of weeklong lockdown

### Tribal president requests meetings about sweat lodge teardowns

BY: JOHN HULT - OCTOBER 21, 2024 1:32 PM

Lawmakers on an audit committee got a rundown Monday about a weeklong lockdown at the South Dakota State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls, but every word that hadn't already appeared in state prison press releases was spoken behind closed doors.

Department of Corrections Secretary Kellie Wasko spent about 10 minutes of the state's Government Operations and Audit Committee in Pierre walking through 12 pages of slides on the lockdown and alleged contraband uncovered.

The committee moved to go into executive session to discuss "juvenile matters" as well as an undefined set of "personnel and contractual matters" as soon as Wasko finished her prepared remarks. Public boards, commissions and local governments are required to abide by open meetings laws when entering executive session, but the Legislature is exempt.

Sen. Reynold Nesiba, D-Sioux Falls, began to ask a question before the body moved to close its doors. Rep. Ernie Otten, R-Tea, cut him off.

"We're going to hold all questions until we go into executive session," Otten told him.

After an hour and 20 minutes of executive session, the committee gaveled back in for less than two minutes and fielded two comments.

"I'm confident to say that everything that I've heard, and that is being done, is being done for inmate safety, staff safety and community safety," said Rep. Drew Peterson, R-Salem.

Otten said he seconded the sentiment.

"It has been very informative, and I'm glad that we do have the personnel that we've got that are rectifying these problems," Otten said. "So from the bottom of my heart, thank you."

It's unclear how much of the executive session was devoted to discussions of the lockdown.

This summer, under questioning from the same committee about outbreaks of violence at Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield, Wasko said she would be willing to give committee members the "nitty gritty" of security incidents once the DOC finished investigating, but only behind closed doors.

She also said at that point that she doesn't believe she needs to answer to the state's Corrections Commission, a board of lawmakers and citizens empowered under state law to advise the department on correctional and criminal justice issues. She would repeat that assertion at a commission meeting a few weeks later.

At the Capitol on Monday, Wasko walked through information the DOC shared when the agency began transitioning its Sioux Falls facilities off of lockdown status earlier this month. Wasko showed photos of tattoo guns, bags of trash and a bag of loose tobacco, as well as images of weapons fashioned from fiberglass, nail files and bits of metal, and tools from prison shops allegedly found in the possession of inmates outside the shops.

### Sweat lodge issue draws attention of Oglala Sioux Tribe

Wasko's Monday public comments did not address the teardown of the penitentiary grounds' three sweat lodges. DOC spokesman Michael Winder told South Dakota Searchlight that the teardowns were temporary and undertaken for the same reason the lockdowns began: as a preemptive search for contraband.

The sweat lodge situation drew the ire of Oglala Sioux Tribe President Frank Star Comes Out last week.

The president sent a letter to Penitentiary Warden Teresa Bittinger on Thursday to request a meeting about why and how the sacred religious spaces were removed, and the actions the DOC intends to take to preserve the right to worship and a timeline for rebuilding the lodges.

Star Comes Out suggested that the religious liberty of Native American inmates had been unfairly – and perhaps unlawfully – upended.

“The sweat lodge is a vital component of the religious and spiritual practices of the Lakota Oyate (people),” Star Comes Out wrote. “The removal of these sacred structures during the lockdown has raised significant concerns within our community, particularly given the legal protections afforded to Native American inmates who practice traditional religious and spiritual ceremonies under federal law.”

Star Comes Out cited the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, which preserves the right to worship for Indigenous inmates.

Star Comes Out also requested a separate meeting with Lakota inmates, and requested that Sen. Shawn Bordeaux, D-Mission, be in attendance. Bordeaux is the current president of the Corrections Commission.

Winder, who did not immediately return a request for comment on the sweat lodge letter on Monday, wrote earlier that the lodges will be rebuilt, and then blessed by a medicine man.

Reached during a committee break on Monday, Sen. Nesiba said he could not discuss what happened in the closed session and echoed the comments of Peterson and Otten.

He did offer, however, that he believes parts of what was discussed could have been addressed during the public portion of the meeting.

*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.*

## **1 million+ patients lose coverage as insurers, hospitals drop Medicare Advantage**

**Experts worry older patients could be exposed to ‘catastrophic’ costs and interrupted access to care**

**BY: ANNA CLAIRE VOLLERS, STATELINE - OCTOBER 21, 2024 9:17 AM**

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. — Libby and Andrew Potter usually ignore the avalanche of Medicare Advantage ads that land in the mailbox at their home in Huntsville, Alabama, each fall as Medicare’s open enrollment period begins.

Libby, a retired middle school librarian, has what she considers good health insurance through the state employee health plan. Andrew has insurance through his job as a university professor and plans to join Libby’s insurance when he retires next year.

But this year, a few days before open enrollment began, a letter arrived from UnitedHealthcare, informing the Potters that the region’s largest hospital system would no longer be considered in-network for Libby’s Medicare Advantage plan.

The Potters spent the next couple of weeks worried and unsure what to do. It seemed incredible that 14 area hospitals, including the area’s only Level 1 trauma center, could suddenly become much, much more expensive.

“We were being very careful in how we go up and down stairs,” Libby joked.

Medicare is the federal health insurance program for people over 65 and those with certain disabilities. Medicare Advantage is a version of Medicare run by private insurance companies that contract with the government. These plans typically offer extra benefits, such as dental, vision and prescription drug coverage, that aren’t included with traditional Medicare. More than half of eligible Medicare beneficiaries now

get their coverage through private Medicare Advantage plans.

But this year, as Medicare's open enrollment season kicks off, more than 1 million patients will have to shop for new health insurance. Facing financial and federal regulatory pressures, many insurers are pulling their Medicare Advantage plans from counties and states they've deemed unprofitable. Meanwhile, large health systems in states including Alabama, Minnesota and Vermont have cut ties with some Medicare Advantage plans.

It's a situation that's alarmed state insurance regulators, who are fielding questions from older adults concerned about their hospitals and doctors withdrawing from their Medicare Advantage plans. Last month, the National Association of Insurance Commissioners sent a letter to the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services asking for guidance.

"Beneficiaries are faced with either paying the increased out-of-network costs or rescheduling their necessary medical services with another provider who may not have prompt availability," the insurance commissioners' group wrote. "A delay in access to medically necessary services is likely to result in harm."

The Potters eventually learned that Libby's copayments at the hospital would remain the same whether or not the hospital was in-network for the state educators' Medicare Advantage plan. But those with other UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage plans will have to pay more — or find another plan.

"When a contract leaves the market, that can threaten continuity of care and access to care," said Dr. Amal Trivedi, professor of health services, policy and practice at the Brown University School of Public Health. "The beneficiary will have to choose a new plan, and each of these plans is going to have a different benefit structure, different provider network, different prior authorization policies and different [prescription drug] formularies.

"The worry is that's going to affect their out-of-pocket costs, expose them to catastrophic spending, or compromise their access to care."

## **Avera, Sanford end participation in Humana Medicare Advantage**

The South Dakota-based Avera and Sanford health systems announced in recent months that they'll no longer participate in Humana Medicare Advantage, effective Dec. 31.

Sanford cited "ongoing challenges and concerns that negatively affect patients including ongoing denials of coverage and delays accessing care."

Avera cited "delays in care due to long waits for prior authorizations and denials of necessary services and care."

— Searchlight staff

## **How we got here**

Insurance giants such as UnitedHealthcare have been aggressively pushing enrollment in their Medicaid Advantage plans for the past several years, luring customers with perks and bonuses not available through traditional Medicare. These plans tend to have low or even no monthly premiums and offer extra benefits such as vision and dental coverage, gym memberships, transportation to medical appointments, and even debit cards for medical supplies.

And they're simple: They provide all of a person's coverage in one plan, unlike traditional Medicare, under which people must get separate prescription drug coverage and supplemental coverage.

But there are trade-offs. Medicare Advantage plans often have a limited network of hospitals and physicians. And while the premiums are typically low, enrollees could end up paying more in the long run in copays and deductibles if they develop a serious illness.

Medicare Advantage programs also are more likely than traditional Medicare to require prior authorization for hospital stays and other high-cost services. The plans' prior authorization requirements have prompted increased scrutiny in recent years. A congressional investigation by Democratic Senate staff released this month, for example, found the nation's largest Medicare Advantage insurers denied a quarter of all prior authorization requests for post-acute care in nursing homes, rehab hospitals and long-term care.

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Medicare Advantage is popular among large employers, many of which are shifting their Medicare-age retirees into these plans. And most states offer Medicare Advantage plans to retired state employees; in 13 states, it's the only option. In some of those 13 states, retirees forfeit their health benefits in perpetuity if they choose coverage under traditional Medicare.

North Carolina Treasurer Dale Folwell, whose office administers the state health plan, said its Medicare Advantage plan is popular.

"What we hear from our retirees, is that they are grateful and happy to have such a great offering as a result of their retirement benefit," the Republican said. "That's why nearly 89% of our retirees over age 65 have availed themselves of the [Medicare Advantage] product we offer them."

## Insurers retreat

This year, the handful of insurance giants that dominate the Medicare Advantage market have said they're scaling back or eliminating plans, to shed members and boost sagging profits. They blame new federal changes to their reimbursements, including a small cut to their base payments, and say patients are using more medical services and benefits than they anticipated.

Though most companies haven't released data on specific counties where they're making cuts, plans are reportedly shuttering in states such as Alabama, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Texas and Vermont, affecting hundreds of thousands of older adults. Experts say the reasons why a company might find certain markets unprofitable are complex, but can include demographics, availability of providers and plans that are already in the market.

"[T]he industry broadly is going to be trimming benefits and in some cases significantly, and exiting from certain counties that aren't profitable," Aetna's former President Brian Kane told shareholders on an earnings call in May, before he left his position. Aetna, a subsidiary of CVS Health, is the third-largest Medicare Advantage insurer in the nation. "I think that's an industry issue and I think it's clearly an Aetna focus as well."

Executives at CVS Health, Aetna's parent company, told shareholders the priority for its Medicare Advantage program would be improving profit margins rather than increasing the number of enrollees.

They have not announced publicly which counties will lose Medicare Advantage plans, but noted their changes could push out 10% of their membership, meaning up to 420,000 patients could be forced to shop for a different plan.

## Canceled plans

Even with the decline in the number of plans available next year, "there are still a lot of plans and people have a lot of options," said Jeannie Fuglesten Biniek, associate director of the Medicare policy program at KFF, a health policy research organization. Next year, the average Medicare beneficiary will have access to 34 Medicare Advantage plans that include drug coverage, down from 36 this year, she said.

But that average masks wide variation across states and even counties in how many plans are available.

"There are a handful of counties, more than in previous years, where all Medicare Advantage plans exited and those look to be predominantly rural counties," said Fuglesten Biniek. "We're talking fortyish counties out of 3,000. For those people in those counties, that matters, but overall, it's a smaller number."

Experts say there isn't enough data available yet to know whether the plan exits are concentrated in certain states or counties.

But research has shown that Medicare Advantage plans that enroll higher shares of Black beneficiaries are more likely to be terminated, said Trivedi, of Brown University. Black enrollees have more lower-quality Medicare Advantage plans available in their counties of residence than white enrollees, research shows; terminated contracts tend to have lower-quality ratings.

"The consequence is that contract terminations in Medicare Advantage seem to have a disproportionate effect on Black beneficiaries because their contracts are more likely to be terminated," Trivedi said.

A disproportionate share of Medicare Advantage beneficiaries are Black, Hispanic, and Asian and Pacific



Islander. These patients tend to have lower incomes than white beneficiaries, and may be drawn by the lower upfront costs of Medicare Advantage plans.

"[Insurers] like to frame it as, 'People are choosing us because we're awesome,'" said Brandon Novick, program outreach assistant at the Center for Economic and Policy Research. "But it's because financially it makes more sense in the short term" for people with limited incomes.

Meanwhile, at least 28 health systems in 21 states have stopped accepting some Medicare Advantage plans this year, according to an analysis from Becker's Hospital Review, an industry publication.

Health systems have cited delayed reimbursements, cumbersome prior authorization requirements and high rates of patient claim denials for their decisions to drop Medicare Advantage plans. Nearly 1 in 5 health systems stopped accepting one or more Medicare Advantage plans last year, according to a report by the Healthcare Financial Management Association.

### 'A tough ask'

For retirees like Libby and Andrew Potter, losing access to trusted doctors and hospitals can mean going longer without needed medical care. Finding a new doctor and getting an appointment can take months, particularly for specialists. And for older adults living in rural areas, losing an in-network hospital or physician can mean choosing between a long drive for care or high out-of-pocket costs.

"There are really important access-to-care issues when providers no longer contract with your Medicare Advantage plan," Trivedi said.

He said the sheer number of plans and differences in benefits might be overwhelming for older adults. "To sort through all of that when somebody also may have frailty or cognitive impairment, that's a really tough ask," Trivedi said. "I study health policy for a living and it'd be hard for me to sort through 40 different options."

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

## Reforms at the U.S. Supreme Court: Where do Harris and Trump stand?

**BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - OCTOBER 21, 2024 2:21 PM**

WASHINGTON — Democrats have increasingly cried out for new rules for the nation's highest court, and the 2024 presidential election reflects a clear party divide over how Supreme Court justices should behave and whether they should remain on the bench for life.

The erasure of a nearly 50-year-old national right to abortion, the granting of wide latitude for former presidents to escape criminal accountability and several ethics scandals magnified these questions. Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump are giving voters very different answers.

Harris' platform calls for "common-sense" reforms that include term limits for justices and an enforceable ethics code that mirrors the rules that apply to lower federal judges.

When President Joe Biden announced his proposals for Supreme Court ethics reform roughly one week after dropping his bid for reelection, Harris issued a statement reinforcing the need to "restore confidence" in the court.

"That is why President Biden and I are calling on Congress to pass important reforms — from imposing term limits for Justices' active service, to requiring Justices to comply with binding ethics rules just like every other federal judge. And finally, in our democracy, no one should be above the law. So we must also ensure that no former President has immunity for crimes committed while in the White House," she said.

While Harris' campaign did not provide additional details on her platform, Harris has a record of supporting such measures. As a senator in 2019, Harris co-sponsored a bill to enforce a uniform ethics code at every level of the federal judiciary, including the Supreme Court.

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## Trump position

When asked for comment about Trump's stance on enforceable ethics rules or term limits at the Supreme Court, Trump campaign Senior Advisor Brian Hughes responded: "President Trump has said that, apart from matters of war and peace, the nomination of a Supreme Court justice is the most important decision an American President can make. As president, he appointed constitutionalist judges who interpret the law as written, and he will do so again when voters send him back to the White House."

The former president has made his opposition to change known on social media.

Nearly two weeks before Biden's speech in July to roll out his ideas for improving the court, Trump wrote on Truth Social that the "Radical Left Democrats are desperately trying to 'Play the Ref' by calling for an illegal and unConstitutional attack on our SACRED United States Supreme Court."

"The reason that these Communists are so despondent is that their unLawful Witch Hunts are failing everywhere. The Democrats are attempting to interfere in the Presidential Election, and destroy our Justice System, by attacking their Political Opponent, ME, and our Honorable Supreme Court. We have to fight for our Fair and Independent Courts, and protect our Country. MAGA2024!" he continued, randomly capitalizing words as he often does.

The Republican National Committee stated in its platform that the party unequivocally opposes any changes to the number of Supreme Court justices.

"We will maintain the Supreme Court as it was always meant to be, at 9 Justices. We will not allow the Democrat Party to increase this number, as they would like to do, by 4, 6, 8, 10, and even 12 Justices. We will block them at every turn."

At the Economic Club of Chicago on Oct. 15, Trump appeared to accuse Democrats of wanting to add up to 25 new justices to the Supreme Court bench.

Harris' 2024 campaign position on the Supreme Court does not include a plan to change the number of justices. During her 2020 presidential run, Harris expressed an openness to expanding the court, according to Politico and other reports. Biden, at the time, remained opposed to changes, including justice term limits.

## Immunity ruling

When Trump was charged with federal fraud and obstruction crimes for his attempts to subvert the 2020 presidential election results, he escalated his appeal for presidential immunity all the way to the Supreme Court.

On July 1, the justices issued a 6-3 opinion granting former presidents criminal immunity for "core constitutional" duties and presumptive immunity for actions on the "outer perimeter" of official duties, but none for unofficial, personal acts.

Two of the justices who joined the conservative majority ruling — Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh — were Trump appointees. Justice Amy Coney Barrett, also appointed during Trump's time in the Oval Office, joined them, concurring in part.

Trump's case was delayed for the better part of 2024, tied up in the high court process as he campaigned for a second presidency. The delay ultimately closed the door on a trial before November's election.

The high-profile case not only highlighted the fact that Trump was being judged by his own appointees, but also that two other justices had been recently exposed in ethics scandals involving Republican donors and appearing to show support for Trump's false claims that he won the 2020 election.

In April 2023, ProPublica uncovered that Justice Clarence Thomas had been accepting luxury travel and other big ticket gifts from Republican billionaire donor Harlan Crow.

In May of this year, the New York Times published photos of an upside-down American flag flying outside the home of Justice Samuel Alito following the violent riot by Trump supporters at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. The upside-down flag, a general symbol of protest, had been adopted by Trump supporters who believed the 2020 election was stolen.

All parties have denied any wrongdoing, and Alito declined to recuse himself from Trump's 2020 election subversion case, and another case brought by a Jan. 6 defendant.

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## The call for a new ethics code

While the Thomas and Alito scandals attracted the most attention, observers of the court say many of the justices' actions raise ethics questions.

Gabe Roth, founder of the nonpartisan nonprofit Fix the Court, said "no justice has totally behaved ethically."

Roth cited transgressions by both conservative and liberal justices: socializing with litigants who argue before the court, the use of government resources to promote a personal book and instances of justices not recusing themselves from cases in which they appear to have a stake.

"It hasn't been to the scale of the things that ProPublica uncovered, but no justice is fully pure when it comes to ethics issues, which is not to say that they're all corrupt or they're all compromised by any means. It's just more, to me, a fact that the whole institution needs to focus more on ethical leadership," Roth said.

ProPublica published numerous stories in 2023 detailing gifts Thomas never disclosed, as well as a luxury fishing expedition Alito took with a Republican billionaire who argued before the court.

The Supreme Court currently polices itself with its own code of conduct and maintains justices already follow rules that apply to lower federal judges.

Congressional Democrats have introduced several bills aiming to impose ethics rules on the justices and limit life-time appointments, for example to 18 years.

A bill led by Senate Democrat Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island passed the Democratic-led Senate Committee on the Judiciary in July 2023.

The legislation aimed to mandate an enforceable ethics code, tighten recusal and gift disclosure requirements, and establish a complaints process similar to that of the lower courts.

An attempt at unanimous consent passage on the Senate floor in June was blocked by Senate Judiciary's top Republican, Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina.

"Let's be clear, this is not about improving the court, this is about undermining the court," Graham said on the floor.

Roth said no matter who wins the presidency and which party takes control of the Senate, the longtime fight for an ethics overhaul and term limits at the high court will continue — and that it shouldn't be partisan.

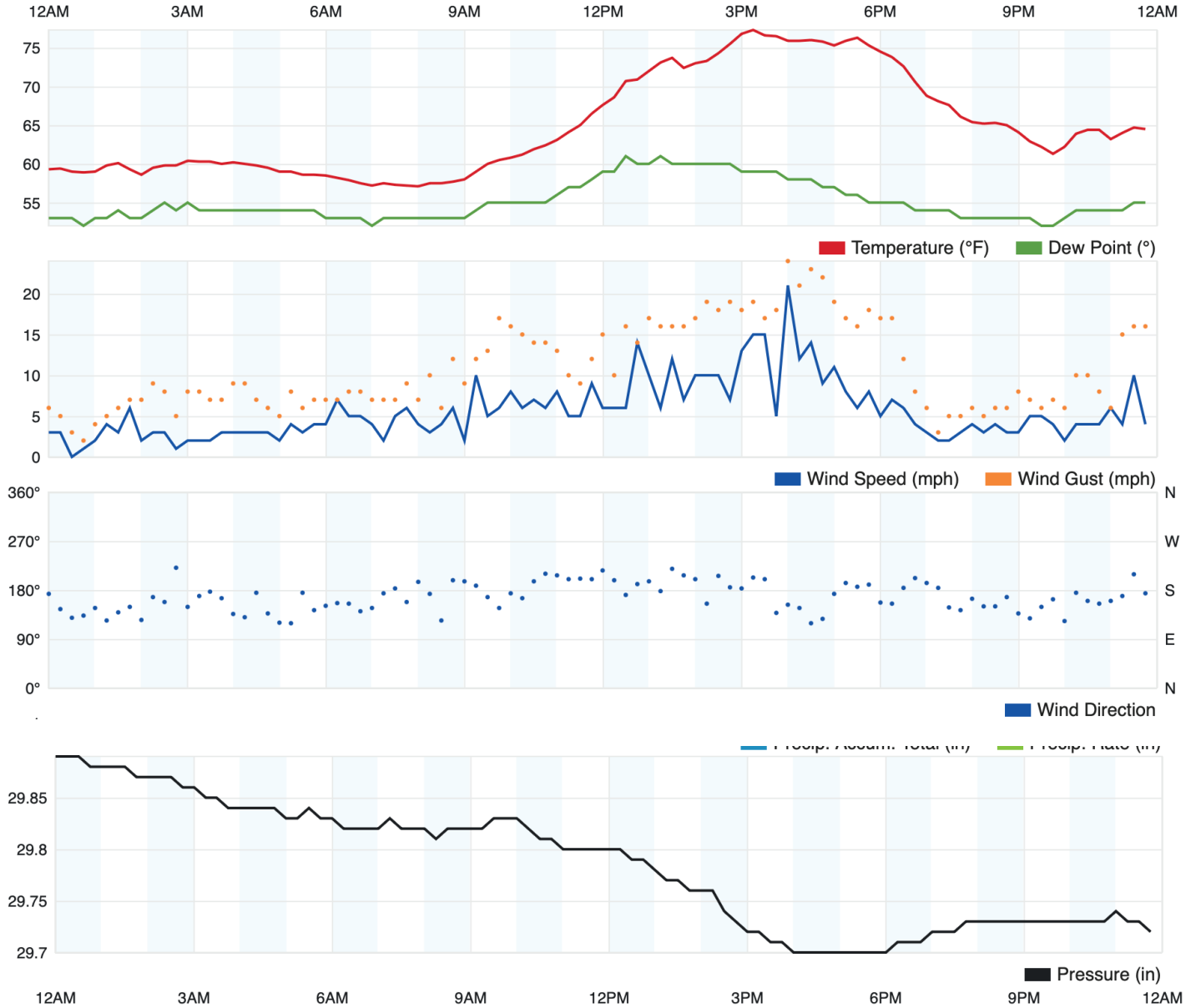
"If they're done right, it doesn't favor one party or another or one ideology or another. It's a bit weird that one side is saying they don't love ethics right now," Roth continued. "I don't get it."

*Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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Today



High: 65 °F

Mostly Sunny  
then Mostly  
Sunny and  
Breezy

Tonight



Low: 33 °F

Partly Cloudy  
then Patchy  
Fog

Wednesday



High: 61 °F

Patchy Fog  
then Sunny

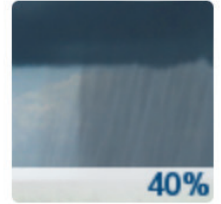
Wednesday  
Night



Low: 46 °F


Increasing  
Clouds


Thursday




High: 62 °F

Chance  
Showers

Today  
  
Highs: 59 - 70°F

Tonight  
  
Lows: 30 - 37°F

Wednesday  
  
Highs: 57 - 68°F

Above average temperatures continue today with highs in the upper 50s to around 70. Temperatures will be about the same on Wednesday. Expect some afternoon clouds lasting into the evening to overnight hours. Lows tonight could dip below freezing for much of north central and northeast SD

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 77 °F at 3:17 PM

Low Temp: 57 °F at 7:59 AM

Wind: 26 mph at 3:20 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 10 hours, 38 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 82 in 1992

Record Low: 8 in 1895

Average High: 56

Average Low: 31

Average Precip in Oct.: 1.64

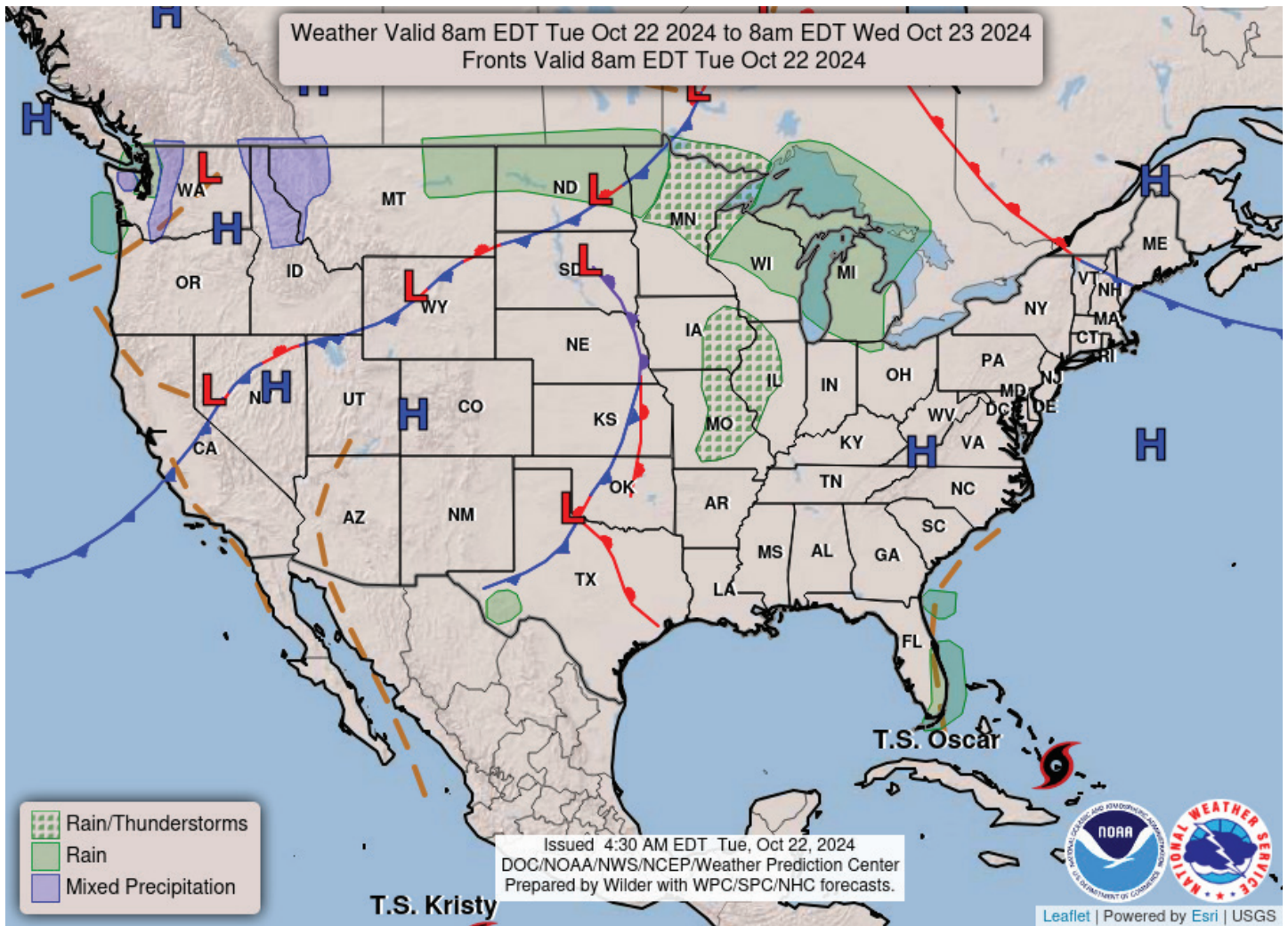
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.02

Average Precip to date: 19.97

Precip Year to Date: 19.77

Sunset Tonight: 6:35:55 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:58:56 am



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## Today in Weather History

October 22, 1992: Record heat occurred on this date. Temperatures rose into the upper 70s to the mid-80s across central and northeast South Dakota as well as west central Minnesota. The record highs were 79 degrees at Mobridge and Timber Lake, 80 degrees at Sisseton, 82 degrees at Aberdeen, 83 degrees at Wheaton, and 85 degrees at Pierre. Although not a record high, Kennebec rose to 87 degrees on this date in 1992.

1884: A drought which began in August, extended through September and continued until the last week October brought hardship to Northern, Central, and Eastern Alabama. The 22nd was the first day of general showers, and gentle rains fell from the 26th to the 29th.

1965 - The temperature soared to 104 degrees at San Diego, CA. Southern California was in the midst of a late October heat wave that year. Los Angeles had ten consecutive days with afternoon highs reaching 100 degrees. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1985 - A guest on the top floor of a hotel in Seattle, WA, was seriously injured while talking on the phone when lightning struck. Several persons are killed each year when the electrical charge from a lightning bolt travels via telephone wiring. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Yakutat, AK, surpassed their previous all-time yearly precipitation total of 190 inches. Monthly records were set in June with 17 inches, in September with 70 inches, and in October with more than 40 inches. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987) Twenty-two cities in the eastern U.S., most of them in the southeast states, reported record low temperatures for the date. Morning lows of 30 degrees at Athens GA, 28 degrees at Birmingham AL, and 23 degrees at Pinson AL, were the coldest of record for so early in the season. (The National Weather Summary) Showers produced heavy rain in southern California, with amounts ranging up to five inches at Blue Jay. Flash flooding resulted in two deaths, ten injuries, and more than a million dollars damage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A "nor'easter" swept across the coast of New England. Winds gusted to 75 mph, and large waves and high tides caused extensive shoreline flooding. A heavy wet snow blanketed much of eastern New York State, with a foot of snow reported in Lewis County. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A storm system moving out of the Gulf of Alaska brought rain to the Northern and Central Pacific Coast Region, with snow in some of the mountains of Oregon, and wind gusts to 60 mph along the Oregon coast. Six cities in Florida reported record low temperatures for the date, including Tallahassee with a reading of 34 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1997: Game 4 of the World Series between the Cleveland Indians and the Florida Marlins was the coldest game in World Series history. The official game-time temperature was 38 degrees at Jacobs Field in Cleveland. Wind chills as low as 18 degrees was reported during the game.

1998: Tropical Depression Thirteen formed on October 22 over the southwestern the Caribbean Sea. By the 24th, this tropical depression became Hurricane Mitch. This hurricane would rapidly intensify over the next two days, reaching Category 5 strength on the 26th. Hurricane Mitch would end up being the second deadliest hurricane in the history of the Atlantic Ocean.





## UNSEEN POWER

A snowflake is a remarkable object in size and shape. Sometimes they appear as though they are floating through space. Other times they arrive in force and fury. Occasionally they fall on an eyelash and can be seen but not felt. They are weightless wonders until they are massed together. Then, they can provide a beautiful country scene or bring a city to a complete halt. Snowflakes give us a unique picture of the strength and power of numbers. What a lesson for the church!

From the very beginning God has intended for His followers to come together for strength and service, power and productivity. We find throughout Scripture that a community of believers can accomplish much more than an individual acting on his own behalf. God established the church and empowered it with the Holy Spirit to spread the gospel and provide healing and hope, energy and encouragement, to its members.

When a Christian feels lonely or deserted, afraid or abandoned, overwhelmed or overpowered, the church is to be a refuge for healing hearts and holding hands. God wants the church to provide protection and peace to all who seek His love, grace and mercy. Within the church, believers can link their lives together to offer protection from sin and work together as God's witness to the world.

Prayer: Lord, may Your church, even if only two or three are gathered in Your name, be faithful to fulfill Your purpose as they worship, work and witness together. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor. If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

*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:  
10.18.24

4 9 26 39 58 23

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$205,000,000**

NEXT 17 Hrs 48  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
10.21.24

1 4 20 24 26 4

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$12,360,000**

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 15  
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
10.21.24

3 14 23 37 38 2

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 16 Hrs 30 Mins  
DRAW: 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
10.19.24

3 6 14 27 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$68,000**

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 30  
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
10.21.24

2 3 7 26 34 1

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

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 59  
DRAW: Mins 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
10.21.24

1 25 57 62 64 15

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$478,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 59  
DRAW: Mins 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)



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## Upcoming Groton Events

- 07/04/2024 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/09/2024 FREE SNAP Application Assistance 1-6pm at the Community Center
- 07/14/2024 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
- 07/17/2024 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm
- 07/17/2024 Pro Am Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/25/2024 Dairy Queen Miracle Treat Day
- 07/25/2024 Summer Downtown Sip & Shop 5-8pm
- 07/25/2024 Treasures Amidst The Trials 6pm at Emmanuel Lutheran Church
- 07/26/2024 Ferney Open Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start
- 07/27/2024 1st Annual Celebration in the Park 1-9:30pm
- 08/05/2024 School Supply Drive 4-7pm at the Community Center
- Cancelled:** Wine on 9 at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm
- 08/08/2024 Family Fun Fest 5:30-7:30pm
- 08/9-11/2024 Jr. Legion State Baseball Tournament
- 08/12/2024 Vitalant Blood Drive at the Community Center 1:15-7pm
- 09/07/2024 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 09/07-08/2024 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
- 09/08/2024 Sunflower Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
- 10/05/2024 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/11/2024 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
- 10/31/2024 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 10/31/2024 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/16/2024 Groton American Legion "Turkey Raffle" 6:30-11:30pm
- 11/28/2024 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm
- 12/01/2024 Groton Snow Queen Contest, 4:30 p.m.
- 12/07/2024 Olive Grove 8th Annual Holiday Party with Live & Silent Auctions 6pm-close
- 04/12/2025 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt at the City Park 10am Sharp
- 05/03/2025 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 05/26/2025 Memorial Day Services Groton Union Cemetery with lunch at Legion Post #39, 12pm
- 07/04/2025 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/09/2025 Legion Auxiliary Salad Luncheon
- 07/13/2025 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
- 09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm

## News from the **AP** Associated Press

### Monday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Aberdeen Christian def. Webster, 25-23, 23-25, 25-15, 12-25, 15-11

Aberdeen Roncalli def. Faulkton, 25-14, 15-25, 25-27, 25-18, 15-11

Canistota def. Irene-Wakonda, 25-15, 25-23, 25-19

Colome def. Crow Creek Tribal School, 25-14, 25-21

Ethan def. Avon, 25-19, 25-21, 19-25, 25-19

Freeman def. Viborg-Hurley, 25-23, 25-14, 25-14

Groton def. Langford, 25-12, 25-13, 25-17

Herreid-Selby def. South Border, N.D., 25-19, 25-17, 25-17

Highmore-Harrold def. Crow Creek Tribal School, 25-11, 25-12, 25-9

Miller def. Wolsey-Wessington, 25-27, 27-29, 25-19, 25-23, 15-5

Tripp-Delmont-Armour def. Platte-Geddes, 25-23, 25-17, 25-11

Warner def. North Central, 25-12, 25-13, 25-12

Yankton def. Beresford, 26-28, 25-12, 32-30, 25-22

Some high school volleyball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

### **Blinken arrives in Israel as US looks to renew cease-fire efforts after the killing of Hamas leader**

By FARNOUSH AMIRI, TIA GOLDENBERG and KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Israel on Tuesday on his 11th visit to the region since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war. The U.S. hopes to revive cease-fire efforts after the killing of top Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, but so far all the warring parties appear to be digging in.

Israel is still at war with Hamas more than a year after the militant group's Oct. 7 attack, and with Hezbollah in Lebanon, where it launched a ground invasion earlier this month. Israel is also expected to strike Iran in response to its ballistic missile attack on Oct. 1.

Blinken landed just hours after Hezbollah launched a barrage of rockets into central Israel, setting off air raid sirens in the country's most populated areas and its international airport, but causing no apparent damage or injuries.

The Israeli military said it intercepted most of the five projectiles, with one landing in an open area. Another 15 projectiles were fired from Lebanon into northern Israel at around the same time, it said.

In a separate development, the death toll from an Israeli airstrike late Monday that destroyed several buildings facing one of Beirut's main hospitals climbed to 13. Lebanon's Health Ministry said 57 others were wounded in the strikes, including seven who were in critical condition.

It said the airstrikes caused significant damage to the Rafik Hariri University Hospital, the country's largest public hospital, located on the outskirts of southern Beirut.

The Israeli military said it struck a Hezbollah target, without elaborating, and said that it had not targeted the hospital itself.

Blinken expected to focus on Gaza

The State Department said ahead of the visit that Blinken would focus on ending the war in Gaza, securing the release of hostages held by Hamas and alleviating the suffering of Palestinian civilians.

State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said Blinken would underscore the need for a dramatic increase in the amount of humanitarian aid reaching Gaza, something that Blinken and Defense Secretary

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Lloyd Austin made clear in a letter to Israeli officials last week.

That letter reminded Israel that the Biden administration could be forced by U.S. law to curtail some forms of military aid should the delivery of humanitarian aid continue to be hindered.

Blinken's previous trips have yielded little in the way of ending hostilities, but he has managed to increase aid deliveries to Gaza in the past.

The United States, Egypt and Qatar have brokered months of talks between Israel and Hamas, trying to strike a deal in which the militants would release dozens of hostages in return for an end to the war, a lasting cease-fire and the release of Palestinian prisoners.

But both Israel and Hamas accused each other of making new and unacceptable demands over the summer, and the talks ground to a halt in August. Hamas says its demands have not changed following the killing of Sinwar.

US and Iran both step up outreach ahead of expected Israeli strike

Blinken is expected to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other top officials. Following Israel, he's expected to visit a number of Arab countries, likely to include Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has been criss-crossing the region in recent days to try and build support ahead of Israel's threatened retaliatory strike. Speaking in Kuwait on Tuesday, he said Gulf Arab countries had assured him they would not allow their territory to be used for any Israeli strike.

"All the neighbors assured us that they will not allow their lands and air to be used against Iran," Araghchi said, according to the state-run IRNA news agency. "This is an expectation from all friendly and neighboring countries and we consider this a sign of friendship."

Gulf Arab nations like the UAE and Qatar host major military installations, and there are concerns that an all-out regional war could draw them in. Iran has repeatedly vowed to respond to any Israeli strike.

War rages in Lebanon and northern Gaza

The U.S. has also tried to broker a cease-fire between Israel and Hezbollah, but those efforts fell apart as tensions spiked last month with a series of Israeli strikes that killed the militant group's top leader, Hassan Nasrallah, and most of his senior commanders.

Israel is currently waging another major operation in already-devastated northern Gaza, which has killed hundreds of Palestinians over the last two weeks, according to local health authorities.

In Lebanon, Israel has carried out waves of heavy airstrikes across southern Beirut and the country's south and east, areas where Hezbollah has a strong presence. Hezbollah has fired hundreds of rockets, missiles and drones into Israel, including some that have reached the country's populous center.

Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking another 250 hostage. Around 100 of the captives are still held in Gaza, a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Israel's offensive has killed over 42,000 Palestinians in Gaza and wounded tens of thousands, according to local health authorities, who do not say how many were combatants but say more than half were women and children. It has also caused massive devastation across the territory and displaced around 90% of its population of 2.3 million.

## Putin hosts Global South leaders at BRICS summit intended to counterbalance Western clout

KAZAN, Russia (AP) — China's Xi Jinping, India's Narendra Modi and other global leaders arrived Tuesday in the Russian city of Kazan for a summit of the BRICS bloc of developing economies that the Kremlin hopes to turn into a rallying point for defying the Western liberal order.

For Russian President Vladimir Putin, the three-day meeting also offers a powerful way to demonstrate the failure of U.S.-led efforts to isolate Russia over its action in Ukraine. Kremlin foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov touted the summit as "the largest foreign policy event ever held" by Russia, with 36 countries attending and more than 20 of them represented by heads of state.



The alliance that initially comprised Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa has expanded rapidly to embrace Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Turkey, Azerbaijan and Malaysia have formally applied to become members, and a few others have expressed an interest in joining.

Observers see the BRICS summit as part of the Kremlin's efforts to showcase support from the Global South amid spiraling tensions with the West and help expand economic and financial ties.

Proposed projects include the creation of a new payment system that would offer an alternative to the global bank messaging network SWIFT and allow Moscow to dodge Western sanctions and trade with partners.

Putin is set to hold about 20 bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the summit, including Tuesday's encounters with China's Xi, India's Modi and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa.

On Thursday, Putin is also set to meet with United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who will be making his first visit to Russia in more than two years. Guterres has repeatedly criticized Russia's action in Ukraine.

## Harris and Trump highlight their economic policies in outreach to Latino voters

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Both Kamala Harris and Donald Trump see economic policy as their best chance to win Latino voters. But their approaches are very different.

In an interview with Telemundo on Tuesday afternoon, Vice President Harris plans to highlight how her agenda would create more opportunities for Latino men — a strategy born out of roughly a dozen focus groups and polling.

The Democratic nominee intends to show off her plans to double the number of registered apprenticeships. She wants to stress how she would remove college degree requirements for certain federal government jobs and encourage private employers to do likewise. And Harris wants to provide forgivable loans worth up to \$20,000 each to 1 million small businesses.

Former President Trump, the Republican nominee, is making his own outreach to Latinos on Tuesday by holding a roundtable with them in Doral, a Miami suburb.

His campaign says he will make the case that employment, wages and home ownership increased for Latinos during his time in office. The campaign also says he will argue that Harris and President Joe Biden stuck Latinos with high inflation and that "Trump is the only candidate who can bring prosperity back to America."

The Trump and Harris campaigns see what could be an election-deciding opportunity with Latino men, who could swing the outcome in states such as Pennsylvania, Arizona and Nevada if their traditional support for Democrats erodes. Trump believes he's made inroads among Latino men. Harris' team is seeking to shore up support within the same group with the election just two weeks away.

It sets up a question of whether memories of a Trump presidency or the promise of new policies under Harris will do more to energize Latino voters.

"We are very confident that these policies resonate because we've seen them resonate in speeches and focus groups," said Matt Barreto, a Harris campaign pollster. "It speaks to Latino men in particular about being successful and achieving the American dream."

Both campaigns are jockeying for an edge with the increasingly diverse electorate in the closing weeks of the campaign. Harris has also focused on Black men, to whom she also pitched the forgivable loans for small businesses. She's gone on the podcast "Call Her Daddy" to appeal to younger women, while Trump has appeared on podcasts to target younger men.

Trump participated in a town hall last week on Univision where his major pitch to Latinos was that the economy had been phenomenal during his White House term.

"We had the greatest economy in the history of our country," Trump said. "Now we have a lousy economy primarily because of inflation. So we're going to get rid of the inflation."

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The former president's description of his own economic record typically excludes the mass job losses and recession caused by the pandemic in 2020. Inflation is now at a relatively healthy 2.4%, but frustration still lingers for voters from inflation spiking in June 2022 at 9.1% as gasoline, groceries and housing became much more expensive.

On Univision, Trump said increased oil production would bring down overall inflation if he was elected. He has also suggested his combination of tariff hikes and tax cuts will help growth, though his campaign lacks details compared to the policy guide released by Harris' team.

In a close race, the Harris campaign is betting that Latino men are getting more attuned to policy specifics as the election draws closer.

Based on focus groups, Barreto said the Harris campaign found that Latino men in particular wanted access to apprenticeships that could give people without college degrees access to a financially stable career.

The latest Labor Department figures show there are 641,044 registered apprenticeships, an increase from the Trump administration, when apprenticeships peaked in 2020 at 569,311. Doubling that figure as Harris has proposed would put the total number of apprenticeships at roughly 1.2 million over four years.

Latino men also expressed a need for access to capital and credit to start companies, as the Treasury Department reported on Oct. 10 that Latino business ownership is up 40% over pre-pandemic levels and could keep climbing with better financing options.

Harris' running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, will be on Univision's *El Bueno, La Mala, y El Feo*, a syndicated radio show, this week, while Harris' husband, Doug Emhoff, will be interviewed this week by Univision's nationally syndicated afternoon radio show, *El Free-Guey Show*. Emhoff will also be interviewed by Alex "El Genio" Lucas on Nueva Network Radio.

Trump hopes to convince Latinos that they can trust a fellow businessman such as himself, even as he's also called for the mass deportation of immigrants in the country illegally.

"Hispanic people — they say you can't generalize, but I think you can — they have wonderful entrepreneurship and they have — oh, do you have such energy. Just ease up a little bit, OK? Ease up," Trump said at an Oct. 12 event. "You have great ambition, you have great energy, very smart, and you really do like natural entrepreneurs."

## China holds live-fire drills opposite Taiwan, a week after large-scale exercise

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — China is holding live-fire drills off the coast of its southern Fujian province facing Taiwan, just a week after a massive air-and-sea drill it described as punishment for Taiwan's president rejecting Beijing's claims of sovereignty.

The live-fire drills were being held near the Pingtan islands, according to a notice from the Maritime Safety Administration. It warned ships to avoid the area. It did not offer additional details.

Taiwan's Defense Ministry said China's drills were part of an annual exercise and it was tracking them.

"It cannot be ruled out that it is one of the ways to expand the deterrent effect in line with the dynamics in the Taiwan Strait," the statement added.

Taiwan is a self-ruled island that Beijing claims is part of China. Tensions around the issue have flared in recent years. China has increased its presence in the waters and skies around Taiwan. It now increasingly sends large numbers of warplanes and navy vessels to military exercises near Taiwan, and its coast guard carries out patrols.

Last week, China held a one-day military exercise aimed at practicing the "sealing off of key ports and key areas." Taiwan counted a record one-day total of 153 aircraft, 14 navy vessels and 12 Chinese government ships.

Taiwan's premier, Cho Jung-tai, called on China to stop its exercises aimed at Taiwan.

"Like all democratic countries in the world, we believe that China's military exercises are a threat to regional peace and stability. Regardless of the scale of the exercise, China's military exercises should not frequently approach Taiwan to make meaningless declarations," he said.

In response to Chinese moves, the U.S. has continued what it calls "freedom of navigation" transits through the Taiwan Strait. On Sunday, the destroyer USS Higgins and the Canadian frigate HMCS Vancouver transited the narrow band of ocean that separates China and Taiwan.

Germany sent two warships through the Taiwan Strait last month as it seeks to increase its defense engagement in the Asia-Pacific region.

China has also exerted diplomatic pressure on Taiwan, poaching its allies. South Africa, which does not recognize Taiwan as a country, asked the island last week to move its liaison office outside the capital, Pretoria, as a concession to China. Taiwan on Monday said it would fight the request.

## King Charles III ends first Australian visit by a reigning British monarch in 13 years

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — King Charles III ends the first visit to Australia by a reigning British monarch in 13 years Tuesday as anti-monarchists hope the debate surrounding his journey is a step toward an Australian citizen becoming head of state.

Charles and his wife, Queen Camilla, watched dancers perform at a Sydney Indigenous community center. The couple used tongs to cook sausages at a community barbecue lunch at the central suburb of Parramatta and later shook the hands of well-wishers for the last time during their visit outside the Sydney Opera House. Their final engagement was an inspection of navy ships on Sydney Harbor in an event known as a fleet review.

Charles's trip to Australia was scaled down because he is undergoing cancer treatment. He arrives in Samoa on Wednesday.

Indigenous activist Wayne Wharton, 60, was arrested outside the opera house early Tuesday afternoon before the royals greeted the crowd.

"It will be alleged the man was acting in an abusive and threatening manner and had failed to comply with two previous move-on directions," a police statement said. He was charged with failing to comply with a police direction and will appear in court on Nov. 5.

Wharton said he intended to serve Charles with a summons to appear in court on war crimes and for genocide but never got close to the couple.

The royal visit was "a slap in the face to every decent Aboriginal person and fair-minded person in Australia that's tried to make a go of their lives," Wharton told the AP after his arrest.

On Monday, Indigenous independent senator Lidia Thorpe yelled at Charles during a reception that he was not her king and Australia was not his land.

Wharton said he backed Thorpe "absolutely 100%." He had protested with a small group of demonstrators outside a Sydney church service the couple attended on Sunday under a banner "Empire Built on Genocide."

Esther Anatolitis, co-chair of the Australian Republic Movement, which campaigns for an Australian citizen to replace the British monarch as Australia's head of state, said while thousands turned out to see the king and Camilla at their public engagements, the numbers were larger when his mother Queen Elizabeth II first visited Australia 70 years ago.

An estimated 75% of Australia's population saw the queen in person during the first visit by a reigning British monarch in 1954.

"It's understandable that Australians would be welcoming the king and queen, we also welcome them," Anatolitis said. "But it doesn't make any sense to continue to have a head of state appointed by birth right from another country."

Anatolitis acknowledged that getting a majority of Australians in a majority of states to vote to change the constitution would be difficult. Australians haven't changed their constitution since 1977.

Constitutional lawyer Anne Twomey said an Australian republic is not something that Charles, 75, need



worry about in his lifetime.

She said the failure of a referendum last year to create an "utterly innocuous" Indigenous representative body to advise government demonstrated the difficulty.

"It's just that on the whole people aren't prepared to change the constitution," Twomey said.

"So a republic, which would be a much more complex constitutional question than the one last year, would be far more vulnerable to a scare campaign and to opposition," she said.

"So unless you had absolutely unanimous support across the board and a strong reason for doing it, it would fail," she added.

Philip Benwell, national chair of the Australian Monarchist League, which wants to maintain Australia's constitutional link to Britain, said he was standing near Thorpe at the Canberra reception when she started yelling at the king and demanding a treaty with Indigenous Australians.

"I think she alienated a lot of sympathy. If anything, she's helped to strengthen our support," Benwell said.

Thorpe has been criticized, including by some Indigenous leaders, for shouting at the king and failing to show respect.

Thorpe was unrepentant. She rejected criticism that her aggressive approach toward the monarch was violent.

"I think what was unacceptable is the violence in that room, of the King of England praising himself, dripping in stolen wealth, that's what's violent," Thorpe told Australian Broadcasting Corp. "The violence is from the colonizer being in that room asserting his authority, being paid for by every taxpayer in this country."

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese wants Australia to become a republic but has ruled out a referendum during his first three-year term. A vote remains a possibility if his center-left Labor Party wins elections due by May next year.

Australians decided in a referendum in 1999 to retain Queen Elizabeth II as head of state. That result is widely regarded as having been the consequence of disagreement about how a president would be chosen rather than majority support for a monarch.

Sydney University royal historian Cindy McCreery suspects Australia is not yet ready to make the change.

"There's interest in becoming a republic, but I think what we may forget is that logistically speaking we're not going to have a referendum on that issue any time soon," McCreery said.

"I, as a historian, think that it's probably not realistic to expect a successful referendum on a republic until we've done more work on acknowledging our ... complicated history," she said.

"Becoming a republic doesn't mean that we've somehow thrown off British colonialism. It hopefully has meant that we're engaging with our own history in an honest and thoughtful way," she added.

## Storm causes at least 6 deaths in Cuba, where a long power outage is raising tempers

By ANDREA RODRIGUEZ and MILEXSY DURAN Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Cuba's capital remained largely paralyzed on Monday and the rest of the island braced for the fourth night of a massive blackout that has generated a handful of small protests and a stern government warning that any unrest will be punished.

Hurricane Oscar made landfall Sunday before crossing the island's eastern coast as a tropical storm Monday with winds and heavy rain, leaving at least six dead after a night that saw protests by several dozen people in urban neighborhoods like Santos Suárez and central Havana.

Some banged pots and pans in the streets, while others demonstrated from their balconies. Protesters who said they have no water blocked at least one street with garbage.

"The country has completely halted," said homemaker Mayde Quiñones, 55. She cares for her mother-in-law, who is in her 80s. "This hurts everyone, but the elderly most of all."

The Cuban government has a low tolerance for civil disobedience and President Miguel Díaz-Canel warned on national television Sunday that "we're not going to allow any vandalism, or let anyone disturb people's tranquility."

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The prolonged nationwide blackout followed a massive outage Thursday night, part of energy problems that led to the largest protests in Cuba in almost 30 years, in July 2021. Those were followed by smaller local protests in October 2022 and March 2024.

It's all part of a deep economic crisis that has prompted the exodus of more than half a million Cubans to the U.S., with thousands more heading to Europe.

The Cuban government and its allies blame the United States' 62-year-old trade embargo on the island for its economic problems but White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Monday that the Cuban government's "long-term mismanagement of its economic policy and resources has certainly increased the hardship of people in Cuba."

Power remains relatively cheap but increasingly unavailable. The Cuban government has said that it's producing 700 megawatts when peak demand can hit 3 gigawatts. Authorities said by Monday afternoon that about 80 percent of Havana had intermittent power but people were skeptical.

"We have the fridge full of food and we're scared," said small-business owner Juan Estrada, 53, whose central Havana business hasn't had consistent power since Friday morning.

Energy Minister Vicente de la O Levy said in a news conference he hoped that more reliable electricity will be restored by Monday or Tuesday morning but classes remained closed through at least Thursday.

He said that Oscar, which made landfall on the eastern coast Sunday evening, will bring "an additional inconvenience" to Cuba's recovery since it will touch a "region of strong (electricity) generation." Key Cuban power plants, such as Felton in the city of Holguín, and Renté in Santiago de Cuba, are located in the area.

Oscar later weakened to a tropical storm but its effects were forecast to linger in the island through Monday.

Many of Havana's 2 million people resorted to cooking with improvised wood stoves on the streets before their food went bad in refrigerators.

People were lining up Monday to buy subsidized food and few gas stations were open.

The failure of the Antonio Guiteras plant on Friday was the latest problem with energy distribution in a country where electricity has been restricted and rotated among different regions at different times. The status of Cuba's other power plants was unclear.

People lined up for hours on Sunday to buy bread in the few bakeries that could reopen.

Some Cubans like Rosa Rodríguez had been without electricity for four days.

"We have millions of problems, and none of them are solved," said Rodríguez. "We must come to get bread, because the local bakery is closed, and they bring it from somewhere else."

The blackout was considered to be Cuba's worst since Hurricane Ian hit the island as a Category 3 storm in 2022 and damaged power installations. It took days for the government to fix them.

The Cuban government announced emergency measures to slash electricity demand, including suspending school and university classes, shutting down some state-owned workplaces and canceling nonessential services.

Local authorities said the outage stemmed from increased demand from small- and medium-sized companies and residential air conditioners. Later, the blackout got worse because of breakdowns in old thermoelectric plants that haven't been properly maintained, and the lack of fuel to operate some facilities.

Cuba's energy minister said the country's grid would be in better shape if there had not been two more partial blackouts as authorities tried to reconnect on Saturday. De la O Levy also said Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela and Russia, among other nations, had offered to help.

## Lower-priced new cars are gaining popularity, and not just for cash-poor buyers

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — Had she wanted to, Michelle Chumley could have afforded a pricey new SUV loaded with options. But when it came time to replace her Chevrolet Blazer SUV, for which she'd paid about \$40,000 three years ago, Chumley chose something smaller. And less costly.

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With her purchase of a Chevrolet Trax compact SUV in June, Chumley joined a rising number of buyers who have made vehicles in the below-average \$20,000-to-\$30,000 range the fastest-growing segment of the nation's new-auto market.

"I just don't need that big vehicle and to be paying all of that gas money," said Chumley, a 56-year-old nurse who lives outside Oxford, Ohio, near Cincinnati.

Across the industry, auto analysts say, an "affordability shift" is taking root. The trend is being led by people who feel they can no longer afford a new vehicle that would cost them roughly today's average selling price of more than \$47,000 — a jump of more than 20% from the pre-pandemic average.

To buy a new car at that price, an average buyer would have to spend \$737 a month, if financed at today's average loan rate of 7.1%, for just under six years before the vehicle would be paid off, according to Edmunds.com, an auto research and pricing site. For many, that is financially out of reach.

Yet there are other buyers who, like Chumley, could manage the financial burden but have decided it just isn't worth the cost. And the trend is forcing America's automakers to reassess their sales and production strategies. With buyers confronting inflated prices and still-high loan rates, sales of new U.S. autos rose only 1% through September over the same period last year. If the trend toward lower-priced vehicles proves a lasting one, more generous discounts could lead to lower average auto prices and slowing industry profits.

"Consumers are becoming more prudent as they face economic uncertainty, still-high interest rates and vehicle prices that remain elevated," said Kevin Roberts, director of market intelligence at CarGurus, an automotive shopping site. "This year, all of the growth is happening in what we would consider the more affordable price buckets."

Under pressure to unload their more expensive models, automakers have been lowering the sales prices on many such vehicles, largely by offering steeper discounts. In the past year, the average incentive per auto has nearly doubled, to \$1,812, according to Edmunds. General Motors has said it expects its average selling price to drop 1.5% in the second half of the year.

Through September, Roberts has calculated, new-vehicle sales to individual buyers, excluding sales to rental companies and other commercial fleets, are up 7%. Of that growth, 43% came in the \$20,000-to-\$30,000 price range — the largest share for that price category in at least four years. (For used vehicles, the shift is even more pronounced: 59% sales growth in the \$15,000-to-\$20,000 price range over that period.)

Sales of compact and subcompact cars and SUVs from mainstream auto brands are growing faster than in any year since 2018, according to data from Cox Automotive.

The sales gains for affordable vehicles is, in some ways, a return to a pattern that existed before the pandemic. As recently as 2018, compact and subcompact vehicles — typically among the most popular moderately priced vehicles — had accounted for nearly 35% of the nation's new vehicle sales.

The proportion started to fall in 2020, when the pandemic caused a global shortage of computer chips that forced automakers to slow production and allocate scarce semiconductors to more expensive trucks and large SUVs. As buyers increasingly embraced those higher-priced vehicles, the companies posted robust earnings growth.

In the meantime, they deemed profit margins for lower-priced cars too meager to justify significant production of them. By 2022, the market share of compact and subcompact vehicles had dropped below 30%.

This year, that share has rebounded to nearly 34% and rising. Sales of compact sedans were up 16.7% through September from 12 months earlier. By contrast, CarGurus said, big pickups rose just under 6%. Sales of large SUVs are barely up at all — less than 1%.

Ford's F-Series truck remains the top-selling vehicle in the United States this year, as it has been for nearly a half-century, followed by the Chevrolet Silverado. But Stellantis' Ram pickup, typically No. 3, dropped to sixth place, outpaced by several less expensive small SUVs: the Toyota RAV4, the Honda CR-V and the Tesla Model Y (with a \$7,500 U.S. tax credit).

The move in buyer sentiment toward affordability came fast this year, catching many automakers off guard, with too-few vehicles available in lower price ranges. One reason for the shift, analysts say, is that many buyers who are willing to plunk down nearly \$50,000 for a new vehicle had already done so in the past few years. People who are less able — or less willing — to spend that much had in many cases held



on to their existing vehicles for years. The time had come for them to replace them. And most of them seem disinclined to spend more than they have to.

With loan rates still high and average auto insurance prices up a whopping 38% in the past two years, "the public just wants to be a little more frugal about it," said Keith McCluskey, CEO of the dealership where Chumley bought her Trax.

Roberts of CarGurus noted that even many higher-income buyers are choosing smaller, lower-priced vehicles, in some cases because of uncertainties over the economy and the impending presidential election.

The shift has left some automakers overstocked with too many pricier trucks and SUVs. Some, like Stellantis, which makes Chrysler, Jeep and Ram vehicles, have warned that the shift will eat into their profitability this year.

At General Motors' Chevrolet brand, executives had foreseen the shift away from "uber expensive" vehicles and were prepared with the redesigned Trax, which came out in the spring of 2023, noted Mike MacPhee, director of Chevrolet sales operations.

Trax sales in the U.S. so far this year are up 130%, making it the nation's top-selling subcompact SUV. "We're basically doubling our (Trax) sales volume from last year," MacPhee said.

How long the preference for lower-priced vehicles may last is unclear. Charlie Chesbrough, chief economist for Cox Automotive, notes that the succession of expected interest rates cuts by the Federal Rates should eventually lead to lower auto loan rates, thereby making larger vehicles more affordable.

"The trends will probably start to change if these interest rates start coming down," Chesbrough predicted. "We'll see consumers start moving into these larger vehicles."

## **In hard-fought Pennsylvania, fast-growing Hispanic communities present a test for Harris and Trump**

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

ALLENTOWN, Pa. (AP) — The sun was creeping over the horizon on a recent morning in Pennsylvania's erstwhile steel country, but inside a house next to two radio towers, Victor Martinez stood with a microphone, ready to broadcast his views to thousands of Spanish-speaking listeners.

"Señores, abran los ojos," Spanish for "Gentlemen, open your eyes," he said, after playing a recent interview where former President Donald Trump suggested he could deploy the U.S. military to deal with the opposition. "Three weeks before Election Day, this guy has the nerve to say that we should use the army to put what he calls 'crazy liberal Democrats' in prison."

Pennsylvania is arguably the hardest fought of the battleground states and happens to have one of the fastest-growing Hispanic communities in the country, in what is known as the 222 Corridor, after the highway that connects small cities and towns west and north of Philadelphia. It's fertile ground for both Democrats and Republicans to test their strength among Latinos in a state where small margins decide who gets 20 electoral votes. It's a place where Democratic nominee Kamala Harris can prove that her party still commands a large share of the demographic's support, and where Trump's campaign has been working to gain ground.

"This is the epicenter for Latino voters in Pennsylvania," said Martinez, who is of Puerto Rican descent and lives in and broadcasts his show from Allentown. "I like the fact that Kamala Harris has to keep sending people over here to listen to us and talk to us. I like it. I like the fact that JD Vance has to keep coming back. I like it, because that means that they have to pay attention to us."

Pennsylvania's Latino eligible voter population has more than doubled since 2000 from 208,000 to 579,000, according to the Latino Data Hub from the University of California, Los Angeles' Latino Policy & Politics Institute. The population in cities like Allentown and Reading is now more than half Hispanic, with a majority being of Puerto Rican descent and a sizable portion of Dominican origin.

Martinez also streams his show on YouTube and Facebook, using a large screen with an image of the White House as a backdrop for his segment on politics, which has become the highest-rated portion of

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his four-hour radio show.

Despite his public stance against Trump, Martinez says he simply wants more Latinos to get out and vote to start building more of an influential bloc, the same way Cubans have done in Florida, where he used to live and where he shaped his political views. He says he liked former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, both Republicans.

"I don't want politicians to think that they have us in the bag. No, they should be fighting for us," he said. "I'm from Florida, so I'm very well aware of the power the Cubans cultivated in South Florida. They got that power because they vote."

In Pennsylvania, roughly half of all requested mail and absentee ballots had been cast by Monday. Of those, 63% had been returned by Democrats with about 27% returned by Republicans, according to Associated Press election research. In recent elections, Democrats have been more likely to participate in advance voting, while Republicans have favored voting in-person on Election Day.

Democrats also are returning more mail and absentee ballots in the two counties that concentrate the most Hispanics in the state. In Lehigh, home to Allentown, Democrats accounted for about 62% of returned mail and absentee ballots with Republicans at 27%. In Berks County, home to Reading, Democrats accounted for about 60% of the total with Republicans at about 31%.

The Trump campaign opened a Latino outreach office in the region and won the endorsements of popular Puerto Rican reggaeton artists such as Anuel AA and Nicky Jam.

"President Trump has always been about trying to influence the Latino population. It's not the usual 'oh we need Latinos.' He appreciates our work and sees our potential," said Marcela Diaz-Myers, a Colombian immigrant who heads a new task force the Pennsylvania GOP formed to do Hispanic outreach.

Trump lost Pennsylvania to Democrat Joe Biden in 2020, after winning the state and the presidency in 2016. Nationwide, about 6 in 10 Hispanic voters supported Biden in 2020, according to AP VoteCast, a broad survey of the electorate.

Harris' campaign is hoping their network of surrogates, including Martinez, Puerto Rican artists and other popular Latino figures, helps them hold Biden's Latino lead, or at least stunts Trump's efforts to make inroads within this group.

The mayor of Allentown, Matt Tuerk, has been knocking on doors for the Democratic vice president and sees Harris' campaign resonating deeply with older Latino voters and particularly women, who often tell him things like "I will vote for 'la mujer,'" Spanish for "the woman."

Tuerk, who is of Cuban descent, says the Trump campaign believes it has some traction with younger Latino men, and he warned the Harris campaign that he was hearing more of Trump's digital ads airing at the city's barbershops where they play Bachata and merengue, musical genres from the Dominican Republic.

One of Trump's most popular Hispanic surrogates is Robert Unanue, the CEO of Goya, which produces many food products considered staples in Latino homes. Unanue has been courting Latino voters in swing states such as Pennsylvania, Nevada, Arizona and North Carolina.

Unanue says some Latinos are against high arrivals of immigrants because many have struggled for years to legalize their status and have spent effort and money to become U.S. citizens. He said many do not think Trump would deport those who have been here a long time and have no criminal record, even though the GOP nominee has vowed to conduct the largest deportation operation in U.S. history.

"Trump is not going to deport la tia, or la sobrina or la prima," Unanue said, using the Spanish words for aunt, niece and cousin. "He is going to focus first on the criminals and second on the deadbeats, people coming to this country to take from us who work hard."

Trump regularly rails against immigrants, saying they are taking jobs and bringing violent crime to the U.S. He has said those accused of murder have "bad genes." He has suggested he would use the National Guard, and possibly the military, to target between 15 million and 20 million people for deportation, though the government estimated in 2022 there were 11 million migrants living in the U.S. without permanent legal permission.

Along Allentown's Seventh Street, or what locals call Calle Siete, there is a mix of Latino-owned restaurants and grocery stores and Dominican beauty salons.

Franklin Encarnacion, 58, of the Dominican Republic, says he sees a lot of support for Harris in this neighborhood.

"She is a woman. She knows what we need in our homes. She knows that things are getting expensive," Encarnacion said, adding he felt Trump has focused too much on saying he wants to deport immigrants.

On the same commercial strip, Miguel Cleto, a pastor from the Dominican Republic, said he thinks Democrats have handled immigration poorly, and they are on the wrong side of the abortion issue.

"Donald Trump is the only solution for this country to go back to where it was," he said.

## **In battleground Georgia, poor people see no reason to vote. That decision could sway election**

By GARY FIELDS Associated Press

MACON, Ga. (AP) — Sabrina Friday scanned the room at Mother's Nest, an organization in Macon that provides baby supplies, training, food and housing to mothers in need, and she asked how many planned to vote. Of the 30, mostly women, six raised their hands.

Friday, the group's executive director, said she tries to stress civic duty, an often difficult proposition given the circumstances of her clients.

"When a mom is in a hotel room and there's six or seven people in two beds and her kids are hungry and she just lost the car, she doesn't want to hear too much about elections," Friday said. "She wants to hear how you can help."

Macon is the largest city in Bibb County, where the majority of residents are Black and one in four of its population lives in poverty. When Joe Biden became president four years ago, he promised to tackle the pernicious gap in racial equity — and in few places is the stubbornness of that challenge as politically significant in this state that could swing the presidential election.

Located about 80 miles or 130 kilometers south of Atlanta, Bibb County is the kind of place where Vice President Kamala Harris would need to run up her margin in order to defeat Donald Trump in this year's election, a strategy that helped Biden win the state four years ago as he promised to lift up Black Americans. It won't be easy: Bibb County never recovered all the jobs lost during the pandemic, and Labor Department data show it had more jobs in 2019 under Trump than it does now.

Trump, the former president, sees himself as having an opportunity with Black voters, particularly men. But he and Harris have one thing in common: Each will have a difficult time persuading people to turn out who typically sit out elections. More than 47,000 people in Bibb County were eligible to vote in 2020 and didn't, a figure roughly four times Biden's margin of victory across the entire state. Eligible voters are defined as legal residents who are 18 or older, according to Census figures.

The Biden-Harris administration can claim to have addressed three of the four crises it pledged to fix. The pandemic largely receded three years ago, the economy has improved and there is a genuine commitment of several hundreds of billions of federal dollars to tackle climate change. But racial inequality — as measured by the Federal Reserve — has worsened.

At Mother's Nest, Linda Solomon, 58, said she and her daughter aren't voting "because nothing changes no matter who sits in the White House. "Why you gonna vote and ain't nobody doing nothing?"

While Harris has excited Black voters in and around Atlanta, with its wealthier and better-educated electorate, interviews in Bibb County suggest voters living in far worse circumstances are not moved by the historic nature of her candidacy. Democrats won the county by a 2-1 margin in 2020, and Republicans are increasingly confident they can erode Democrats' historic advantage of winning roughly 90% of all Black votes.

Janiyah Thomas, Black media director for the Trump campaign, said in an email exchange that "Black voters in rural America hold the key to America's future, and President Trump is the only candidate who has proven he can deliver real results."

Thomas said Black unemployment hit historic lows during Trump's first term, although it ultimately hit



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a record low of 4.8% in April 2023 under Biden. But the Black unemployment rate is now at 5.6%, more than two percentage points higher than the unemployment rate for white workers and higher than the rate for Asian and Hispanic workers.

Thomas said get-out-the-vote efforts are focused on low-propensity voters, adding that they are using traditional canvassing methods as well as TikTok and outside groups. She estimated the efforts will reach 15 million doors across the battlegrounds.

The Harris campaign is relying on having staff on the ground. It has six people in its Macon office and has been canvassing across the region, including lower-income and rural areas. The campaign believes lower-income voters receive most of their news and information on mobile devices and can be reached by its \$200 million digital ad push.

While campaigning, Harris has focused on the middle class, and she has offered plans for small businesses and home buyers.

In places like Macon, that could prove a difficult sale. The clients at Mother's Nest are not business owners or homebuyers anytime soon, and even Harris' plan to take on grocery chains for price gouging doesn't resonate with a population living in food deserts.

The outlook of those patrons falls in line with other Black registered voters. They have an overwhelmingly positive view of Harris, but only about half of them believe the outcome of this presidential election will have "a great deal" or "quite a bit" of impact on them personally, according to a recent poll from the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

But the more nonurban parts of Georgia are only part of the electoral puzzle. It's a dramatically different story in Atlanta and its vote-rich suburbs where enthusiasm runs high for both Harris and Trump, although often divided by race.

A viewing party of the presidential debate drew scores of well-to-do residents to Buckhead Art & Company in an affluent uptown neighborhood. Many of the dozens of attendees, including the owner and hostess, Karimah McFarlane, were part of the Howard University graduate network. The party had a panel discussion that urged attendees to focus their efforts on getting young Black men to vote. The first thing every guest encountered was the voter registration table, complete with information on Georgia's system and various deadlines.

McFarlane explained that Atlanta has attracted small business owners and others because of the business-friendly atmosphere. What can be less friendly is the voting system, with some newcomers particularly puzzled by how to vote absentee.

Across town, a voter registration drive at Spelman College targeted first-time voters. Hosted by the members of Harris' sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, and their Alpha Phi Alpha brothers from Morehouse College, the event began drawing would-be registrants an hour before sign-ups started. At its peak, dozens of students crowded the tables set up outside the student union and bookstore. The organizations could not campaign for, or endorse Harris, but students spoke freely.

Caleb Cage, 21, a religion major at Morehouse, said he'd seen the excitement rise for the vice president "especially among people in my particular demographic, young people." Cage is voting absentee in his home state of Maryland.

He said he had heard about young Black men taking their support to Trump and his response was to remember what the vote means. "To reiterate the sentiments of our Morehouse brother, Sen. Raphael Warnock, a vote is a prayer for the future world you want to see. That's extremely important for young people."

But, even on a storied historically Black college campus, there was an awareness that the messages that are invigorating college students might not hit others. Elise Sampson, 20, a junior political science major at Spelman and member of the sorority co-sponsoring the registration drive, said economic disparities needed to be part of the discussions.

"It comes down to an accessibility issue," she said. "When people don't feel heard and represented, it is hard to want to participate in a political system that doesn't hear and represent you."

Malcolm Patterson, a 21-year-old junior finance major at Morehouse from Marietta, Georgia, was at the

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event to support the activity, adding he was already registered.

"This is my first presidential election," Patterson said. "It's important for us to vote on the future we hope to see," he said.

Poor voters are hidden figures in the election

Even with 2020's record number of ballots cast, more than 75 million people eligible to vote did not cast ballots, according to a study by the Center for Inclusive Democracy at the University of Southern California.

AP VoteCast, a survey of both voters and nonvoters, showed that nonvoters in 2020 tended to be poorer, younger, less educated, unmarried and minorities. The data, collected by the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, also found that among voters in 2020, 15% reported having a household income under \$25,000 in the previous year, compared with roughly 3 in 10 nonvoters. Put those characteristics against a population of 27 million adults who live below poverty, according to the census, and the figures suggest that people on the lower rungs of the economic ladder probably make up a significant subset of all nonvoters.

Georgia was an unlikely cauldron of election turmoil

In 2020, the turnout of people eligible to vote in Georgia was 66.3%, nearly matching the national figure of 66.8%, according to the Center for Inclusive Democracy, with the lowest turnouts amongst Black and Latino voters.

The Republican-controlled legislature has sought changes aimed at redressing complaints fueled by Trump's false claims of voting fraud in 2020. (Trump is facing criminal charges in the state for his actions trying to overturn the result.) That includes requiring a hand count of all ballots cast, though a Georgia judge has blocked that at least for now. Another change requires homeless voters to use the address of the county voter registration office rather than where they live, which could add to the impoverished nonvoter numbers.

A microcosm of demographics and census

A majority of Bibb County's 150,000-plus residents are minorities and over 60% are unmarried. Four in 10 are younger than 30 and nearly half have a high school education or less. The poverty rate is above 25%, more than double the state and national averages.

In interviews with dozens of single moms, grandmothers and some men, it was clear that the campaigns are not addressing their problems.

Solomon came to Mother's Nest with her grown son and daughter and grandchildren. None of them vote, she said. Her son can't because of a criminal record but she and her daughter won't because, "If you ain't got nothing, nobody has time for you whether you are Black or white. If you're poor, you're poor and they ain't got time."

Friday, who started the center in 2022, slips in comments on voting and why it's important, not just nationally but locally, where issues are decided that impact the families directly.

"You'd be surprised that a lot of them just don't want to because they've given up," she said.

Dr. Tiffany Hall hosted a dental clinic and heard the challenges of the attendees first hand, including how most can't get preventive dental care until issues become emergencies.

Tynesha Haslem, 36, listened intently. In an interview, she said she remembered voting — she believes during one of Barack Obama's elections — but voting has not been a priority in a "horrible" life.

She lost the car she had earlier this year and she and her sons spend nights in a hotel. She is not registered to vote now but even if she wanted to, it is unclear that she could because of a felony conviction on her record from 2016 for attacking an ex-boyfriend. Her top priority is getting a job "hopefully in customer service," she said.

Nonvoters have basic, urgent needs the campaigns don't address

Cars began lining up, for more than a mile, near the Unionville Missionary Baptist Church for a food and clothing giveaway. The first flurry came in a steady flow for an hour, grabbing canned goods and other produce packaged the night before by church members.

Levita Carter, 55, was one of the church members and also a teacher in the school system. "Our children are coming to school hungry," she said. "They don't have sufficient food. They don't have sufficient clothing."

Carter's message to people using the food pantries and Mother's Nest: "Our vote counts right here. We need to start small in our town and our place and get some people in place right here that can affect change here before we can even get to voting for president."

## Mideast conflict looms over US presidential race as Harris and Trump jostle for an edge

By ZEKE MILLER and JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two weeks out from Election Day, the crisis in the Middle East is looming over the race for the White House, with one candidate struggling to find just the right words to navigate its difficult cross-currents and the other making bold pronouncements that the age-old conflict can quickly be set right.

Vice President Kamala Harris has been painstakingly — and not always successfully — trying to balance talk of strong support for Israel with harsh condemnations of civilian casualties among Palestinians and others caught up in Israel's wars against Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Former President Donald Trump, for his part, insists that none of this would have happened on his watch and that he can make it all go away if elected.

Both of them are bidding for the votes of Arab and Muslim American voters and Jewish voters, particularly in extremely tight races in the battleground states of Michigan and Pennsylvania.

Harris over the weekend alternately drew praise and criticism over her comments about a pro-Palestinian protester that were captured on a widely shared video. Some took Harris' remark that the protester's concerns were "real" to be an expression of agreement with his description of Israel's conduct as "genocide." That drew sharp condemnation from Israel's former ambassador to the U.S., Michael Oren.

But Harris' campaign said that while the vice president was agreeing more generally about the plight of civilians in Gaza, she was not and would not accuse Israel of genocide.

A day earlier, the dynamics were reversed when Harris told reporters that the "first and most tragic story" of the conflict was the Oct. 7 Hamas attack last year that killed about 1,200 Israelis. That was triggering to those who feel she is not giving proper weight to the deaths of the more than 41,000 Palestinians who have been killed in Gaza.

Trump, meanwhile, in recent days has participated in interviews with Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya and Lebanese outlet MTV, where he promised to bring about peace and said "things will turn out very well" in Lebanon.

In a post on his social media platform Monday, he predicted a Harris presidency would only make matters in the Mideast worse.

"If Kamala gets four more years, the Middle East will spend the next four decades going up in flames, and your kids will be going off to War, maybe even a Third World War, something that will never happen with President Donald J. Trump in charge," Trump posted. "For our Country's sake, and for your kids, Vote Trump for PEACE!"

Harris' position is particularly awkward because as vice president she is tethered to President Joe Biden's foreign policy decisions even as she's tried to strike a more empathetic tone to all parties. But Harris aides and allies also are frustrated with what they see as Trump largely getting a pass on some of his unpredictable foreign policy statements.

"It's the very thoughtful, very careful school versus the showboat," said James Zogby, founder and president of the Arab American Institute, who has endorsed Harris. "That does become a handicap in these late stages when he's making all these overtures. When the bill comes due they're going to walk away empty-handed, but by then it'll be too late."

The political divisions on the campaign trail augur potentially significant implications after Election Day as powers in the region, particularly Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu, closely eye the outcome and the potential for any shifts to U.S. foreign policy.



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A new AP-NORC poll finds that neither Trump nor Harris has a clear political advantage on the situation in the Middle East. About 4 in 10 registered voters say Trump would do a better job, and a similar share say that about Harris. Roughly 2 in 10 say neither candidate would do a better job.

There are some signs of weakness on the issue for Harris within her own party, however. Only about two-thirds of Democratic voters say Harris would be the better candidate to handle the situation in the Middle East. Among Republicans, about 8 in 10 say Trump would be better.

In Michigan, which has the nation's largest concentration of Arab Americans, the Israel-Hamas war has profound and personal impacts on the community. In addition to many community members having family in both Lebanon and Gaza, Kamel Ahmad Jawad, a metro Detroit resident, was killed while trying to deliver aid to his hometown in southern Lebanon.

The war's direct impact on the community has fueled outrage and calls for the U.S. to demand an unconditional cease-fire and impose a weapons embargo on Israel.

Although both parties have largely supported Israel, much of the outrage and blame has been directed at Biden. When Harris entered the race, many Arab American leaders initially felt a renewed sense of optimism, citing her past comments and the early outreach efforts of her campaign.

However, that optimism quickly faded as the community perceived that she had not sufficiently distanced her policies from those of Biden.

"To say to Arab Americans, 'Trump is going to be worse' — what is worse than having members of your family killed?" said Rima Meroueh, director of the National Network for Arab American Communities. "That's what people are saying when they're asked the question, 'Isn't Trump going to be worse?' It can't be worse than what's happening to us right now."

Future Coalition PAC, a super PAC backed by billionaire Elon Musk, is running ads in Arab American communities in Michigan focused on Harris' support for Israel, complete with a photo of her and her husband, Doug Emhoff, who is Jewish. The same group is sending the opposite message to Jewish voters in Pennsylvania, attacking her support for the withholding of some weapons from Israel — a Biden administration move to pressure the longtime U.S. ally to limit civilian casualties.

Harris spokesperson Morgan Finkelstein cast Trump's approach toward the Middle East as part of a broader sign that "an unchecked, unhinged Trump is simply too dangerous — he would bring us right back to the chaotic, go-it-alone approach that made the world less safe and he would weaken America."

## **New campus protest rules spur an outcry from college faculty**

By ANNIE MA AP Education Writer

Dissent is thriving this fall at American colleges, and not just among student activists. With student protests limited by new restrictions, faculty have taken up the cause.

To faculty, new protest rules threaten freedom of speech — and the freedom to think, both central to university life. This semester, some of the most visible demonstrations have involved professors speaking up for the right to protest itself.

Last spring, pro-Palestinian tent encampments crowded schools and disrupted commencement plans, drawing accusations of antisemitism and prompting new limits.

At Indiana University, an "expressive activity policy" rolled out in August prohibits protests after 11 p.m., bans camping on campus, and requires pre-approval for signs. In defiance, each Sunday a group of faculty members, students and community members gather on campus for candlelight vigils that extend past the 11 p.m. deadline.

Russ Skiba, a professor emeritus who has attended the vigils, said the new restrictions are part of a larger movement to limit academic freedom on campuses.

In Indiana, the Republican governor in March signed a law increasing state oversight of public universities. The law, sponsored by a lawmaker who said colleges suffer from "monolithic thinking," subjects faculty to post-tenure reviews over whether they are fostering diversity of thought and keeping their political views out of the classroom. Skiba and other Indiana professors widely opposed the bill, which they criticized as

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vague and subject to interpretation.

"Universities are bastions of free speech, but when you have a movement that is anti-democratic, one of the places that is most attacked is freedom of speech," Skiba said.

Faculty members at colleges elsewhere around the country have pushed back on the new rules with protests, vigils and demands for explanation.

A group of Harvard University professors held a "study-in" at a campus library on Oct. 16 in support of pro-Palestinian students who were temporarily banned from the library for holding a similar demonstration. In September, a group representing University of California faculty filed a complaint alleging the system sought to chill their academic freedom and keep from teaching about the Israel-Hamas war "in a way that does not align with the University's own position."

To some professors, the protest restrictions are also a labor issue.

Colleges have been granting tenure to fewer professors, and facing pressure in some areas to do away with it altogether. Legislatures in several states have taken an interest in how topics around race, gender and history are taught. Protest guidelines handed down by administrators are another way the faculty's say in university affairs is being diminished, some professors say.

"We have to, as faculty, organize and demand the sort of shared governance that gives us a right to review and challenge these policies," said Todd Wolfson, a journalism and media studies professor at Rutgers University and the president of the American Association of University Professors. "They're not made by people coming out of the academic arm of our institutions."

Tensions on campuses nationwide have been high since the war began over a year ago, when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250. Israel's offensive has killed over 42,000 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not say how many were fighters.

Colleges have been under tremendous pressure, including from Republicans in Congress, to protect students from discrimination while upholding free speech. Demonstrations last spring blocked foot traffic in parts of some campuses and included instances of antisemitic imagery and rhetoric. Some Jewish faculty members and students have the protests made them feel unsafe.

Shirin Vossoughi, a Northwestern University professor, was among 52 faculty members who signed an open letter opposing the school's new demonstration policy as caving to political pressure to silence certain types of activism. She said the rules crack down not just on free speech, but pro-Palestinian voices in particular.

"A lot of universities have rewritten their demonstration and code of conduct policies this summer, and I think my first thought is that it is very clear that it's in response to dissent around Palestine," she said.

During the protests last spring, some faculty members joined ranks with demonstrators. Others acted as mediators for students they see as under their care and protection. Faculty voted no confidence against leaders of schools including Columbia University, the University of Massachusetts, Brandeis University, and Cal Poly Humboldt over their handling of the protests.

At Northwestern University, Steven Thrasher was among three faculty members charged by university police for obstructing law enforcement during last spring's protests. He was suspended and removed from teaching this fall while under investigation by the university.

"The way that I saw my role was as a protector of the students' safety and of their ability to express themselves," Thrasher said this fall. "I knew as soon as I started seeing violence happening towards students that I would do what I could."

While schools say the rules are meant to limit disruptions, faculty members say they have the effect of neutralizing dissent.

"The whole point of a protest is to be seen and heard," said Michael Thaddeus, a mathematics professor at Columbia University, where new rules require advance notice and prevent demonstrations that "substantially inhibit the primary purposes" of an area of campus. "Free speech rights aren't served if you can only speak into the void and not have anybody hear you, and that includes the right to be seen and heard by people who don't like what you have to say."

Professors also drew a connection to the growing percentage of lecturers, adjuncts and professors who do not have tenure protections. Professors increasingly see the issue of speech and academic freedom as a labor issue as a result of the crackdowns, said Risa Lieberwitz, AAUP's general counsel.

"We're seeing unionization growing and increasing," she said. "I think to some extent it's because it's so important to organize, to claim democratic rights."

Wolfson said professors must stand up for students' rights to demonstrate and speak freely.

"Their freedom of speech rights are the lifeblood of the university," Wolfson said. "We cannot have a university based on critical thinking and exploring questions if we're going to clamp down on students' rights to protest something they think is a massive problem, and if they see a way for the university to actually engage in it productively."

## How Project 2025's rightward vision became a flashpoint in this year's election

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — For the past year, Project 2025 has endured as a persistent force in the presidential election, its far-right proposals deployed by Democrats as shorthand for what Donald Trump would potentially do with a second term at the White House.

Even though the former president's campaign has vigorously distanced itself from Project 2025 — Trump himself declared he knows "nothing" about it — the sweeping Heritage Foundation's proposal to gut the federal workforce and dismantle federal agencies aligns closely with his vision. Project 2025's architects come from the ranks of Trump's administration and top Heritage officials have briefed Trump's team about it.

It's rare for a complex 900-page policy book to figure so dominantly in a political campaign. But from its early start at a think tank, to its viral spread on social media, the rise and fall and potential rise again of Project 2025 shows the unexpected staying power of policy to light up an election year and threaten not only Trump atop the ticket but down-ballot Republicans in races for Congress.

Through it all, Project 2025 has not gone away. It exists not only as a policy blueprint for the next administration, but as a database of some 20,000 job-seekers who could staff a Trump White House and administration and a still unreleased "180-day playbook" of actions a new president could employ on Day One after the inauguration on Jan. 20, 2025.

The Heritage Foundation's president, Kevin Roberts, who recently took the helm of the project, appears to relish the fight, moving full steam ahead.

"Rest assured we will not give up," Roberts wrote in an email to supporters this summer. "We will not back down."

How Project 2025 came to be

When Project 2025 debuted in April 2023, it promised to "dismantle the administrative state" by putting forward the personnel and the policies that could serve as a roadmap for the next conservative president.

The former Trump administration officials working on the project said they wanted to avoid the mistakes of the first Trump White House by ensuring the next Republican president would be ready with personnel and policies to enact his campaign priorities.

"There is an impetus to really hit the ground running," said Paul Dans, director of the 2025 Presidential Transition Project, in a 2023 Associated Press interview.

Centered at the Heritage Foundation, the venerable conservative think tank in Washington, D.C., the concept for the book touched back to an earlier version, its Reagan-era "Mandate for Leadership" that was said to be so popular at the White House that copies were put on work desks to guide the new presidency.

At least 100 conservative groups, many with alumni from the Trump administration, came together to craft the proposals for a vast restructuring of the federal government — from installing more political appointees at the Justice Department to reassigning government workers with law enforcement backgrounds to handle illegal immigration to dismantling the Department of Education.

One of the core proposals would make it easier to staff the government with Trump loyalists by reclas-



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sifying some 50,000 workers into jobs where they can be fired — a revival of the so-called Schedule F policy that Trump tried to put in place before leaving office. The idea is now central to the conservative vision of dismantling the “deep state” bureaucracy that they blame for blocking Trump priorities.

The rollout of Project 2025 on the foundation’s 50th anniversary was also a debut of sorts for Roberts; he had previously been seen as an ally to Trump rival Ron DeSantis, who keynoted the gala event at the start of the presidential primary season.

“The conservative movement is coming together to prepare for the next conservative administration,” Roberts said in the announcement. Heritage, he said, sought “to ensure that the next president has the right policy and personnel necessary to dismantle the administrative state.”

When Project 2025 became a viral sensation

President Joe Biden’s campaign had warned against Project 2025 early on, in social media posts ahead of his State of the Union address in April, and House Democrats launched a Project 2025 Task Force to amplify their concerns in June. Days later, comedian John Oliver mocked it on his HBO show.

But it wasn’t until Biden’s dismal debate performance with Trump in June that Project 2025 had its viral moment.

It wasn’t so much what was said at the presidential debate as what went unsaid: Biden failed to really even mention Project 2025, crushing the expectations of allies who expected more of a knock-out punch.

That weekend, a single thread on X about Project 2025 took off, amassing nearly 20 million views, according to the Democratic campaign. Actress Taraji P. Henson, who had spoken to Vice President Kamala Harris in a segment for the BET Awards show, warned prime-time viewers: “The Project 2025 plan is not a game. Look it up!” And countless young TikTok creators speaking directly into their cameras explained the threat they believed Project 2025 posed to their civil rights, reproductive rights and other rights in videos that went viral.

“This is really a case of the grassroots revolting,” said Joe Radosевич at the Center for American Progress. “They saw what was being offered as the contours of the race and completely rejected it.”

Especially in the aftermath of the Supreme Court’s Dobbs ruling that ended the constitutional protections for abortion, Democrats and their allies wanted to make the case showing how the presidential election would impact people’s lives in the future, rather than simply giving voters a choice between the personalities.

People wanted a debate about policies, Radosевич said, not an election “purely on vibes.”

By the end of June, Google searches for “Project 2025” surpassed searches for Taylor Swift and the NFL, the Harris campaign said.

And by the time a giant-size replica of the Project 2025 book was hauled on stage for nightly ridicule at the Democratic National Convention, it wasn’t just celebrities and liberal convention-goers who were mocking it. Conservatives began blaming Heritage and Project 2025 for hurting Trump’s election chances.

Project 2025 gets a tongue-lashing from Trump

Trump’s campaign never embraced Project 2025 and actively shunned it, despite the proximity of people and policies familiar to the former president’s time in the White House.

Other conservative groups with close ties to Trump are also preparing for a second term in the White House. Trump’s campaign team had repeatedly warned Heritage to tone it down and not portray Project 2025 as part of Trump’s campaign.

But Roberts appeared undeterred, even as he came under fire in July for suggesting, after the Supreme Court ruling granting the president broad immunity from prosecution over the Jan. 6 insurrection, that the country was in the midst of a “second American Revolution, which will remain bloodless if the left allows it to be.”

Trump spoke up forcefully against Project 2025 days later.

“I know nothing about Project 2025,” Trump posted on his own social media account. “I have no idea who is behind it. I disagree with some of the things they’re saying and some of the things they’re saying are absolutely ridiculous and abysmal. Anything they do, I wish them luck, but I have nothing to do with them.”

Trump at the time was rolling out his own policy platform ahead of the Republican National Convention,

drafted partly by one of his former administration officials, the conservative leader Russ Vought, who also contributed to Project 2025 and its 180-day playbook.

Heritage parted ways with Dans, the chief architect of Project 2025, who resigned at the end of the month, a move that apparently pleased Trump's team.

"Reports of Project 2025's demise would be greatly welcomed and should serve as notice to anyone or any group trying to misrepresent their influence with President Trump and his campaign — it will not end well for you," said Susie Wiles and Chris LaCivita, the Trump campaign managers, in a joint statement.

The future of Project 2025

As the races for control of Congress tighten to the point where a single seat could determine which party controls the House or Senate, Project 2025 is being used by Democratic-aligned outside groups to portray Republicans as linked to its hardline proposals.

The House Accountability Project has created micro-websites for more than a dozen House Republicans in some of the most contested seats, tying their past votes on abortion, government funding and other issues to Project 2025 proposals.

"The House GOP is actually pushing policies that are in Project 2025 as we speak," said Danny Turkel, spokesman for the House Accountability War Room. "They're already taking these policies into the Capitol."

The House Republican campaign committee argues its candidates have nothing to do with Project 2025, and the attacks are concocted by Democrats to shift attention from their own border and inflation policies.

"They fabricated a false attack based on something House Republicans had never even read," said Will Reinert, press secretary for the National Republican Congressional Committee.

He called the attacks a "desperate lie" as the House Democrats "see their chances of regaining the majority dwindling."

## **Peru's ex-president Toledo gets more than 20 years in prison in case linked to corruption scandal**

By FRANKLIN BRICEÑO and REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

LIMA, Peru (AP) — Peru's former President Alejandro Toledo on Monday was sentenced to 20 years and six months in prison in a case involving Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht, which became synonymous with corruption across Latin America, where it paid millions of dollars in bribes to government officials and others.

Authorities accused Toledo of accepting \$35 million in bribes from Odebrecht in exchange for allowing the construction of a highway in the South American country. The National Superior Court of Specialized Criminal Justice in the capital, Lima, imposed the sentence after years of legal wrangling, including a dispute over whether Toledo, who governed Peru from 2001 to 2006, could be extradited from the United States.

Judge Inés Rojas said Toledo's victims were Peruvians who "trusted" him as their president. Rojas explained that in that role, Toledo was "in charge of managing public finances" and responsible for "protecting and ensuring the correct" use of resources. Instead, she said, he "defrauded the state."

She added that Toledo "had the duty to act with absolute neutrality, protect and preserve the assets of the state, avoiding their abuse or exploitation," but he did not do so.

Odebrecht, which built some of Latin America's most crucial infrastructure projects, admitted to U.S. authorities in 2016 to having bought government contracts throughout the region with generous bribes. The investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice spun probes in several countries, including Mexico, Guatemala and Ecuador.

In Peru, authorities accused Toledo and three other former presidents of receiving payments from the construction giant. They alleged Toledo received \$35 million from Odebrecht in exchange for the contract to build 650 kilometers (403 miles) of a highway linking Brazil with southern Peru. That portion of the highway was initially estimated to cost \$507 million, but Peru ended up paying \$1.25 billion.

Rojas at one point read parts of the testimony from Jorge Barata, a former Odebrecht executive in Peru, who told prosecutors that the former president called him up to three times after leaving office to demand

that he be paid. Toledo lowered his gaze and looked at his hands as Rojas read the expletive-laden remarks that Barata recounted to prosecutors.

Toledo has denied the accusations against him. His attorney, Roberto Siu, told reporters after the hearing that they will appeal the sentence.

The former president on Monday frequently smirked, and at times laughed, particularly when the judge mentioned multimillion-dollar sums central to the case as well as when she struggled to read transcripts and other evidence in the case. Throughout the hearing, he also leaned to his right to speak with his attorney.

In contrast, last week, he asked the court with a broken voice and his hands together, as if he were praying, to let him return home citing his age, cancer and heart problems.

Toledo, 78, was first arrested in 2019 at his home in California, where he had been living since 2016, when he returned to Stanford University, his alma mater, as a visiting scholar to study education in Latin America. He was initially held in solitary confinement at a county jail east of San Francisco but was released to house arrest in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic and his deteriorating mental health.

He was extradited to Peru in 2022 after a court of appeals denied a challenge to his extradition and he surrendered to authorities. He has since remained under preventive detention.

Rojas said Toledo will get credit for time served starting in April 2023. He will serve the remainder of his sentence at a prison on the outskirts of Lima that was built specifically to house former Peruvian presidents.

Prosecutor José Domingo Pérez after the hearing described the sentence as "historic" and said it shows Peruvians that "crimes and corruption are punished."

Odebrecht rebranded as Novonor in 2020.

## Trump makes more debunked claims about FEMA as he surveys storm damage in North Carolina

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and BILL BARROW Associated Press

SWANNANOVA, N.C. (AP) — Surveying storm damage in North Carolina, former President Donald Trump on Monday blasted federal emergency responders whose work has been stymied by armed harassment and a deluge of misinformation, but he said he was not concerned that the aftermath of Hurricane Helene would affect election results in the battleground state.

Trump was asked whether it was helpful to criticize hurricane relief workers after the Federal Emergency Management Agency recently paused work in the area because of reports they could be targeted by militia. He responded by again assailing the agency and repeating the falsehood that the response was hampered because FEMA spent its budget helping people who crossed the border illegally. That claim was debunked weeks ago by U.S. Rep. Chuck Edwards, R-N.C., who stood behind Trump as he spoke.

"Well, I think you have to let people know how they're doing," Trump told reporters in Swannanoa, outside Asheville. "If they were doing a great job, I think we should say that, too, because I think they should be rewarded. ... If they're doing a poor job, we're supposed to not say it?"

Trump's campaign and that of his Democratic rival, Vice President Kamala Harris, are ramping up their campaigns in the final two weeks before Election Day.

Trump had three stops in North Carolina on Monday. After the Asheville area, he held a rally across the state in Greenville and spoke at a faith leaders event in Concord, where he appealed to Christian voters by repeating his criticism of transgender athletes playing on women's sports teams and his proposal to conduct a large-scale deportation operation. Trump said that during his administration, he fought for Christians "like no president has ever fought before."

Harris on Monday focused her campaigning efforts on the "blue wall," traveling to suburban Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin. She held a series of conversations with Republican Liz Cheney moderated by GOP strategist Sarah Longwell, publisher of the Bulwark, a commentary site for anti-Trump conservatives, and conservative radio host Charlie Sykes. Trump won those three states in 2016 and lost them in 2020, and Harris could all but lock up the presidency if she swept them.



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Cheney, a former Wyoming congressman who lost her seat after she spoke out against Trump following the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection, offered advice to her fellow Republicans who are uneasy with Trump but not comfortable broadcasting support for a Democrat.

"You can vote your conscience and not ever have to say a word to anybody," Cheney said.

Hurricane Helene displaced thousands of voters

Many North Carolina counties affected by Hurricane Helene moved Election Day precincts or changed early voting sites. Thousands of voters remained displaced or without power or water as early voting commenced. Both parties are scrambling to check their turnout operations.

"We're working every channel we can, you know?" Republican National Committee Chair Michael Whatley, a North Carolinian, said. "We're going to be doing phone calls. We're going to be doing direct mail. We'll be doing emails and digital — basically anything we can do to let people know where to go."

Despite extensive damage across western North Carolina, Trump said he saw no reason for the storm to cast doubt on the North Carolina election results.

"No, I think in a way, it's the opposite," Trump said. "I mean, we're so impressed, and I think they have a pretty good system here."

Republican Renee Kyro, who lives a short drive from the devastated mountain town of Chimney Rock, said she knows "plenty of Trump supporters who lost everything," and others who remain in their homes but don't have reliable internet or phone connections and may not know their polling location.

"I'll go door to door if I have to," she said.

State Sen. Natalie Murdock, who doubles as political director for Democrats' coordinated campaign in the state, said the party has the apparatus to reach their target voters in the disaster zone. Field workers in some of Democrats' two-dozen-plus offices around the state have engaged in recovery efforts, distributing water and other supplies to residents.

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper, a Democrat, urged Trump not to "share lies or misinformation" about the storm recovery.

Many storm survivors lost everything, and they want help and truth, Cooper said Monday at a briefing in Asheville.

"We should work together to give them both," the governor said. "Storm recovery cannot be partisan."

Edwards, who represents Asheville and surrounding areas in Congress, put out a long statement last month debunking "outrageous rumors" that FEMA was halting trucks from bringing in supplies, abandoning rescue efforts to bulldoze Chimney Rock, running out of money and more. He did not defend FEMA from Trump's criticism Monday.

Instead, Edwards, who owns McDonald's franchises, presented Trump with what he called a "French fry certification pin" in a nod to the former president's photo opportunity Sunday at one of the fast-food restaurants.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre called Trump's FEMA comments "dangerous" and said they had been debunked on a bipartisan basis. She said 5,500 federal personnel were in North Carolina and Florida after Helene and Hurricane Milton and noted that \$2 billion in federal assistance had been approved for those affected in North Carolina.

"They are dangerous," Jean-Pierre said of Trump's remarks. "They are unhelpful. It is not what leadership looks like."

Democrats are running both on Helene and Mark Robinson

Even before Helene, North Carolina was all the more compelling because of its history of split-ticket voting. It's one of the few states that features competitive governor's races concurrent with presidential contests.

Democrats have carried the presidential electoral vote just once since 1992 — in Barack Obama's narrow win in 2008. Republicans have won just one governor's race in the same span. Four years ago, Cooper won reelection by 4.5 points despite Trump outpacing Biden. He's prevented by term limit laws from running again.

Democrats hope Republican gubernatorial nominee Mark Robinson's latest struggles, centered on CNN's

revelations that the state's first Black lieutenant governor once called himself a "Black Nazi" and posted lascivious statements on a porn website, turn thousands of Cooper-Trump voters into supporters of Harris and Democratic gubernatorial nominee Josh Stein. Robinson has denied the allegations and sued CNN, calling its report defamatory.

Trump demurred Monday when asked whether voters should support Robinson, whom Trump has endorsed and has referred to as "Martin Luther King on steroids."

"I'm not familiar with the state of the race right now," he said. "I haven't seen it."

## Hundreds mourn Catholic priest and Indigenous peace activist killed in southern Mexico

By RAÚL VERA and ISABEL MATEOS Associated Press

SAN ANDRES LARRAINZAR, Mexico (AP) — Hundreds gathered Monday to mourn Catholic priest Marcelo Pérez, an activist for Indigenous peoples and farm laborers who was killed in the southern Mexico state of Chiapas.

It was a killing that many say was a tragedy foretold, in a state where drug cartels have caused thousands of people to flee their homes.

Mourners gathered in San Andres Larrainzar, near the city of San Cristobal de las Casas, where Pérez was killed on Sunday.

Pérez, a leading activist for peace in the violence-torn state, was from San Andrés Larrainzar. A mass in his honor Monday was held in Spanish and Tzotzil, the Indigenous language he spoke.

Pérez, 50, had often received threats, but nonetheless continued to work as a peace activist. Human rights advocates said Pérez did not receive the government protection he needed.

"For years, we insisted that the Mexican government should address the threats and aggressions against him, but they never implemented measures to guarantee his life, security and well-being," The Fray Bartolome de las Casas human rights center wrote.

While there was no immediate information on the killers — President Claudia Sheinbaum only said that "investigations are being carried out" — Rev. Pérez's peace and mediation efforts may have angered one of the two drug cartels that are currently fighting for control of Chiapas.

The state is a lucrative route for smuggling both drugs and migrants.

"Father Marcelo Pérez was the subject of constant threats and aggressions on the part of organized crime groups," according to the rights center, adding that his killing "occurred in the context of a serious escalation of violence against the public in all the regions of Chiapas."

For at least the last two years, the Sinaloa and Jalisco cartels have been engaged in bloody turf battles that involve killing whole families, and forcing villagers to take sides in the dispute. Hundreds of Chiapas residents have had to flee to neighboring Guatemala for their own safety.

"They should look for an intelligent way to disarm those groups," said Cardinal Felipe Arizmendi, who once served as the bishop for the area. "They shouldn't wait for people to file complaints, and people are going to file complaints because their lives are at risk."

Together with continued drug violence in the northern state of Sinaloa, and the army killings of six migrants earlier this month, the killing of Pérez was another embarrassment for the government.

Sheinbaum took office Oct. 1 and has pledged to follow the policy of her predecessor and mentor, former president Andrés Manuel López Obrador, of not confronting the drug cartels. The policy has failed to significantly reduce violence.

"This is a reflection of the whole country," Cardinal Arizmendi said following the mass for Pérez. "They shouldn't say everything is fine in Mexico. Please," he continued. "This strategy has not worked."

The state prosecutors' office said Rev. Pérez was shot dead by two gunmen when he was in his van, just after he had finished celebrating Mass.

He served in the community for two decades and was known as a negotiator in conflicts in a mountainous region of Chiapas where crime, violence and land disputes are rife. Pérez also led several marches

against violence, which has brought him several death threats.

The U.N. Human Rights Office said Pérez was the seventh human rights activist killed in Mexico so far in 2024.

## Teen in custody after 5 found dead in shooting at home in Washington state, police say

FALL CITY, WASH. (AP) — Law enforcement officials found five people killed in a shooting inside a home southeast of Seattle on Monday morning and took a teenager into custody, police said.

Several people called 911 around 5 a.m. to report a shooting in Fall City, Washington, King County Sheriff's Office spokesperson Mike Mellis said at a media briefing Monday afternoon.

Arriving deputies immediately took one teen into custody while another teenager who had been hurt was taken to a Seattle hospital, Mellis said. Both teens live at the house, Mellis said.

Deputies entering the home found the bodies of five people, he said. Two were adults and three were described by Mellis as young teenagers. No names have been released yet.

"Once bodies were discovered, clearly we understand that this is a hugely significant crime scene," he said.

Mellis said the shooting appears to involve members of a family, but added that they didn't yet know how they were related. He also said there was no ongoing threat to the community.

"I have no reason to think that there will be any additional arrests," he said.

The teen in custody was booked into King County's juvenile detention facility, according to Mellis. The teen will appear in court for a first hearing on Tuesday or Wednesday, a spokesperson for the county Prosecuting Attorney's Office said in an email.

A neighbor told KING-TV that a couple and their five children lived in the home.

"I'm just in total shock, I keep bursting into tears," Lynne Trowern, told the news outlet.

An emailed statement Monday evening from King County Councilmember Sarah Perry said the shooting involved a family of seven people.

Sheriff Patricia Cole-Tindall told KING-TV that she was "very sad, very disturbed" to learn about the shooting.

## Eyewitness video captures frantic efforts to save lives after deadly collapse of dock walkway

By RUSS BYNUM and EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP) — The metal gangway where dozens of people waited to board a ferry boat made a loud, creaking noise before snapping in the middle amid panicked cries from those sent plunging into the water. Some clung desperately to the railing, while others began to float away with the tidal current.

"There was no time for anyone to get off," said Icy White, who watched from about 30 feet away at the ferry dock on Sapelo Island. "It took seconds."

White's family was among hundreds visiting the isolated Georgia barrier island Saturday for a fall festival spotlighting the history and culture of its tiny Gullah-Geechee community of Black slave descendants. The celebration gave way to tragedy when the gangway collapsed, sending seven visitors to their deaths.

White of Atlanta recorded video of the immediate aftermath on her cellphone and shared it with The Associated Press. It shows tourists and island residents jumping into action to rescue imperiled strangers and render aid to the injured in a remote location with few trained first responders initially on-site.

"There was no EMS that was there," said Darrel Jenkins, White's cousin. "We were the EMS."

The crisis unfolded on an island isolated from the mainland

Largely unspoiled Sapelo Island, most of which is owned the state of Georgia, has no roads or bridges connecting it to the mainland. Residents and visitors typically rely on ferries operated by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to make the 7-mile (11-kilometer) trip.

Natural Resources Commissioner Walter Rabon told a news conference Sunday an estimated 700 visi-



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tors showed up for the Cultural Day event hosted by residents of Hogg Hummock, a tiny enclave founded after the Civil War by slaves who had worked the island plantation of Thomas Spalding.

Rabon said his agency had 40 staff members working on the island during one of its busiest days of the year. The U.S. Coast Guard and local sheriff's and fire departments later joined search and rescue efforts with boats and helicopters. But Rabon praised civilian bystanders for their efforts immediately after the collapse sent about 20 people into the water.

"Their quick response and action saved additional lives," Rabon said.

Video shows a frantic scene immediately after the collapse

White's video shows people clinging to metal railing on the broken gangway, dangling at a steep angle into the water. Some holding on at the bottom are partly submerged, while those closer to the top extend hands trying to reach and pull them up. Others pass orange life preservers to those at the bottom.

At least a dozen people floating in the water can be seen drifting away from the dock, pulled by a strong tidal current that threatened to drag them out to sea. Still recording on her phone, White runs into a dockside parking lot shouting for others to come help.

"Who can help? Who can swim? Please, help! Help! Help!" she calls out. "The bridge fell! It fell! Please help! People are in the water!"

Another video clip shows volunteers attempting to comfort a crying woman with a broken leg at the water's edge. A few feet away, a man in latex gloves kneels performing chest compressions on someone sprawled on the ground, a muddy mix of rocks and shells.

Other footage shows volunteers using a blanket to form a makeshift stretcher for an injured woman, then carrying her toward a boat for evacuation.

The coroner identifies the dead as seniors visiting the island

The seven people killed were all seniors, ranging in age from 73 to 93, according to McIntosh County Coroner Melvin Amerson.

Officials said none of them lived on the island, and Hogg Hummock resident Reginald Hall said none of them appeared to be islanders' family members.

They included Charles L. Houston, 77, of nearby Darien, a chaplain for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

Also killed were William Johnson Jr., 73, and Queen Welch, 76, both of Atlanta. The remaining four were from Jacksonville, Florida: Crews Carter, 75; Cynthia Gibbs, 74; Carlotta McIntosh, 93; Isaiah Thomas, 79.

Investigators working to determine what caused the collapse

The broken gangway was removed from the dock and taken to what the Georgia Department of Natural Resources on Monday called a "secured facility."

An investigative team with expertise in accident reconstruction and engineering was assigned to determine what caused the collapse that Rabon, the Natural Resources commissioner, referred to Sunday as a "catastrophic failure."

Rabon's agency operates the Sapelo Island ferries and dock, which was rebuilt in 2021. The agency said the gangway was last inspected in December 2023 with no concerns identified.

Rabon told reporters about 40 people were standing on the gangway waiting to board a ferry when it collapsed in the middle.

Tragedy strikes a shrinking community of people descended from slaves

Hogg Hummock is among a shrinking cluster of small Southern communities descended from enslaved island populations known as Gullah, or Geechee in Georgia. Scholars say residents retain much of their African heritage — including a unique dialect and skills such as cast-net fishing and basket weaving — because of their separation from the mainland.

Hogg Hummock, also known as Hog Hammock, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996.

But the community's population has been shrinking for decades, and some families have sold their land to outsiders for vacation homes. Last year, county commissioners approved zoning changes that doubled

the size of homes allowed in Hogg Hummock. That raised fears among residents that larger homes could spur tax increases that could force them to sell land their families have held for generations.

## **Longest-serving state legislative leader exploited the public trust, prosecutors say**

By SOPHIA TAREEN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — As the longest-serving legislative leader in American history, Michael Madigan repeatedly exploited his public role for private benefit, federal prosecutors alleged Monday during opening statements in Illinois' largest corruption trial in years.

Madigan, Illinois' House speaker for more than three decades and a former state Democratic Party chairman, is charged in a 23-count indictment with racketeering conspiracy, using interstate facilities in aid of bribery, wire fraud and attempted extortion. Among multiple schemes, he's accused of using his influence to pass legislation favorable to utility companies that doled out kickbacks, jobs and contracts to Madigan loyalists in return.

"This is a case about corruption at the highest levels of state government," assistant U.S. Attorney Sarah Streicker told jurors. "Madigan abused his power and used the organizations he led to engage in a pattern of corrupt conduct over and over and over again."

Over two hours, Streicker gave an overview of the government's case, presenting slides with photos and flow charts of key players accused in the schemes, handwritten Madigan documents and quotes from wiretapped conversations.

Madigan's defense attorneys quickly batted down the accusations in their opening statement.

"She is relying on bad information. She is relying on unreliable sources. And she is relying on guess work and speculation," said defense attorney Tom Breen. "You are going to hear some out-and-out lies."

Instead, defense attorneys painted a picture of Madigan, who resigned in 2021, as devoted to his working-class legislative district on the city's Southwest Side near Midway International Airport.

"He was in fact, incorruptible," Breen said.

Madigan, 82, has maintained a low profile since he was indicted in 2022 and "adamantly" denied wrongdoing.

The Chicago Democrat — who is also an attorney — watched the proceedings intently, taking notes on a legal pad. Several of his family members attended and sat in the front row, including his daughter, Lisa Madigan, who served four terms as Illinois attorney general. She declined to seek re-election in 2018.

Opening statements began Monday afternoon after jury selection that lasted almost two weeks. Twelve jurors and six alternates were selected after extensive questions on the role of lobbyists, news consumption habits and familiarity with the man who was once the most powerful leader in Illinois politics.

First elected to the Legislature in 1970, Madigan was speaker of the state House from 1983 to 2021, except for two years when Republicans were in control. He set much of Illinois' political agenda by deciding which legislation would be voted on and by controlling several campaign funds. He also oversaw political mapmaking.

Federal prosecutors allege he exploited those roles repeatedly to amass more power and money. He's also accused of benefiting from private legal work illegally steered to his law firm.

"You will see how he was willing to trade public power to line his own pockets," Streicker said.

Prosecutors also outlined a network of loyalists who helped run the schemes and conceal them.

Standing trial alongside Madigan is longtime confidant and co-defendant Michael McClain, who prosecutors called Madigan's "mouthpiece." The onetime state legislator and former lobbyist has already been found guilty in a separate, related case. Last year, federal jurors convicted McClain and three others of a bribery conspiracy involving ComEd, the state's largest utility company.

Madigan's trial is expected to last nearly three months. Jurors are expected to hear about 200 recordings and testimony, including from former Chicago Alderman Danny Solis, who was a cooperating witness for the government and secretly recorded conversations for years.

Much of the evidence has been previewed in open court. A sweeping investigation of public corruption has already produced convictions of legislators and Madigan's former chief of staff.

Prosecutors said the recordings will illustrate Madigan's role in the schemes. But defense attorneys, who played video clips of meetings of Solis during opening statements, said the former alderman is not to be trusted as he faced legal and financial troubles of his own.

McClain's attorneys were expected to address jurors on Tuesday. He sat at a table separate from Madigan as he watched the proceedings Monday.

## **Biden is 'deeply concerned' about the release of secret documents on Israel's possible attack plans**

By AAMER MADHANI and DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is "deeply concerned" about the unauthorized release of classified documents on Israel's preparation for a potential retaliatory attack on Iran, a White House spokesman said Monday.

The Biden administration is still not certain if the classified information was leaked or hacked, White House national security spokesman John Kirby said. Officials don't have any indication at this point of "additional documents like this finding their way into the public domain," he said.

Kirby added that the Pentagon is investigating. U.S. officials on Saturday had confirmed an investigation by the administration.

"We're deeply concerned, and the president remains deeply concerned about any leakage of classified information into the public domain. That is not supposed to happen, and it's unacceptable when it does," Kirby said.

The documents are attributed to the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency and National Security Agency, and note that Israel was still moving military assets in place to conduct a military strike in response to Iran's blistering ballistic missile attack on Oct. 1. They were sharable within the "Five Eyes," an intelligence alliance comprised of the U.S., Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand and Australia.

Marked top secret, the documents first appeared online Friday on the Telegram messaging app and quickly spread among Telegram channels popular with Iranians.

Analysts at the SITE Intelligence Group, a consultancy that monitors and analyzes online threats from extremist groups, tracked the release of the documents to a Telegram channel popular with Iran-backed militias. The channel contained posts from an anonymous user with a long history of posting other supposedly top-secret content who said they had access to the leaked documents. The user also wrote that they had sold some of the material and provided it to the Iranian military.

The release comes at a pivotal time in the Middle East, as Israel considers its response to Iran's attack. "The smallest item — even something like the leak of this relatively innocuous document — could move things in new directions," said Rita Katz, SITE's co-founder and executive director.

Rep. Mike Turner of Ohio, the Republican chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, said the unauthorized release of the information was concerning, especially given the "high stakes of what's going on in the Middle East right now."

While it remains possible the information was obtained through hacking, "if this has been a leak, it is criminal and it is certainly espionage," Turner said Monday on the BBC.

The Telegram channel identifies itself as being based in Tehran, Iran's capital. It previously published memes featuring Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and material in support of Tehran's self-described "Axis of Resistance," which includes Middle East militant groups armed by the Islamic Republic.

One of the two documents resembled the style of other material from the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency leaked by Jack Teixeira, an Air National Guardsman who pleaded guilty in March to leaking highly classified military documents about Russia's war on Ukraine and other national security secrets.

The U.S. has urged Israel to take advantage of its elimination of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar and press for a cease-fire in Gaza and has likewise urgently cautioned Israel not to further expand military opera-



tions in the north in Lebanon and risk a wider regional war.

However, Israel's leadership has repeatedly stressed it will not let Iran's missile attack go unanswered. The investigation into the release of the documents may take some time as authorities look for digital or physical clues that could reveal how the information got out, and what implications it may have for information management and intelligence sharing with U.S. allies, according to Gavin Wilde, a senior fellow in the Technology and International Affairs Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"I imagine they'll eventually get to the bottom of it," said Wilde, who formerly worked on the National Security Council. "The intelligence community has gotten a lot better at digital chain of custody — who has seen a particular document, how many times it's been shared, and with whom."

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre on Monday declined to comment on what changes the government has made to better safeguard top secret information in the aftermath of the Discord leak. She added that Biden has "complete confidence" in the Pentagon, Justice Department and intelligence community following the latest unauthorized disclosure.

The nation's spy agencies have worked to bolster cybersecurity since the Discord leak and the conviction of former NSA contractor Reality Winner. Accounting for human behavior, however, can be a harder challenge, according to Shawnee Delaney, a former officer at the Defense Intelligence Agency who is now CEO of the Vaillance Group, a private threat analysis firm.

"Cybersecurity isn't just a technological issue," Delaney told The Associated Press. "It's a human one, and humans are wholly unpredictable."

Spokespeople for the Pentagon and the NSA said officials were aware of the incident but had no further comment.

## **Initial report shows Liam Payne had cocaine in his system when he died, says Argentine official**

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — An initial toxicology report for ex-One Direction singer Liam Payne, who died last week after falling from a third-floor hotel balcony in Buenos Aires, showed that he had cocaine in his system after his death, an Argentine official said.

The final toxicology results are not expected to be made public for some weeks. But the preliminary toxicology report of the wildly famous boy band star, handed to local prosecutors on Monday, suggested evidence of exposure to cocaine, the official said, stressing that these initial results don't offer an accurate reading of just how much was circulating in his blood when he died.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief journalists. The preliminary report was widely reported in local media on Monday.

Argentina's public prosecution is investigating the case — which is not uncommon when a death is sudden or unexpected.

Payne's autopsy concluded that the traumatic injuries that caused his death were consistent with his three-story fall from the hotel window. Prosecutors have ruled out anyone else being involved.

Argentine investigators found what appeared to be narcotics and alcohol strewn about broken objects and furniture in 31-year-old Payne's hotel room, leading the public prosecution to surmise Payne had suffered a substance abuse-induced breakdown around the time of his fall. The prosecution said Payne could have plunged from his hotel room balcony in a state of "semi or total unconsciousness."

Photos purportedly taken from inside Payne's hotel room published by local media showed snowlike powder left on a table and a smashed-in TV screen. Police also discovered a blister pack of clonazepam, a central nervous system depressant, and over-the-counter medications scattered among Payne's belongings. Shortly before Payne's death, the hotel manager called 911 to report a guest acting aggressively and under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

Investigators are also trying to figure out who sold Payne the drugs he took at the CasaSur Hotel in Palermo, a chic neighborhood of the Argentine capital. Police have taken statements from at least three

hotel employees, as well as two women who visited Payne's hotel room a few hours before his death.

Fans and major pop industry figures around the world have reacted with an outpouring of grief.

The late singer's father, Geoff Payne, was still in Buenos Aires meeting with the prosecutors and other local officials Monday in an effort to organize the repatriation of the remains.

Argentine authorities expect to release the body next week, clearing the way for Geoff Payne to fly home and hold a funeral back in England, where on Sunday hundreds of fervent One Direction fans gathered to mourn the musician.

## What is the Hezbollah-linked financial institution Israel is targeting in Lebanon?

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — The Israeli military has carried out a wave of airstrikes targeting branches of a financial institution affiliated with Lebanon's Hezbollah, saying the quasi-banking system is being used to fund the militant group's military wing.

The strikes destroyed more than a dozen branches of al-Qard al-Hasan across Lebanon Sunday night, and came two weeks after an airstrike killed the man who many referred to as Hezbollah's "finance minister."

After assassinating most of Hezbollah's top political and military commanders, including the group's longtime leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, and pummeling its communities with devastating airstrikes, Israel says it is now going after the Shiite group's funders and financial institutions in an attempt to further disrupt it and its base of support.

Hezbollah started attacking Israeli military posts along the border with Lebanon a day after the Oct. 7, 2023, attack by Hamas on southern Israel that killed some 1,200 people and took about 250 hostage. Hezbollah said that by launching attacks along the Lebanon-Israel border it was backing up its Hamas allies in the Gaza Strip.

What is al-Qard al-Hasan and who benefits from it?

Al-Qard al-Hasan is officially a non-profit charity institution operating outside the Lebanese financial system, and one of the tools by which Hezbollah entrenches its support among the country's Shiite population.

In addition to its military wing, Hezbollah has branches that run schools, hospitals, low-price grocery stores, as well as al-Qard al-Hasan, from which hundreds of thousands of its supporters benefit.

Israel says the institution finances arms purchases and is used to pay Hezbollah fighters. The U.S. Treasury has imposed sanctions on it since 2007, saying it is "used by Hezbollah as a cover" to manage the militant group's financial activities "and gain access to the international financial system."

Founded four decades ago, soon after Hezbollah's inception, the association, whose name in Arabic means "the benevolent loan," offers interest-free loans and allows people to deposit gold as collateral in return for the credit, enabling them to pay for school fees and weddings, buy a car or open a small business. People can also open savings accounts.

Al-Qard al-Hasan has more than 30 branches around Lebanon. Following Lebanon's 2019 financial collapse, the institution provided a lifeline for many Lebanese. Unlike banks around the country that imposed limits on how much people could withdraw from their bank accounts, people with deposits at al-Qard al-Hasan were still able to withdraw their cash.

In 2021, the U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control imposed sanctions on seven individuals in connection with Hezbollah and al-Qard al-Hasan. A year later, the Biden administration slapped terrorism sanctions on two others, including al-Qard al-Hasan's director, Adel Mansour, and two companies in Lebanon for providing Hezbollah with financial services.

Mansour did not respond to messages left by The Associated Press for comment. After sanctions were imposed against him two years, he told the AP: "I am proud and this is a medal of honor for me."

A senior official at the central bank in Beirut refused to comment about the Israeli targeting of al-Qard al-Hasan branches when contacted by the AP on Monday.

David Asher, an expert on illicit financing who has worked at the U.S. Defense and State Departments

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and is now a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, said the Israeli attacks were "a big deal."

"Al-Qard al-Hasan is part of Hezbollah's central financial unit," which is akin to its treasury, he said.

Faysal Abdul-Sater, a Lebanese political analyst who closely follows Hezbollah's affairs, said the militant group is not funded through al-Qard al-Hasan. He said the money deposited at the institution belongs to individuals and companies, and the system benefits people with low incomes.

"This is a symbolic strike," Abdul-Sater said about targeting al-Qard al-Hasan.

How harmful are the Israeli strikes?

The systematic destruction of al-Qard al-Hasan branches, coming after assassinations that took out almost all of Hezbollah's top leadership and displaced hundreds of thousands of the group's supporters, is bound to add to the chaos and fears within Hezbollah's base of support.

But experts say it is unlikely to harm Hezbollah's finances in and of itself.

Al-Qard al-Hasan tried to reassure customers, saying in a statement late Sunday that it had evacuated all its branches and relocated gold and other deposits to safe areas.

Lebanese economist Louis Hobeika said destroying al-Qard al-Hasan branches will have no effect on Hezbollah's funding as its money comes from Iran and wealthy supporters around the world. The group's salaries are known to be paid in cash in dollars.

"As long as Iran and Hezbollah's allies are funding the group it will not be affected," Hobeika said, adding that the flow of "bags of cash" from abroad will continue just like in the past.

Lina Khatib, an associate fellow at Chatham House who focuses on the Middle East, said al-Qard al-Hasan customers still have faith that "Hezbollah will be able to compensate them for their losses."

Khatib noted that al-Qard al-Hasan's operations, like those of any financial institution, are not limited to any physical assets the strikes targeted.

A Lebanese woman who gave only her first name, Zahraa, for safety reasons, said she was in need of cash and deposited a gold necklace and several rings earlier this year in return for an \$800 loan. The woman said she has been repaying it in \$50 monthly installments.

"I don't care whether I get the gold or not at a time when men are sacrificing their souls in south Lebanon," Zahraa said referring to Hezbollah gunmen who are fighting invading Israeli forces.

Who was the Hezbollah financier killed?

Israel began going after Hezbollah's finances earlier this month, when an Israeli airstrike destroyed the top two floors of a south Beirut building, killing Mohammed Jaafar Qassir, who the U.S. Treasury and Israel accused of transferring hundreds of millions of dollars from Iran to Hezbollah over the years. The U.S. had offered \$10 million for information leading to the disruption of the financial mechanisms of Hezbollah.

The U.S. Treasury said Qassir provided funding for Hezbollah operations through a number of "illegal smuggling and procurement activities and other criminal enterprises."

It added that Qassir was also a critical conduit for financial disbursements from the powerful Quds Force branch of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard that are used to fund Hezbollah's activities.

The Israeli military said Qassir was in charge of Hezbollah's Unit 4400, which ships weapons from Iran to Lebanon, and supervised Hezbollah's development of precision-guided missiles.

Hezbollah did not comment on Qassir's killing.

Days after Qassir was killed in Beirut, an airstrike in Damascus, Syria, blamed on Israel killed his brother Hasan, who was married to Nasrallah's daughter, Zeinab.

## **White House says health insurance needs to fully cover condoms, other over-the-counter birth control**

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Millions of people with private health insurance would be able to pick up over-the-counter methods like condoms, the "morning after" pill and birth control pills for free under a new rule the White House proposed on Monday.

Right now, health insurers must cover the cost of prescribed contraception, including prescription birth



control or even condoms that doctors have issued a prescription for. But the new rule would expand that coverage, allowing millions to buy condoms, birth control pills, or "morning after" pills from local storefronts for free without a prescription.

The proposal comes days before Election Day, as Vice President Kamala Harris affixes her presidential campaign to a promise of expanding women's health care access in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to undo nationwide abortion rights two years ago. Harris has sought to craft a distinct contrast from her Republican challenger, Donald Trump, who appointed some of the judges who issued that ruling.

"The proposed rule we announce today would expand access to birth control at no additional cost for millions of consumers," Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra said in a statement. "Bottom line: women should have control over their personal health care decisions. And issuers and providers have an obligation to comply with the law."

The emergency contraceptives that people on private insurance would be able to access without costs include levonorgestrel, a pill that needs to be taken immediately after sex to prevent pregnancy and is more commonly known by the brand name "Plan B."

Without a doctor's prescription, women may pay as much as \$50 for a pack of the pills. And women who delay buying the medication in order to get a doctor's prescription might jeopardize the pill's effectiveness, since it is most likely to prevent a pregnancy within 72 hours after sex.

If implemented, the new rule would also require insurers to fully bear the cost of the once-a-day Opill, a new over-the-counter birth control pill that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved last year. A one-month supply of the pills costs \$20.

Copays prevent some women from purchasing birth control, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists said in a statement that praised the newly proposed rule.

"Birth control is a critical part of so many of our patients' lives, but the simple truth is that even with insurance coverage, the cost of copays can be prohibitive for many people," the statement said.

Federal mandates for private health insurance to cover contraceptive care were first introduced with the Affordable Care Act, which required plans to pick up the cost of FDA-approved birth control that had been prescribed by a doctor as a preventative service.

America's Health Insurance Plans, the lobbying group for private health insurers, said Monday it was reviewing the proposal.

The proposed rule would not impact those on Medicaid, the insurance program for the poorest Americans. States are largely left to design their own rules around Medicaid coverage for contraception, and few cover over-the-counter methods like Plan B or condoms.

## **'You are not my king,' Indigenous Australian senator yells at visiting King Charles**

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — An Indigenous senator told King Charles III that Australia is not his land as the British royal visited Australia's parliament on Monday.

Sen. Lidia Thorpe was escorted out of a parliamentary reception for the royal couple after shouting that British colonizers have taken Indigenous land and bones.

"You committed genocide against our people," she shouted. "Give us what you stole from us — our bones, our skulls, our babies, our people. You destroyed our land. Give us a treaty. We want a treaty."

No treaty was ever struck between British colonizers and Australia's Indigenous peoples.

Charles spoke quietly with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese while security officials stopped Thorpe from approaching.

"This is not your land. You are not my king," Thorpe yelled as she was ushered from the hall.

Thorpe is renowned for high-profile protest action. When she was affirmed as a senator in 2022, she wasn't allowed to describe the then-monarch as "the colonizing Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II." She briefly blocked a police float in Sydney's Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras last year by lying on the street in front of it. Last year, she was also banned for life from a Melbourne strip club after video emerged of her

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abusing male patrons.

Albanese, who wants the country to become a republic with an Australian head of state, made an oblique reference to the issue in his speech welcoming the monarch.

"You have shown great respect for Australians, even during times when we have debated the future of our own constitutional arrangements and the nature of our relationship with the Crown," Albanese said. But, he said, "nothing stands still."

Opposition leader Peter Dutton, who wants to keep the British king as Australia's monarch, said that many supporters of a republic were honored to attend a reception for the Charles and Queen Camilla at Parliament House in the capital Canberra.

"People have had haircuts, people have shined shoes, suits have been pressed and that's just the republicans," Dutton quipped.

But Australia's six state government signaled their support for an Australian head of state by declining invitations to the reception. They each said they had more pressing engagements on Monday, but monarchists agreed the royals had been snubbed.

Charles used the start of his speech to thank Canberra Indigenous elder Auntie Violet Sheridan for her traditional welcome to the king and queen.

"Let me also say how deeply I appreciated this morning's moving Welcome to Country ceremony, which offers me the opportunity to pay my respects to the traditional owners of the lands on which we meet, the Ngunnawal people, and all First Nations peoples who have loved and cared for this continent for 65,000 years," Charles said.

"Throughout my life, Australia's First Nations peoples have done me the great honor of sharing so generously their stories and cultures. I can only say how much my own experience has been shaped and strengthened by such traditional wisdom," Charles added.

Australians decided in a referendum in 1999 to retain Queen Elizabeth II as head of state. That result is widely regarded to have been the consequence of disagreement about how a president would be chosen rather than majority support for a monarch.

Albanese has ruled out holding another referendum on the subject during his current three-year term in government. But it is a possibility if his center-left Labor Party is re-elected at elections due by May next year.

Charles was drawn into Australia's republic debate months before his visit.

The Australian Republic Movement, which wants Australia to sever its constitutional ties with Britain, wrote to Charles in December last year requesting a meeting in Australia and for the king to advocate their cause. Buckingham Palace politely wrote back in March to say the king's meetings would be decided upon by the Australian government. A meeting with the ARM does not appear on the official itinerary.

"Whether Australia becomes a republic is ... a matter for the Australian public to decide," the Buckingham Palace letter said.

Earlier Monday, Charles and Camilla laid wreaths at the Australian War Memorial then shook hands with well-wishers on the second full day of their visit.

The memorial estimated 4,000 people had turned out to see the couple.

Charles, 75, is being treated for cancer, which has led to a scaled-down itinerary. It is Charles' 17th trip to Australia and the first since he became king in 2022. It is the first visit to Australia by a reigning British monarch since his late mother Queen Elizabeth II traveled to the distant nation in 2011.

Charles and Camilla rested the day after their arrival late Friday before making their first public appearance of the trip at a church service in Sydney on Sunday. They then flew to Canberra where they visited the Tomb of the Unknown Australian Soldier and a reception at Parliament House.

Before leaving the war memorial, they stopped to greet hundreds of people who gathered under clear skies flying Australian flags. The temperature was forecast to reach a mild high of 24 degrees Celsius (75 degrees Fahrenheit).

On Wednesday, Charles will travel to Samoa, where he will open the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

## **Akron to pay \$4.8 million to relatives of a Black man killed by police**

By JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

The family of Jayland Walker, a Black man killed when eight police officers fired 94 bullets at him after he shot at least one round out his car window, will receive a \$4.8 million settlement from the city of Akron, the mayor's office said Monday.

A grand jury declined to indict the officers last year, but Walker's family accused the officers in a federal lawsuit of using excessive force and participating in a "culture of violence and racism" within Akron's police department.

What began as a traffic stop on June 27, 2022, ended when Walker was shot 46 times in a hail of gunfire that upended the city with protests and heightened tensions with police. The investigation said police tried to stop Walker and then gave chase after seeing him driving with a broken taillight and a broken light on his rear license plate. Police said Walker refused to stop and then fired a shot from his car before fleeing on foot.

A city's announcement of the settlement says talks continue with Walker's family and the wider community on changing police procedures. The vehicle pursuit policy has been changed so that officers are not allowed to chase vehicles just for equipment violations.

The family's lawyers said they would discuss the settlement once the court process is over. "There's more to the settlement than money. The family accomplished meaningful policy changes with its litigation efforts," said Bobby DiCello, a family attorney.

A state investigation found Walker, 25, jumped out of his still-moving car, ran from police and ignored commands to stop and show his hands. Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost said Walker reached toward his waistband and raised a hand, so the officers chasing him believed he was going to fire again.

Attorneys for Walker's family criticized the state's investigation, saying it was skewed in favor of the police. DiCello disputed the state's description of Walker shooting at police when he fired out his car window, saying the gun wasn't pointed at anyone.

The eight officers who fired at Walker were put on leave and then reinstated to desk duty before returning to active duty, a police official said in February.

## **Mexican schools have 6 months to ban junk food sales or face heavy fines**

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Schools in Mexico have six months to implement a government-sponsored ban on junk food or face heavy fines, officials said Monday, as authorities confront what they call the worst childhood obesity problem in the world.

The rules, published on Sept. 30, target products that have become staples for two or three generations of Mexican school kids: sugary fruit drinks, chips, artificial pork rinds and soy-encased, salty peanuts with chili.

School administrators who violate the order will face fines equivalent to between \$545 and \$5,450, which could double for a second offense. That could amount to nearly a year's wages for some.

Mexico's children have the highest consumption of junk food in Latin America and many get 40% of their total caloric intake from it, according to the U.N. children's agency, which has called child obesity there an emergency.

Authorities say about one-third of Mexico's children are overweight or obese.

Previous attempts to implement laws against junk food have met with little success.

A survey of over 10,000 schools carried out between 2023 and 2024 found that junk food was available in 98% of them, with sugary drinks in 95% and soft drinks in 79%. Ads for junk food were found in 25%



of schools.

New President Claudia Sheinbaum said Monday that schools will have to offer water fountains and alternative snacks, like bean tacos.

"It is much better to eat a bean taco than a bag of potato chips," Sheinbaum said. "It is much better to drink hibiscus flower water than soda."

However, the vast majority of Mexico's 255,000 schools do not have free drinking water available to students. According to a report in 2020, the effort to install drinking fountains succeeded in about 10,900 of the country's schools, or about 4%. Many schools are in areas so poor or remote that they struggle to maintain acceptable bathrooms, internet connection or electricity.

Mexico instituted front-of-package warning labels for foods between 2010 and 2020 to advise consumers about high levels of salt, added sugar, excess calories and saturated fats. Some snack foods carry all four warning labels.

But under the new rules, schools will have to phase out any product containing even a single warning label from their snack stands.

It wasn't immediately clear how the government would enforce the ban on the sidewalks outside schools, where vendors usually set up tables of goods to sell to kids at recess; 77% of schools in the recent survey had such stands outside.

## Yankees and Dodgers meet in World Series for 12th time in matchup of Broadway and Hollywood

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Broadway vs. Hollywood. Subway vs. Freeway. Judge vs. Ohtani.

New York neighbors who became cross-country rivals, the Yankees and Dodgers renew their starry struggle in the World Series for the first time in 43 years.

"I've always had that sense being here that there's that underlying, craving for that," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said Monday. "The stars will be out. The eyeballs will be watching and, hopefully, we can deliver on a great Series."

Two of baseball's most successful teams face each other starting Friday at Dodger Stadium, the Yankees coming off their 41st American League pennant and the Dodgers their 25th National League championship. New York is seeking its 28th World Series title but first since 2009, the Dodgers their eighth and second in a five-year span.

"When you're playing for the Dodgers and playing for the Yankees, it better feel different," LA manager Dave Roberts said at Yankee Stadium last June. "If not, you better do something different for a profession."

Yankees pinstripes vs. Dodgers Pantone 294. The Bronx Bombers vs. the Dem Bums' descendants. The granite-and-limestone of new Yankee Stadium on chilly autumn nights vs. Dodger Stadium in sunny Chavez Ravine, with the San Gabriel Mountains beyond the pavilions.

"It's kind of what the people wanted, what we all wanted," Dodgers star Mookie Betts said. "It's going to be a battle of two good teams, a lot of long flights across the country."

New York is 8-3 against the Dodgers in the most frequent World Series matchup, including 6-1 against Brooklyn and 2-2 since the rivalry became Big Apple against Tinseltown.

Mickey Owen, Al Gionfriddo, Cookie Lavagetto, Sandy Amoros, Johnny Podres, Don Larsen, Sandy Koufax and Reggie Jackson created indelible images in the matchup, which started in 1941 with one of the wackiest World Series turns.

Trailing 2-1 in the Series, Brooklyn led 4-3 with two outs in the ninth inning at Ebbets Field when Tommy Henrich swung and missed at strike three from Hugh Casey. The ball bounced away from Owen and rolled toward the Dodgers dugout as Henrich reached on the dropped third strike. Joe DiMaggio singled, Charlie Keller hit a two-run double and Joe Gordon added another two-run double later in the inning as the Yankees won 7-4 and went on to win the title in five games.

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Lavagetto's two-out, pinch walk-off double in the ninth ended Bill Bevens' no-hit bid in 1947's Game 4 and two games later Gionfriddo robbed DiMaggio of a tying three-run homer.

New York beat the Dodgers again in 1949, 1952 and 1953, frustrating the fans in Flatbush, but Brooklyn finally won the title in 1955 when Podres pitched a Game 7 shutout at Yankee Stadium and Gil Hodges drove in both runs. Amoros preserved the lead when he made a running catch of Yogi Berra's sixth-inning drive in the left-field corner with two on and relayed to shortstop Pee Wee Reese, who threw to Hodges at first and doubled up Gil McDougald. Those players were celebrated in Roger Kahn's 1972 book "The Boys of Summer."

Larsen pitched the World Series' only perfect game in 1956's fifth game in the Bronx, Berra jumping into his arms after the final out, and the Yankees won Game 7 behind Johnny Kucks' three-hit shutout in what turned out to be the last World Series game at Ebbets Field.

Walter O'Malley moved the Dodgers to California after the 1957 season, and Koufax had an interlocking "LA" on his cap instead of a "B" when he struck out a then-Series record 15 in the 1963 opener at Yankee Stadium. The rivalry didn't resume until 1977 with the first of three matchups in a five-year span.

Jackson's three home runs led the Yankees to a clinching win in 1977's Game 6. The Yankees won another six-game Series the following year, highlighted by third baseman Graig Nettles' diving stops on Reggie Smith, Steve Garvey and Davey Lopes.

Los Angeles lost the first two games in the Bronx in 1981, and then won four in a row — capped by a 9-2 victory that had Dodgers manager Tommy Lasorda dancing. The defeat prompted Yankees owner George Steinbrenner, his hand bandaged after an alleged fight with Dodgers fans in a hotel elevator, to issue a written apology "to the people of New York and to the fans of the New York Yankees everywhere."

Both teams feel the history created by their predecessors.

"You put that jersey on and those pinstripes, it just feels different," Yankees slugger Juan Soto said.

Shohei Ohtani and Los Angeles took two of three when they met Aaron Judge and New York in a much-hyped series in June.

Roberts is reminded of the history when he approaches Dodger Stadium.

"I can't believe I'm driving up Vin Scully Way, when I go to work," he said. "It's overwhelming, but I try not to let my head go there too often; I just try to do my job."

## Should the minimum wage be lower for workers who get tipped? Two states are set to decide

By KAVISH HARJAI Associated Press

Mel Nichols, a 37-year-old bartender in Phoenix, Arizona, takes home anywhere from \$30 to \$50 an hour with tips included. But the uncertainty of how much she's going to make on a daily basis is a constant source of stress.

"For every good day, there's three bad days," said Nichols, who has been in the service industry since she was a teenager. "You have no security when it comes to knowing how much you're going to make."

That uncertainty exists largely because federal labor law allows businesses to pay tipped workers, like food servers, bartenders and bellhops, less than the minimum wage as long as customer tips make up the difference. Voters in Arizona and Massachusetts will decide in November whether it's good policy to continue to let employers pass some of their labor costs to consumers.

The ballot measures reflect an accelerating debate over the so-called subminimum wage, which advocates say is essential to the sustainability of the service industry and detractors say pushes the cost of labor off employers' shoulders and leads to the exploitation of workers.

The amount tipped workers make varies by state. Fourteen states pay the federal minimum, or just above \$2 an hour for tipped workers and \$7 an hour for non-tipped workers.

Arizona employers can pay their tipped workers \$3 less hourly than other workers. Under current rates, that means tipped workers' base pay is \$11.35 an hour.

Voters will decide whether to approve a measure backed by state Republicans and the Arizona Restau-

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rant Association to change the minimum for tipped workers to 25% less than the regular minimum wage as long as their pay with tips is \$2 above that minimum.

The hourly minimum wage in Arizona is currently \$14.35 and increases yearly according to inflation.

Voters in Massachusetts are being asked to eliminate the tiered minimum-wage system.

There, voters will decide on a measure to incrementally increase the state's tipped worker wage — currently \$6.75 per hour — until it meets the regular minimum wage by January 2029. The measure was put forward by One Fair Wage, a not-for-profit that works to end the subminimum wage.

If voters approve the measure, the Bay State would join seven states that currently have a single minimum wage. Michigan will soon join that group after an August state Supreme Court ruling initiated a phase-out of the subminimum wage.

"When you're not making the money that you should be making to pay your bills, it becomes hard on you," said James Ford, a longtime Detroit-based hospitality worker. "(The ruling) makes me think we're moving forward."

Other states have wage measures on the ballot. In California, voters will choose whether to raise the hourly minimum wage from \$16 to \$18 by 2026 in what would be the highest statewide minimum wage in the country. Measures in Alaska and Missouri would gradually raise minimum wages to \$15 an hour while also requiring paid sick leave.

In the last two years, Washington, D.C., and Chicago also have started to eliminate the subminimum wage.

And the minimum wage is figuring into the presidential race, where both former President Donald Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris want to eliminate federal taxes on workers' tips.

Employers must ensure that workers get the full minimum if they don't make that much with tips. But they don't always comply with federal labor law. One in 10 restaurants and bars investigated nationally by the U.S. Labor Department between 2010 and 2019 violated a provision of the Fair Labor Standards Act, resulting in the establishments paying \$113.9 million in back wages.

The issue disproportionately affects women, who make up about 47% of the U.S. workforce but nearly 70% of those who work in tipped professions, according to an AP analysis of U.S. Census data.

In Arizona, Republican state Sen. J.D. Mesnard, the sponsor of Proposition 138, said the measure is a win for both businesses and lower-wage workers.

"The employer is protected in the sense that they can preserve this lower base, knowing that there are going to be tips on top of it," Mesnard said. "The tipped worker is guaranteed to make more than minimum wage, which is more than they're guaranteed today."

Nichols doesn't support it.

"It would reduce my hourly, and anything that reduces my hourly is not something that I want to lean into," she said. "I don't believe that business owners need any more cuts in labor costs."

Proposition 138 was initially put forward as a response to a ballot measure pushed by One Fair Wage that would create a single minimum wage of \$18, but the group abandoned the effort after threats of litigation from the restaurant association over how it collected signatures.

Instead, One Fair Wage will focus on trying to pass a wage hike in the Legislature. Democratic State Rep. Mariana Sandoval said she hopes her party in November can flip the Legislature, where Republicans hold a one-seat majority in both chambers.

After working for tips for more than 20 years, server Lindsay Ruck, who works at a restaurant at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, said she's faced her fair share of belligerent customers. But because their tips make up such a significant part of her pay — approximately \$60 an hour — she's hesitant to stand up to them.

To Ruck, higher base pay — not less — is called for.

"I think that there should be just a single minimum wage and then people should get tipped on top of that," Ruck said.

The National Restaurant Association and its state affiliates warn of reduced hours, lower employment and menu price hikes if employers can't rely on tips to pay their workers. That's why Dan Piacquadio, a

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co-owner of Harold's Cave Creek Corral restaurant outside Phoenix, is hoping voters pass Proposition 138.

"This is just a way to protect our current system that's been there for 20 years and protect restaurant owners, keep restaurants affordable, and most importantly, keep very good pay for all tipped workers," Piacquadio said.

Between 2012 and 2019, the number of restaurants and people employed at those restaurants grew at a faster clip in the seven states that have a single minimum wage compared to states that pay the federal minimum tipped wage, according to labor economist Sylvia Allegretto.

"We are sitting here in a state that has a \$16 minimum wage," Allegretto said from Oakland, California, where she works at the left-leaning Center for Economic and Policy Research. "No subminimum wage, and we've got a thriving restaurant industry."

## Today in History: October 22, Lance Armstrong stripped of Tour titles

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, Oct. 22, the 296th day of 2024. There are 70 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Oct. 22, 2012, cyclist Lance Armstrong was formally stripped of his seven Tour de France victories and received a lifetime ban from Olympic sports after the International Cycling Union chose not to appeal doping charges against Armstrong by the United States Anti-Doping Agency.

Also on this date:

In 1836, Sam Houston was inaugurated as the first constitutionally elected president of the Republic of Texas.

In 1928, Republican presidential nominee Herbert Hoover spoke of the "American system of rugged individualism" in a speech at New York's Madison Square Garden.

In 1934, bank robber Charles "Pretty Boy" Floyd was shot to death by federal agents and local police at a farm near East Liverpool, Ohio.

In 1962, in a nationally broadcast address, President John F. Kennedy revealed the presence of Soviet-built missile bases under construction in Cuba and announced a naval blockade of all offensive military equipment being shipped to the Communist island nation.

In 1968, Apollo 7 returned safely from Earth orbit, splashing down in the Atlantic Ocean.

In 1995, the largest gathering of world leaders in history marked the 50th anniversary of the United Nations.

In 2014, a gunman shot and killed a soldier standing guard at a war memorial in Ottawa, then stormed the Canadian Parliament building before he himself was shot and killed.

In 2016, the Chicago Cubs won their first pennant since 1945, beating the Los Angeles Dodgers in Game 6 of the National League Championship Series. (The Cubs would go on to beat Cleveland in the World Series in seven games.)

Today's Birthdays: Black Panthers co-founder Bobby Seale is 88. Actor Christopher Lloyd is 86. Actor Derek Jacobi is 86. Actor Tony Roberts is 85. Actor Catherine Deneuve is 81. Physician and author Deepak Chopra is 78. Actor Jeff Goldblum is 72. Actor-comedian Bob Odenkirk is 62. Olympic gold medal figure skater Brian Boitano is 61. Country singer Shelby Lynne is 56. Reggae deejay and singer Shaggy is 56. Film director Spike Jonze is 55. Argentine President Javier Milei is 54. Former MLB All-Star Ichiro Suzuki is 51. Actor Jesse Tyler Ferguson is 49. Actor Corey Hawkins is 36. Actor Jonathan Lipnicki is 34. Rapper 21 Savage is 32.