

# Groton Daily Independent

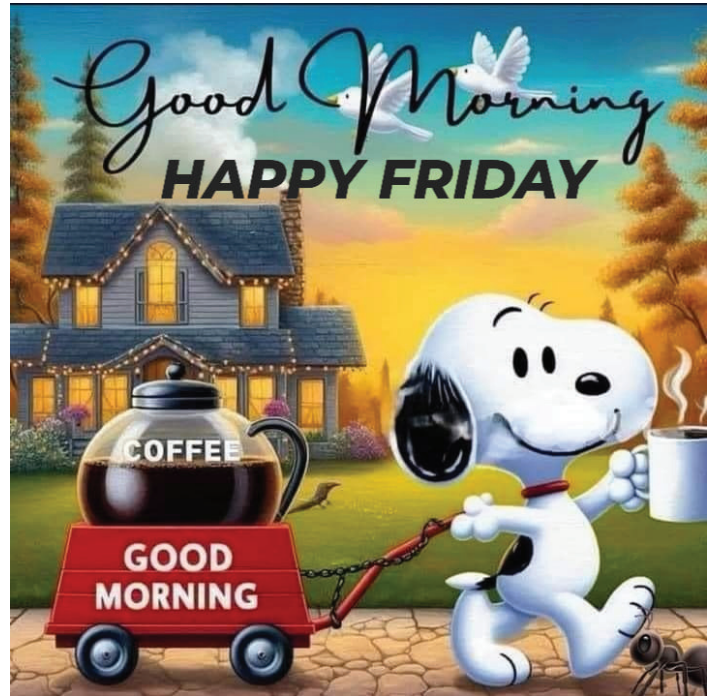
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## Friday, Oct. 25

Senior Menu: Potato soup, ham salad croissant, tomato spoon salad, fruit.  
School Breakfast: Breakfast cookie.  
School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, tri taters.  
Volleyball hosts Redfield (7th/C at 5 p.m., 8th/JV at 6 p.m., varsity to follow)

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



## Saturday, Oct. 26

State Cross Country at Rapid City  
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 209 N Main

## Sunday, Oct. 27

United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.  
St. John's Lutheran: St. John's at 9 a.m., Zion at 11 a.m., Sunday School at 9:45 a.m.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with Milestones (Jr. K and Kindergarten), 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.  
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.  
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.  
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.

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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.**

## Strikes Continue, Talks Resume

Israeli strikes across Gaza have killed at least 59 people over two days, including 17 who were reportedly seeking shelter at a school. The strikes come a week after Israeli forces killed Hamas' military head and leader, Yahya Sinwar, and as the militant group continues searching for a successor.

Meanwhile, US and Israeli negotiators are expected to travel to Qatar's capital, Doha, this weekend to renew stalled talks over a cease-fire and hostage-release deal. The US saw Sinwar as an obstacle in negotiations, but it isn't clear if Hamas is willing to return to the table. Options for a plan reportedly include one from Egypt, which calls for a two-week pause in fighting in exchange for the release of six hostages. Roughly 97 hostages taken Oct. 7, 2023, are still in Hamas' captivity.

In neighboring Lebanon, Israeli and Hezbollah forces continued to trade fire, particularly in the southern part of the country. Hezbollah has also lost both its leader and presumed successor.

## Dodgers versus Yankees

Game 1 of the World Series begins tonight (FOX, 8 pm ET) in Los Angeles as the New York Yankees and Los Angeles Dodgers—the league's two largest teams by market—face off in a historic championship for a 12th time. Current betting odds give the Dodgers a slight edge in what many commentators are calling a toss-up.

The series pits the American League and National League's No. 1 teams against each other for the first time since 2013 and only the fifth occasion in 30 seasons. The matchup also features some of the sport's best players, with five former Most Valuable Players expected to play—the most ever. That group includes each league's home run leader (the Yankees' Aaron Judge and the Dodgers' Shohei Ohtani) for the first time since 1956.

Together with the Yankees' Juan Soto, the trio makes up the sport's top batters—by weighted runs created plus, a metric that attempts to weigh a variety of factors—the first such appearance of the top three offensive leaders at the Fall Classic.

The Yankees seek their record-extending 28th championship title, while the Dodgers seek their eighth—and to avoid adding to their most-ever 14 title losses.

## 'Killer Nurse' Loses Appeal Bid

Lucy Letby, a former British neonatal nurse convicted of murdering seven infants and attempting to murder seven others, has lost her bid to appeal her conviction. The case has become the subject of growing scrutiny, with some experts questioning the evidence used to convict her.

The prosecution claimed she killed the babies using different methods, including the injection of air into the bloodstream and poisoning them with insulin. However, a recent article highlighted potential flaws in the prosecution's case, suggesting questions about the evidence may have been overlooked. The article argues the prosecution relied heavily on a chart showing Letby's presence during suspicious events, which did not account for other factors affecting mortality rates. Some experts have noted the evidence was largely circumstantial, with no one directly observing Letby harming a baby, and have questioned the validity of her alleged confession note.

Letby, who has maintained her innocence, is currently serving 15 life sentences.

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## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Los Angeles district attorney recommends resentencing for Erik and Lyle Menendez due to new evidence related to their conviction for the 1989 murder of their parents.

Ron Ely, actor best known for starring in titular 1960s TV role on "Tarzan," dies at age 86.

Jack Jones, two-time Grammy-winning singer and actor, dies at age 86.

TKO, parent company of the WWE and UFC, purchases Professional Bull Riders, On Location, and IMG for \$3.25B.

## Science & Technology

Group of cable companies, advertisers, and news outlets sue the Federal Trade Commission over "click-to-cancel" rules, which would simplify canceling contracts from a variety of businesses.

Study finds the human brain can parse and process single sentences as quickly as 125 milliseconds, roughly equal to the blink of an eye.

Astronomers discover first black hole in a triple star system; findings raise questions about how black holes form and their resulting gravitational pull on nearby objects.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.2%, Dow -0.3%, Nasdaq +0.8%); Tesla stock lifts Nasdaq, closing up 22% in best day since May 2013.

Lilium shares close down 61% after air taxi startup says main subsidiaries will file for insolvency.

Keurig Dr Pepper to buy energy-drink maker Ghost for over \$1B, with initial cash investment of \$990M in exchange for 60% ownership stake; Keurig Dr Pepper will acquire remaining 40% stake in 2028.

Judge blocks Coach owner Tapestry's \$8.5B acquisition of Michael Kors owner Capri.

Southwest Airlines and activist investor Elliott Investment Management strike deal on Southwest's leadership, including keeping CEO Bob Jordan; deal averts proxy fight.

## Politics & World Affairs

Owner of Dali container ship that crashed into Baltimore's Francis Scott Key Bridge earlier this year and killed six people agrees to pay \$102M in settlement with Justice Department.

Three Georgia men convicted in 2022 for federal hate crime in the killing of 25-year-old Ahmaud Arbery seek new trial; the three men had confronted and shot Arbery, who was out on a run.

India's east coast braces for Cyclone Dana as more than 1 million people are evacuated.

Hurricane Kristy strengthens into Category 5 storm in Pacific Ocean southwest of the southern tip of Baja, California; Kristy is expected to remain away from land.



## **Poll: Republicans Trump, Dusty Johnson hold sizable leads in South Dakota**

By **STU WHITNEY**

**South Dakota News Watch**

Nearly 6 in 10 South Dakotans plan to vote for Republican nominee Donald Trump in the upcoming presidential election, according to a scientific poll of 500 registered voters co-sponsored by South Dakota News Watch.

Trump holds a lead of 59% to 33% over Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris in the survey, which was also sponsored by the Chiesman Center for Democracy at the University of South Dakota.

The other two statewide candidate races on South Dakota's Nov. 5 ballot are also lopsided in favor of Republicans, according to the survey, which was conducted Oct. 12-16 by Mason-Dixon Polling and Strategy and has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.5 percentage points.

Those interviewed were selected randomly from a telephone-matched state voter registration list that included both landline and cellphone numbers. Quotas were assigned to reflect voter registration by county.

U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson and Public Utilities Commissioner Kristie Fiegen are well ahead in their re-election bids, with Johnson leading Democratic challenger Sheryl Johnson 61% to 24% and Fiegen polling at 50% in a three-candidate field.

"In most Great Plains states, the Democratic Party 'brand' is toxic to 50% of the electorate and probably 50% of the independents," said Michael Card, an emeritus professor of political science at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion. "Few seem to deviate from party registration, and these numbers reflect that."

Trump's 59% showing is up since a similar poll in May, which had him at 50% and President Joe Biden at 31%. Biden dropped out of the race July 21 and was replaced on the ticket with Harris, who chose Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz as her running mate.

### **Trump's favorability stays steady at 48%**

In the May poll, some of Trump's support was siphoned by Independent candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who was at 11% at the time in South Dakota. Kennedy suspended his campaign Aug. 23 and asked his supporters to back Trump, though his name still appears on the South Dakota ballot.

Trump's odds of seizing three electoral votes in deep-red South Dakota were never in doubt, considering the state has not favored a Democrat presidential candidate since Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964.

But a closer look at the numbers shows the immutability of the former president's support in the Mount Rushmore State, where his favorability rating is 48%. That rating, which gauges a political figure's popularity, has remained between 47% and 50% for Trump in five consecutive Mason-Dixon polls dating back to October 2018.

The most recent poll found that 35% of statewide voters have an unfavorable view of Trump, the same percentage as the survey in May.

### **Harris eclipses Biden's support from Dems**

With RFK Jr. still technically on the ballot, it's an open question whether Trump will match his previous vote share of 62% in South Dakota the last two presidential cycles – against Hillary Clinton in 2016 and Biden in 2020. Trump won the presidency in 2016 and lost in 2020.

The former Manhattan real estate mogul and reality TV star remains one of the most polarizing figures in American political history. The poll of South Dakotans has his favorability at 72% among Republicans and 8% among Democrats. He's also more popular overall with men (54%) than women (42%).

In terms of vote share, Trump is strongest in the West River region that includes Pennington County/

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Rapid City, where he won with 61% in 2020. The News Watch poll has him at 64% in that region, compared to 55% in the Sioux Falls area.

The switch from Biden to Harris moved the meter somewhat for Democrats in South Dakota, but not to significant effect. It's hard to compare Harris' 33% vote share in the most recent poll to Biden's 31% in May because of the RFK Jr. factor.

The vice president's 85% vote share among Democrats surpassed Biden (75%) from the previous poll, reflecting the energy of her campaign and concerns about Biden's age, even before a poor June debate performance accelerated the end of his candidacy.

Among all South Dakota voters polled, Harris was at 34% favorable and 57% unfavorable, compared to Biden's 25% and 58% in May. That includes 39% favorability among female voters and 27% among males.

## **Poll shows Dusty Johnson over 60%**

Three-term Republican incumbent Dusty Johnson holds a commanding lead of 61% to 24% in the poll over Democrat Sheryl Johnson, a retired education assistant from Sioux Falls who is seeking her first elected office.

The 48-year-old congressman, facing his first major-party general election challenge since 2018, is favored by 88% of Republican respondents, along with 36% of Independents (24% undecided) and 29% of Democrats (28% undecided).

Dusty Johnson's name recognition and mainstream Republican support – not to mention his opponent's financial inability to challenge him on air – has allowed him to tamp down criticism that he's focused on running for governor in 2026.

"The proof is in the pudding," he told News Watch. "I think anybody who knows me knows that I am driven every single day to be effective. No matter what the future holds, nothing's going to change that."

Part of Sheryl Johnson's strategy was to curry favor among populist Republicans and Independents by siding with landowners in the dispute over carbon pipelines, an approach that saw her attend several "No on Referred Law 21" community meetings.

At the same time, she voiced her support for Amendment G to put an end to South Dakota's abortion ban, though she framed it as a federal issue. Dusty Johnson responded that he would respect the will of voters but that he planned to vote against the measure.

Sheryl Johnson has nearly 40% support among Independents in the poll, with plenty of undecideds. But her failure to crack 50% among Democrats and the fact that 88% of Republicans are sticking with Dusty – who has clashed at times with the populist wing of his party – shows the daunting challenge that she faced.

Despite the well-worn maxim of all politics being local, Card said the current predicament facing South Dakota's junior party is more about politics becoming national.

"While local Democrats may not go for all policy planks of the national party, their opposition focuses on those more extreme (national) positions," said the USD professor. "With confirmation bias, people focus on what they already believe about the party."

## **Fiegen has solid PUC lead, with room to grow**

Another Republican incumbent, Fiegen, has a comfortable lead in her re-election bid as chairperson of the Public Utilities Commission, according to the poll.

The statewide survey shows her at 50%, followed by Democratic nominee Forrest Wilson (23%) and Libertarian Party candidate Gideon Oakes (8%), with 19% undecided.

Fiegen, a Chancellor native who served in the South Dakota House of Representatives from 1994 to 2001, was appointed to the PUC by former Gov. Dennis Daugaard in 2011 and was elected to new terms in 2012 and 2018.

She has campaigned on her experience and leadership roles on the three-member PUC, which regulates electric, natural gas and telephone utilities and issues permits for energy projects and pipelines.

Fiegen won with 66% of the statewide vote in a two-person race in 2018.

Jon Schaff, a political science professor at Northern State University in Aberdeen, expects her election

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night share to be higher than the 50% reflected in the poll because of a large number of undecided voters. The survey showed that 76% of Republicans favor Fiegen, with 12% undecided.

"The only reason Fiegen isn't up by more is that when you poll a lot of people on PUC, that polling question is the first time they've ever heard of the PUC," said Schaff. "Thus, the high number of undecideds. So she'll win based on party ID."

Fiegen's challengers haven't run high-profile campaigns, making it harder to cut into the GOP incumbent's electoral advantages. Wilson, the Democrat, does lead with Independent voters with 33% compared to Fiegen's 21%, but he only has a 54% vote share within his own party, with nearly 30% still undecided.

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

## GROTON

AN EXHIBIT IN THREE PARTS  
OCT 5 - DEC 28, 2024



**GROTON DAY OPEN HOUSE**  
**SATURDAY OCT 26 @ 1:00PM**

WITH SPEAKERS FROM  
THE GROTON COMMUNITY!

21 S. MAIN ST. ABERDEEN SD 605 626-7117 [DACOTAHPRAIEMUSEUM.COM](http://DACOTAHPRAIEMUSEUM.COM)

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## Save the Date: Northern State University's 2025 Gypsy Days Homecoming Week Set for Sept. 15-21

ABERDEEN, S.D. – Hot off the excitement of this year's Homecoming, the Northern State University community is already gearing up for an earlier-than-usual celebration in 2025. NSU will host its annual homecoming week from Sept. 15 through 21, with the Gypsy Day parade and game scheduled for Sept. 20, 2025.

With the 2024 festivities just a few weeks behind us, the university is ready to bring back even more fun, spirit and tradition for students, alumni and the community next year.

"Gypsy Days, for me, means the ability to reconnect with the people I care about, celebrate school spirit and honor traditions," said 2024 Homecoming King Jacob Ebeling, a senior biochemistry major from Sioux Falls. "This is a truly special time where alumni, current students, and the community come together to celebrate Northern."

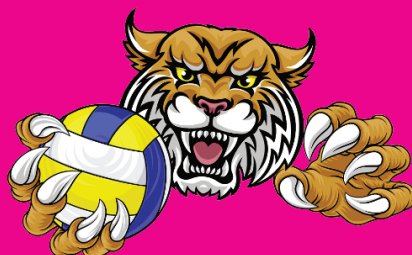
The annual parade will take place during the morning on Saturday, Sept. 20, 2025, while the NSU Wolves football team will take on the Concordia-St. Paul Golden Bears that afternoon. Full schedules and event times will be released closer to the week.

"As the leaves start to turn and the excitement of the fall settles in, there's no better time to rally the pack and celebrate what makes NSU special," said Chad Hatzenbuehler, co-chair of the parade committee. "We're thrilled to continue building on the incredible energy from this year's homecoming," and with the earlier date, we're looking forward to an action-packed, memory-making week."

Mark your calendars, break out your maroon and gold, and get ready to howl with the Wolves during the 2025 Northern State University Gypsy Days homecoming week.

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

**GT**  
Groton Area  
Tigers



Friday, Oct. 25

Volleyball  
Redfield

at

Groton Area  
JV at 6 p.m.

Sponsored by

Adam & Nicole Wright

Varsity to follow

**\$5 ticket or**

**GDI Subscription**

**required to watch the games.**

## Minnehaha County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: SD Highway 42, mile marker 350, nine miles west of Sioux Falls, SD

When: 6:28 a.m., Thursday, October 24, 2024

Driver 1: 56-year-old male from Hartford, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 1999 Harley Davidson FLHTCUI

Helmet Used: Yes

Driver 2: 19-year-old male from Sioux Falls, SD, minor injuries

Vehicle 2: 2016 Dodge Ram 1500

Seat Belt Used: No

Minnehaha County, S.D.- A motorcyclist died this morning in a two-vehicle collision nine miles west of Sioux Falls, SD.

The names of the persons involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 1999 Harley Davidson was traveling westbound on SD Highway 42 near mile marker 350. At the same time, the driver of a 2016 Dodge Ram was eastbound on SD 42 and attempted to pass the vehicle in front of him by entering the westbound lane. While passing, he collided head-on with the approaching motorcycle.

The driver of motorcycle passed away at the scene. The driver of the Dodge Ram sustained minor injuries.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.



## NOTICE OF SALE

November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at 10:00 AM

State Nebraska Bank & Trust vs Brian Dolan & Kristen Dolan

(06CIV22-000424-01)

2012 Chevy Avalanche



An Execution of Judgement in the above referenced matter was received by the Brown County Sheriff's Office on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024. The amount of the Judgment is \$33,157.48, \$260.50 Cost, \$373.39 Pre-Judgement interest, plus continuing costs, and interest, as provided by law. This amount does not include Sheriff's Office fees and costs related to this matter. The property to be sold pursuant to the Execution is: 2012 Chevy Avalanche, VIN 3GNTKFE79CG124632. Odometer Reading: 206,206.

**THIS PROPERTY WILL BE AUCTIONED AND SOLD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER, WITH THE SALE BEING FINAL, SOLD AS IS WITH NO WARRANTIES EXPRESSED OR IMPLIED. CASH IS REQUIRED ON THE DAY OF SALE.**

The sale will be held at the Brown County Court House, 101 1<sup>st</sup> Ave SE, Aberdeen, SD 57401 on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at 10:00 AM.

DAVE LUNZMAN, SHERIFF OF BROWN COUNTY.

By: Nate Smith, Deputy, 605-626-7100 ext. 509.

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## Fellowship of Christian Students help clean ditches

The October service project for FCS (Fellowship of Christian Students) was spent cleaning up the ditches for the Adopt-A-Highway Program. Numerous students met on a Sunday afternoon with their gloves ready to clean up Highway 37 north of Groton. Afterwards, the students enjoyed pizza and bowling at the Jungle Lanes and Lounge.



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



LICENSE YOUR DOG.



**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

## St. Thomas More wins first round playoff game over Groton Area



**Korbin Kucker tries to gain a few yards on this run.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

St. Thomas More came to Groton Area on Thursday for the first round of the football playoffs and went home with a 40-13 win.

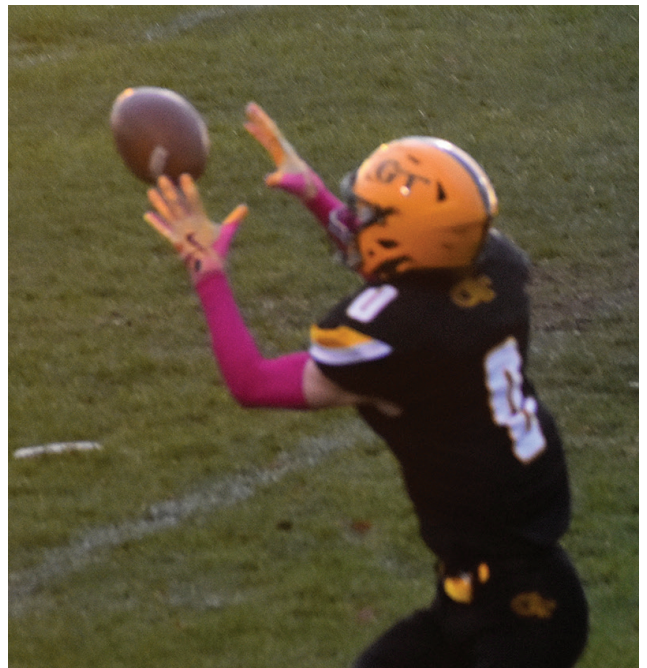
The Cavaliers scored touchdowns on plays of 57, 54, 49, 32, 13 and 4 yards, racking up 333 yard rushing and 87 yards passing with 19 first downs. St. Thomas More scored once in each the first and second quarters and twice in each the third and fourth quarters.

Groton Area had 14 first downs, 98 yards rushing (Korbin Kucker 18-53, Christian Ehresmann 11-41, 1 touchdown; Brevin Fliehs 4-4), and Korbin Kucker completed six of 16 passes for 68 yards with one touchdown and one interception. Receivers were Keegen Tracy with 3 catches for 40 yards while having one catch each were Christian Ehresmann for 20 yards for a touchdown, Ryder Johnson for eight yards and Teylor Diegel had no gain.

Leading tacklers for Groton Area were Christian Ehresmann with nine, Korbin Kucker eight, Brevin Fliehs six and Teylor Diegel three.

St. Thomas More had twice as many penalties as Groton Area, seven for 70 yards to three for 35 yards. Groton Area lost two of three fumbles and St. Thomas More lost one fumble that was recovered by Korbin Kucker.

Noah Wald completed six of 11 passes for 87 yards for one touchdown and two interceptions, both by Teylor Deigel. Receivers for the



**Keegen Tracy makes the catch to get a first down.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Cavaliers were Broeden Sales with three catches for 42 yards and one touchdown and Reeve Ross had two for 31 yards.

In rushing, St. Thomas More had just one more carry than Groton, 34-33, but with its big plays had Dawson Inhofer with seven carries for 168 yards and two touchdowns, Grayden Juve had 12 carries for 100 yards and two touchdowns, Josh Elder had six carries for 24 yards and one touchdown and Joseph Gracometto had three carries for 22 yards.

Leading tacklers for St. Thomas More were Joseph Giacometto with 13 while Josh Elder had six and Brody Lee and BROeden Sales each had four.

One PAT for Groton Area was a two point attempt that failed, but Joao Nunes kicked the PAT for the second touchdown.

## Working to Protect & Promote Traditional American Values

- ✓ Pro Police
- ✓ Pro Constitution
- ✓ Pro Family



Visit the Campaign Site  
[ManhartForHouse.com](https://ManhartForHouse.com)



Paid for by Manhart for State House

# MANHART

## STATE REPRESENTATIVE

### DISTRICT 1

[facebook.com/ManhartLogan](https://facebook.com/ManhartLogan) | [ManhartForHouse.com](https://ManhartForHouse.com)

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



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Opponents outspend supporters of South Dakota abortion-rights ballot measure

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - OCTOBER 24, 2024 6:34 PM

Anti-abortion groups have out-fundraised and outspent abortion-rights advocates in the campaign for South Dakota's Nov. 5 abortion ballot measure.

Three major anti-abortion ballot question committees raised a combined \$1.6 million since May, while the main abortion-rights committee raised \$298,392, according to campaign finance reports filed this week with the Secretary of State's Office. The anti-abortion committees spent \$1.2 million on advertising while proponents spent \$195,683.

"\$1 million is a lot of money for a ballot issue campaign in South Dakota," said Michael Card, associate professor emeritus of political science at the University of South Dakota.

There are no limits on contributions to ballot question committees in South Dakota.

Abortion is currently banned in the state, with one exception for abortions necessary to save the life of the mother. Amendment G would legalize abortion while allowing for restrictions in the second trimester of pregnancy and a ban in the third trimester, with mandatory exceptions to protect the life or health of the pregnant woman.

David Wiltse, South Dakota State political science professor, said he isn't surprised by the fundraising and spending disparity.

Abortion measures have passed in each state they've been put to a public vote since Roe v. Wade was overturned, and voters have rejected every measure that would have restricted access. Wiltse said the lack of proponent fundraising is a "sign of confidence" they don't have to "convert" many voters.

"The 'No' side needs to spend more since they are working against the national trend here," Wiltse said in an emailed statement. "While I wouldn't say the backers of this amendment have a lock on this, they certainly have the prevailing winds in their favor."

According to a recent South Dakota News Watch and Chiesman Center for Democracy poll of 500 registered South Dakota voters, 49.8% said they support the abortion measure. About 46.8% of respondents said they opposed the measure, with the remainder undecided.



**A sign in Sioux Falls on Oct. 24, 2024, urges voters to support an abortion-rights ballot measure, and another sign urges the opposite.** (Photos by Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

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South Dakota is one of ten states with an abortion question on the ballot this election.

## Catholic groups play large role

No G for SD, a month-old ballot question committee formed to oppose the amendment, raised more than \$1 million, including \$340,000 from Catholic organizations and officials.

The Knights of Columbus, a Catholic fraternal organization, contributed \$200,000. The Catholic Chancery Office in Sioux Falls donated \$140,000. The chancery funds come largely from parishioner donations, and the bishop consults with church organizations, which include parishioners, before making such donations.

The bishop of the Diocese of Sioux Falls, Donald DeGrood, donated \$2,500 of his own funds.

Chris Motz, chief of staff and general counsel for the Diocese of Sioux Falls, said the diocese "felt a duty to educate and inform" about the dangers of the amendment.

"We'd count unborn children and women with difficult pregnancies among those to whom we have a duty of care and compassion," Motz said. "Our contributions are meant to give them a voice."

The Catholic Church has long opposed abortion, and is one of the largest entities bankrolling campaigns against abortion rights in states where it's on the ballot.

In Kansas' 2022 election, the Catholic Church donated nearly \$3.7 million toward efforts opposed to the ballot question; and in Ohio in 2023, Catholic bishops gave \$1.7 million to a political action committee to fight a similar ballot measure. No abortion-rights ballot measure has lost since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the federal constitutional right to an abortion in 2022. South Dakota's measure is one of 10 on the ballot Nov. 5.

## Opponent spending

Another notable donor to No G for SD is Tammie Broin, vice chairwoman and co-founder of Sioux Falls-based biofuels producer POET, who contributed \$100,000.

Donations largely went toward advertising, which included billboard advertisements, and television and radio commercials across South Dakota — such as a \$26,750 commercial campaign on KELO and \$43,645 for commercials on Dakota News Now's KDLT and KSFY stations, according to Federal Communications Commission reports.

Two other anti-abortion ballot question committees are Life Defense Fund, which reported raising \$587,743, and Celebrate Life Committee, which reported raising \$25,000.

Life Defense Fund is chaired by state Rep. Jon Hansen, R-Dell Rapids, who shared the group's campaign finance report with South Dakota Searchlight (the Secretary of State's Office had not posted the report to its website as of Thursday afternoon). The Life Defense Fund is also challenging Amendment G in a lawsuit that's not scheduled for trial until after the election.

Some notable donations to the ballot question committee include:

\$50,000 from Colleen and Glenn Ridder, a family physician and medical director of Sioux Falls-based pregnancy help center, the Alpha Center.

\$50,000 from Greg Schweiss, president of the Western South Dakota Catholic Foundation.

\$50,000 from the Catholic Diocese of Sioux Falls, and thousands more donated from Catholic churches and organizations throughout the state.

More than \$45,000 in combined donations from South Dakota Right to Life — not including donations from local chapters, such as Sioux Falls Right to Life's \$10,000 donation.

\$25,000 from Prestige Auto Sales in Spearfish.

Bishop DeGrood also donated \$2,500 of his own funds to the ballot question committee.

Celebrate Life Committee, chaired by Daktronics Inc. founder Al Kurtenbach, received a \$5,000 donation from him and another \$20,000 from Frank Kurtenbach, his brother and former vice president of the company. The committee spent almost all of its money on billboard advertisements.

Card said the spending by anti-abortion committees is only a piece of the campaign across the state: Parishioners may hear opposition campaigning at church or read it in church bulletins.

"My wife and I attend Catholic church in Vermillion, where there is a message in the bulletin at each service, along with a mention in every sermon or homily to vote no," Card said.

## Proponent funding

Card said proponents haven't achieved the same level of messaging.

"Proponents of Amendment G don't have that bully pulpit and may not have the resources to give for their side. And if they do, it's apparent they're not giving it," Card said.

The American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota and Planned Parenthood North Central States, both part of national organizations that support reproductive rights, do not support the ballot measure and have not donated money to the campaign. A spokesperson for Planned Parenthood told South Dakota Searchlight last year that the organization isn't supporting the measure because "we don't believe it will adequately reinstate the right to abortion in South Dakota."

Dakotans for Health, the committee that circulated petitions to put Amendment G on the ballot, spent most of its \$298,392 on advertising. Dakotans for Health is also campaigning for the passage of Initiated Measure 28, which the group intends as a removal of state sales taxes on groceries.

Dakotans for Health Chair Rick Weiland said the organization still feels "really good about our chances" on the abortion-rights measure despite being outspent.

"When push comes to shove, people are going to opt for freedom in their decisions, not this radical abortion ban governing their decisions for the last two years," Weiland said.

The committee's largest contributions included:

\$100,000 from Michelle Locher, a Florida resident who also donated \$1 million to a political action committee supporting Florida's proposed constitutional amendment on abortion rights.

\$40,000 from Chicago-based nonprofit Think Big America.

\$10,000 from Jim Conyngham, of Austin, Texas.

\$10,000 from Barb Christianson, a Rapid City resident.

\$5,000 from Tom Daschle, a Democrat who formerly represented South Dakota in the U.S. Senate.

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

## Prison leader responds to criticism over loss of private employer, trumpets college partnership

Sioux Falls lawmaker urged corrections secretary to release letter telling state's version of the story

BY: JOHN HULT - OCTOBER 24, 2024 5:50 PM

A state lawmaker released a letter Thursday from Department of Corrections Secretary Kellie Wasko that addresses allegations of unfairness by a private company that left its prison workshop earlier this year.

The DOC has never granted an interview with Wasko to discuss the exit of Metal Craft Industries, which paid a market wage to inmates in Sioux Falls under the guidelines of a federal program. The business employed inmates for more than two decades.

The letter outlining the DOC's version of the story wasn't meant for public consumption. It was offered confidentially Monday to members of the Legislature's Government Operations and Audit Committee.

Rep. Linda Duba, D-Sioux Falls, who sits on the committee, asked Wasko on Wednesday evening for permission to release the letter to the media and Wasko agreed. Duba sent it Thursday morning.

"This is just to give some clarity and a lot of details," Duba said.

The letter's release comes one week after the state Board of Technical Education voted unanimously to endorse the pursuit of a diesel mechanic program for inmates in the space once occupied by Metal Craft



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Industries.

That program would be run by Southeast Technical College, which already teaches welding to minimum security inmates at its Sioux Falls campus on a daily basis. Wasko argues in the letter that Metal Craft was "putting the safety of our staff and other offenders at risk" by refusing to "modernize" its operations. She goes on to tell lawmakers that the DOC "hopes to have a new program set up soon" through Southeast Tech.

## **DOC response comes after media spotlight**

Several media outlets, including South Dakota Searchlight, have written about the dispute between Metal Craft Industries and the DOC.

Metal Craft's owner, Terry Van Zanten, said Wasko wanted operational changes too quickly, and that he wasn't offered enough guidance on how to comply with DOC mandates. The company was forced out, Van Zanten argues.

In the letter released Wednesday, Wasko called that a "very misleading and false narrative," and accused Van Zanten of slandering the agency by telling it.

She wrote that Metal Craft Industries came under scrutiny after a civilian Metal Craft employee was caught on camera allowing an inmate employee to use a cell phone. A subsequent search of the shop turned up contraband, including a knife, loose drill bits, two iPads, unauthorized snacks and "excess electronics, cooking appliances and other items to which offenders are not allowed to access."

Metal Craft's shop was located in the Jameson Annex, which is the prison system's maximum security facility for male inmates.

The DOC had pushed Van Zanten to work with inmates with shorter sentences, Wasko's letter said, in order to give them job skills for use outside the prison walls. Most of Van Zanten's employees were serving life sentences.

Wasko said the company slow-walked changes to its inmate staffing, didn't take changes to the state's prison tool control policies seriously and chose to end the partnership rather than comply.

The letter offers new details and a timeline of events, but its narrative aligns broadly with the story Wasko has told to lawmakers in public meetings about the situation.

Van Zanten wanted to use his long-term inmate employees to train new ones, and the letter quotes snippets of an email from him in which he asked to retain some of his "key" inmate employees, even as the DOC moved to reclassify them and move them out of Jameson. Van Zanten wrote in the email that he needed those inmate employees to stay competitive in the market.

"Essentially, MCI was asking for DOC to house offenders in the most restrictive conditions of confinement, even if their classification deemed them less risky, for MCI's benefit," Wasko wrote.

Van Zanten said Thursday that he believes Wasko's letter is meant as cover for an overly rigid approach to change and the failures in communications that he says led to the breakdown of the business relationship.



**Participants in a welding program for minimum security inmates are pictured at Southeast Technical College in Sioux Falls on Oct. 7, 2024.** (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

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"We told the truth, and we're sticking by it," Van Zanten said. "She's just pulling things out of her hat at this point."

## **Diesel mechanic program planned for vacated space**

The DOC aims to refashion the Metal Craft space into an instructional area for inmates.

Currently, inmates on minimum security status who live in a halfway house in Sioux Falls travel to Southeast Tech every day to participate in afternoon sessions of the school's welding program. The program is jointly funded with the South Dakota Department of Labor.

Over the course of the partnership, more than 50 welders have been certified, according to Ben Valdez, the school's vice president of academic affairs. Inmate welding students have worked on projects for community organizations, Valdez said, including a series of camera mounts for Howard Wood Field in Sioux Falls that are now used during track and field events.

More than 80% of the program's graduates have gotten welding jobs upon release, Valdez said.

"Our two new instructors have even taken it up another notch," Valdez said during a recent visit to the welding program's workshop. "Instead of just teaching welding, we're doing a lot of fabrication. Within welding facilities, a lot of times they have to be able to cut, press, shape and redo the welding materials so that they then can actually put them together."

Inmate students at Southeast Tech are treated "like every other student," Valdez said, and can participate in on-campus events, including job fairs and a recent visit from television personality and vocational education advocate Mike Rowe.

Pritam Gurung is one of the inmates in the current class of 12 at Southeast Tech. Gurung is looking forward to leaving DOC custody with the skills to land a decent paying job. His family has been disappointed with the repeat drunken driving offenses that landed him in prison over the winter, but "the things that I'm doing with the time that I've got in here, they're happy about that," Gurung said.

In addition to discussions on a diesel mechanics program, Valdez said there have been preliminary talks on bringing female inmates into programs like medical coding and phlebotomy.

The DOC also offers career and technical education courses in precision machining for male offenders at Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield through Lake Area Technical College, according to an Oct. 4 news release from the DOC. Offenders from the Rapid City Minimum Center can enroll in a plumbing course at Western Dakota Technical College, the release said.

*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.*

## **US senators stress importance of Douglas School expansion ahead of B-21 arrival**

### **Lawmakers rejected a funding request from the school district last winter**

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - OCTOBER 24, 2024 4:45 PM

SIOUX FALLS — Douglas School District's \$15 million state funding request to help build a new elementary school ahead of B-21 bombers arriving at Ellsworth Air Force Base has gained influential supporting comments.

U.S. Senators John Thune and Mike Rounds, both Republicans from South Dakota, spoke to a panel of state lawmakers Thursday.

"As you all think about these issues, you have a lot of issues to grapple with just like we do in Washington, trying to figure out how to prioritize and allocate resources to certain areas and hitting the targets you need to hit, but I would offer up to you how important I think this is," Thune said.

The senators spoke to the Legislature's Select Committee on Legislative Relationships with Ellsworth

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Air Force Base. The base, near Box Elder and Rapid City, is undergoing a flurry of construction to prepare for the arrival of B-21 bombers sometime this decade. The planes are under development for the Air Force by Northrop Grumman.

Rounds said the Air Force keeps an eye on schools near bases.

"In some cases," he said, "the Air Force has challenged local school districts and said 'we will pull current operating programs if you don't maintain your school systems.'"

Rounds said a smooth transition to B-21s — which will eventually replace B-1 bombers at the base — is a matter of global security.

"The world is on fire right now," he said, referring to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Israel-Hamas war, and Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific.

He said the new bomber will instill fear in the nation's enemies.

"The rest of the world will once again recognize that we are not retreating, we are not going away," Rounds said.

As the base prepares for the arrival of the new bombers, the nearby Douglas School District is anticipating an influx of military-connected families, resulting in an estimated 1,500 new students.

Douglas Superintendent Kevin Case advocated for the funding request at the meeting, emphasizing the district's currently limited capacity and the need for new facilities.

Although federal and local contributions are expected to cover much of the \$62 million school construction project, the district is seeking \$15 million from the state to close the gap.

The committee ultimately decided to delay forwarding a recommendation to the legislative Executive Board. The decision came at the end of a meeting where members asked for more time to review the language of the request before submitting it.

Legislation that would have provided the money failed during last winter's legislative session. The next session begins in January, when the budget situation is expected to be tighter now that the state has spent all of the federal pandemic relief money that padded the budget for several years.

*Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.*



**A B-21 Raider conducts flight testing at Edwards Air Force Base in California.** (Courtesy photo)

## 'We have persevered': Biden will apologize for Native American boarding school history

BY: SHONDIN SILVERSMITH, ARIZONA MIRROR - OCTOBER 24, 2024 5:07 PM

For the first time in history, a sitting U.S. president is set to apologize to Indigenous communities for the role the federal government played in the atrocities Indigenous children faced in the federal Native American boarding school system.

The apology, which President Joe Biden will deliver Friday when he speaks at the Gila River Crossing School on the Gila River Indian Community near Phoenix, comes three years after Interior Secretary Deb Haaland launched the first-ever investigation into Native American Boarding Schools.

The final boarding school report provided eight recommendations from the Department of Indian Affairs for the federal government that would support a path to healing for tribal communities.

At the top of that list was a call for the United States to acknowledge and apologize for its role in the federal Indian boarding school policies that have harmed — and continue to harm — Indigenous peoples across the country.

"The president is taking that to heart, and he plans on making an apology to Indian Country for the boarding school era," Haaland said in an Oct. 23 interview with the Arizona Mirror.

Haaland said she has been pinching herself since she got the news that Biden planned on issuing an apology because of the work put in by so many people to shed light on Native American boarding schools and the lasting impacts it has had on Indigenous communities.

"It's incredibly meaningful," Haaland said, because, as part of the boarding school initiative, their department organized the Road to Healing tour, where they visited several Indigenous communities to hear stories about boarding schools.

"They were all heart-wrenching," Haaland said of stories that were shared by victims and their families. "We sat through so many testimonies from survivors and descendants, and I have a deep understanding of what so many people went through and what our community suffered from."

The Department of the Interior investigated the federal Indian boarding school system across the United States, identifying more than 400 schools and over 70 burial sites.

Arizona was home to 47 of those schools, which were attended by Indigenous children who were taken away from their families and attempted to assimilate them through education — and, often, physical punishment.

The legacy of the federal Indian boarding school system is not new to Indigenous people. For centuries, Indigenous people across the country have experienced the loss of their culture, traditions, language and land.

"This is an incredibly suppressed history that so many people didn't know about and now it's seeing the



**Pershlie Ami, a citizen of the Hopi tribe, shares her experience of attending Phoenix Indian School when she was a kid during the Road to Healing tour hosted by the U.S. Department of Interior at the Gila Crossing Community School on Jan. 20, 2023.** (Shondiin Silversmith/Arizona Mirror)

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light of day," Haaland said. "I have to believe that people will heal from what we've been able to do, and certainly hearing from President Biden, who has been the best president for Indian Country in my lifetime, say that he's sorry, it's beyond words."

Biden plans to visit Indian Country for the first time on Oct. 25, where he will issue that apology alongside Haaland at the Gila River Crossing School.

"Some of our elders who are boarding school survivors have been waiting all of their lives for this moment," Gila River Indian Community Gov. Stephen Roe Lewis said in a statement to the Arizona Mirror.

"It's going to be incredibly powerful and redemptive when the president issues this apology on Indian land," he added. "If only for a moment on Friday, this will rise to the top and the most powerful person in the world, our president, is shining a light on this dark history that's been hidden."

Haaland said Biden, being the first sitting president willing to apologize, helps Indian Country feel seen because the "horrible history" of Native American Boarding Schools and assimilation policies aimed at pushing Indigenous people out of their communities has been ignored "for so long."

"It was an outright assault and genocide that our communities went through for centuries, and we're still here," Haaland said. "None of anything that the federal government or anyone did throughout those centuries managed to eradicate us."

"We have persevered," she added. "I feel so proud the sitting president is acknowledging that. It's amazing, and I am deeply appreciative."

Learning that the president is willing to issue an apology, Indivisible Tohono Co-founder April Ignacio said that it is a historic event because they finally acknowledge the government's role in a national policy of forced assimilation against the first peoples of this land.

"Never in my life did I think we would be here," Ignacio said. "This apology is long overdue, and the impact the Boarding School era had on our loss of culture and language must be tied to immediate action through reparations."

In 2023, Ignacio said, Indivisible Tohono organized a caravan of 18 Tohono O'odham elders who were boarding school survivors and attendees to testify during the Road to Healing Tour organized by the Department of Interior.

Ignacio said she has five generations of boarding school survivors and attendees in her family. She shared her story during the Road to Healing tour.

"As a co-founder of Indivisible Tohono, I thank President Biden for his willingness to address the historical and ongoing impact of Indian Boarding School policies," Ignacio said. "This apology is consistent with President Biden's promise to honor sovereignty, and this historical acknowledgment will be a part of his legacy."

Praise for Biden's forthcoming apology is being shared by tribal nations across the country, including the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma.

"President Biden's apology is a profound moment for Native people across this country," Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. said in a written statement. "I applaud the President for acknowledging the pain and suffering inflicted on tribes and boarding school survivors, which is long-overdue."

Hoskin said that Oklahoma was home to 87 boarding schools, which were attended by thousands of Cherokee children. Today, he said, nearly every Cherokee Nation citizen feels the impact.

"Our children were made to live in a world that erased their identities, their culture and upended their spoken language," he said. "They often suffered harm, abuse, neglect and were forced to live in the shadows."

The Cherokee Nation is one of the largest tribes in the United States with more than 450,000 tribal citizens. About 141,000 of them reside within the tribe's reservation boundaries in northeastern Oklahoma.

"The significance of this public apology by the President on behalf of this nation is amplified and an important step, which must be followed by continued action," Hoskin said.

He said that the Department of Interior's recommendations in the boarding school report, especially those focused on the preservation of Indigenous languages and the repatriation of ancestors and cultural

items, can be a path toward true healing.

*Shondiin Silversmith is an award-winning Native journalist for the Arizona Mirror based on the Navajo Nation. Silversmith has covered Indigenous communities for more than 10 years, and covers Arizona's 22 federally recognized sovereign tribal nations, as well as national and international Indigenous issues.*

## Minimum wage in South Dakota will increase to \$11.50

**BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - OCTOBER 24, 2024 9:23 AM**

The minimum wage for non-tipped employees in South Dakota will increase from \$11.20 per hour to \$11.50 per hour on Jan. 1, according to the state Department of Labor and Regulation.

The minimum wage in the state is adjusted annually based on increases in the cost of living, as measured by the consumer price index published by the U.S. Department of Labor. South Dakota implements this annual increase due to a citizen-initiated ballot measure passed by voters in 2014.

The minimum wage for tipped employees will be \$5.75 per hour effective Jan. 1, which is half the minimum wage for non-tipped employees. Wages and tips combined must equal at least the minimum wage.

These increases will apply to all South Dakota employers, with some limited exceptions. For more information, visit [dlr.sd.gov/employment\\_laws/minimum\\_wage.aspx](http://dlr.sd.gov/employment_laws/minimum_wage.aspx).

South Dakota is one of 30 states, plus the District of Columbia, that has adopted a minimum wage higher than the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour, according to The Economic Policy Institute. South Dakota's minimum wage is currently the 25th highest in that group.



(Getty Images illustration)

## Nearly all grant money from state's \$200M housing fund is awarded; loan money remains

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - OCTOBER 24, 2024 7:00 AM**

A state board has awarded nearly all of the grant funding for the state's Housing Infrastructure Financing Program, while much of the program's loan money remains available.

The program uses a mix of state and federal money to ease the burden of high inflation for homebuilders and address a need for workforce housing. Lawmakers created the program in 2023, after legal wrangling held up the funds the previous year. It covers up to one-third of the cost of a development's roads, sewer lines, street lights and other costs associated with building new neighborhoods.

The funding pool included \$50 million in federal COVID relief funding for grants, \$50 million in state funding for grants, and \$100 million in state funding for loans.

There are just over \$1 million in remaining grant funds designated for Sioux Falls and Rapid City projects, but that's due to interest income rather than the original allotted amount of funding, said Chas Olson, executive director of the state Housing Development Authority. Two applications for projects in those cities are on the waiting list for the remaining funds, one of which will be considered at the next board meeting.

The authority's board awarded other returned and remaining grant funds to three projects at its Oct. 17 meeting.

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"We've had a couple projects on the waiting list in the event that additional funds become available," Amy Eldridge, director of rental housing development, told board members.

The board approved additional grant funding for Alpha Omega Subdivision in Box Elder, which was approved in September 2023 for over \$3 million in grant funding. Due to an increase of \$3.5 million in construction project costs, the project was awarded an additional \$520,873 in grant funding.

Another \$107,340 in grant funds were awarded to a housing project planned by the Pierre Economic Development Corporation, since its original project increased in costs by \$322,000.

The remainder of the grant funding was awarded to a new project: River Park in Brandon, to develop infrastructure for 174 units of multi-family housing and 265 single-family homes. The board approved grant funding for the project.

If any other grant funding is returned from other projects, River Park could receive that funding for its \$19 million project.

That's because the authority has to spend all of its federal funds, allocated from the American Rescue Plan Act, by the end of 2026 or return them to the federal government, Eldridge told board members.

The board also approved \$96,613 in loan funding for the Huron Cul-De-Sac, which was approved for \$269,667 in grant funding in November 2023. Project costs increased by \$289,836 since then.

About \$87 million in loan funds remains available, with around \$29.3 million earmarked for Sioux Falls and Rapid City and the remaining balance flagged for the rest of the state. The board has awarded about \$18 million in loans to 12 projects so far. The loan funds have grown with interest earned since they were established.

With 70 infrastructure projects in motion due to program funding – an estimated 12,000 new housing units statewide – developers and contractors are less interested in loan funds right now, Olson said. There is also anticipation that lower interest rates will come along from banks.

"As a result, contractors are occupied, and developers without ongoing projects might be waiting to see how quickly these new units are absorbed," Olson said.

## Projects that returned funding to the board

Seven projects that were awarded grant and loan funds returned some amount of funding to the board, totaling \$1.65 million in grants and \$2.17 million in loans. All of the returned grant funding was re-allocated at the Oct. 17 meeting.

Projects stalled and not proceeding:

City Springs – Vanocker Heights (Sturgis): \$2,140,000 loan funds returned

Stanley Township (Fort Pierre): \$705,000 ARPA grant funds returned

Rustler Lot (Miller): \$178,790 general grant funds returned

Stardust Subdivision (Mitchell): \$567,568 ARPA grant funds returned

Projects that came in under budget:

Freedom Estates (Box Elder): \$184,799 general grant funds returned

Kangas West Addition (Lake Norden): \$14,513 general grant funds returned

Liberty Park Phase 4 (Box Elder): \$29,124 loan funds returned

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



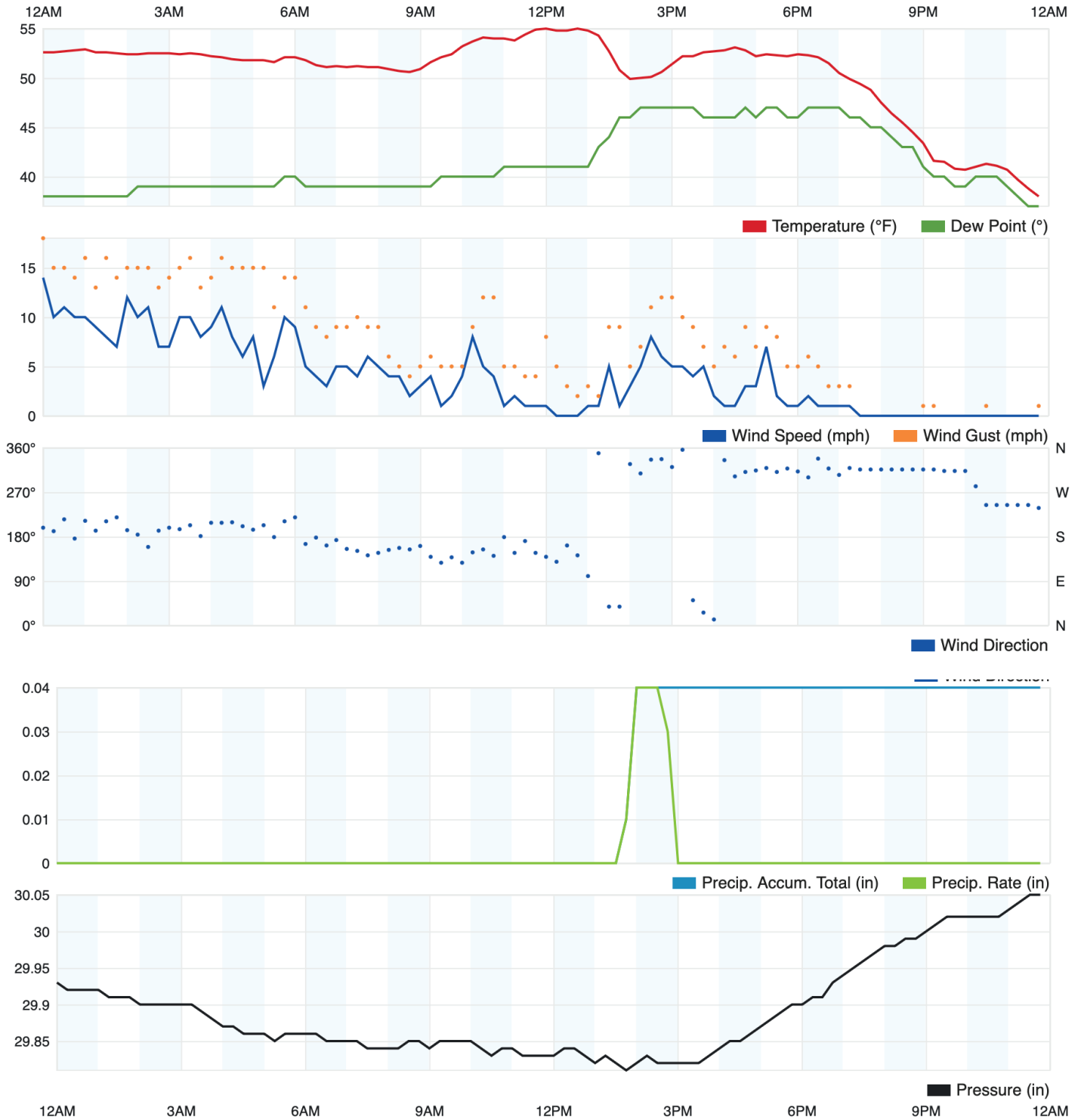
**Houses under construction.** (Getty Images)

grant funding of \$3 million, and \$3.6 million in loan

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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Today



High: 58 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 28 °F

Mostly Clear

Saturday



High: 61 °F

Mostly Sunny  
then Partly  
Sunny and  
Breezy

Saturday Night



Low: 37 °F

Mostly Clear

Sunday



High: 67 °F

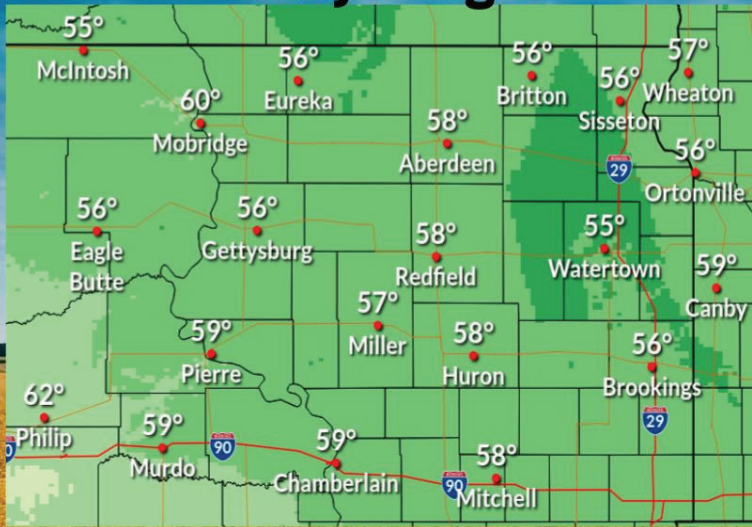
Sunny



## Dry Through The Weekend

October 25, 2024  
2:50 AM

### Today's Highs



### Tonight



Mostly Clear

Lows: 28 to 37°

### Saturday



Mostly Cloudy

South Winds 20 - 35 mph

Highs: 58 to 68°

### Sunday



Partly Cloudy

South Winds 15 - 25 mph

Highs: 65 to 74°

Dry weather continues, with warming temperatures. The increasing temperatures and winds will also increase the fire danger for the weekend. We will see increasing chances for moisture early to middle of next week.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 55 °F at 11:53 AM

Low Temp: 39 °F at 11:31 PM

Wind: 16 mph at 12:32 AM

Precip: : 0.04

Day length: 10 hours, 29 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 81 in 1989

Record Low: 10 in 1942

Average High: 54

Average Low: 29

Average Precip in Oct.: 1.83

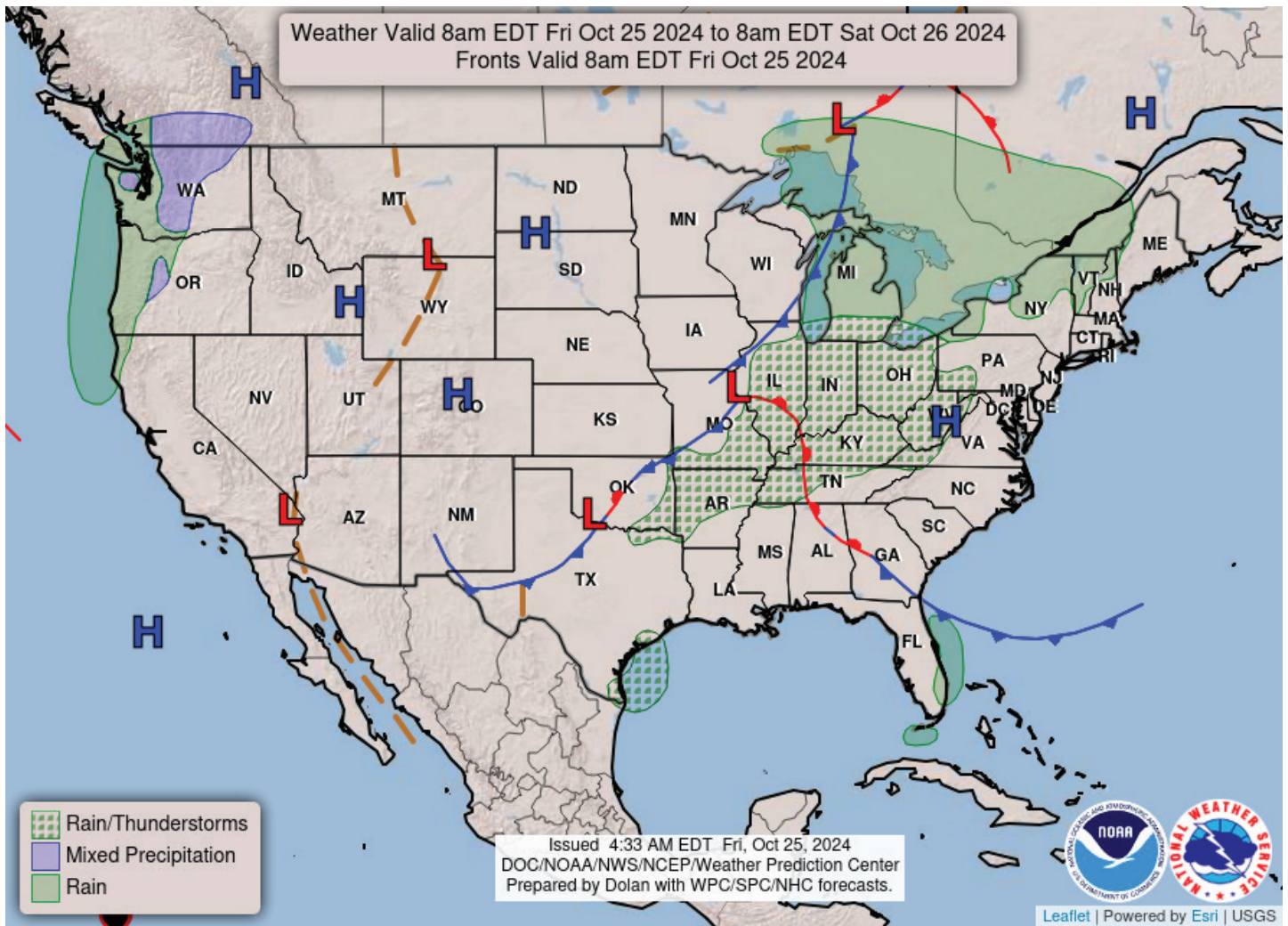
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.06

Average Precip to date: 20.16

Precip Year to Date: 19.81

Sunset Tonight: 6:31:05 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:03:02 am



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## Today in Weather History

October 25, 1954: A storm dumped snow over the region with the highest snowfall amounts at Devils Tower with sixteen inches. Other snowfall totals from the area included four inches in Colony and Faith, eight inches in Custer and Lead, and eleven inches in Spearfish.

1918: The Canadian steamship Princess Sophia carrying miners from the Yukon and Alaska becomes stranded on Vanderbilt Reef. A strong northerly gale hampers rescue attempts the day before. The ship sinks on this day, killing the 268 passengers and 75 crewmen on board.

1921: A devastating category 3 hurricane struck near Tarpon Springs, Florida. The storm caused 8 fatalities and is the latest in the calendar year a category 3 hurricane or stronger made landfall in the US.

1975: GOES-1, which was launched on October 16th, produced its first image of the earth on this day.

1977: Dutch Harbor in Alaska reported a barometric pressure reading of 27.31 inches (925 millibars) to establish an all-time record for the state.

1981 - A northbound tornado caused two million dollars damage to Bountstown, FL, in less than five minutes. Fortunately no deaths occurred along its six mile path, which was 30 to 100 yards in width. Radar at Apalachicola had no indication of a tornado or severe weather. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A storm system moving across the Saint Lawrence Valley produced 40 to 50 mph winds east of Lake Ontario. High winds downed some trees around Watertown NY, and produced waves seven feet high between Henderson Harbor and Alexandria Bay. Mason City IA and Waterloo IA tied for honors as cold spot in the nation with record lows for the date of 19 degrees. Severe thunderstorms in Oklahoma and northern Texas produced golf ball size hail and wind gusts to 65 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Severe thunderstorms erupted over northeastern Texas during the late evening producing softball size hail at Newcastle and Jonesboro. Low pressure over James Bay in Canada continued to produced showers and gale force winds in the Great Lakes Region. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Low pressure over Nevada produced high winds in the southwestern U.S., and spread heavy snow into Utah. Winds gusted to 63 mph at the Mojave Airport in southern California. Snowfall totals in Utah ranged up to 12 inches at Snowbird, with 11 inches at Alta. "Indian Summer" type weather continued in the central and eastern U.S. Twenty cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Highs of 77 degrees at Alpena MI and 81 degrees at Saint Cloud MN were the warmest of record for so late in the season. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003: A fire began in the Cuyamaca Mountains spread quickly due to Santa Ana Winds. As of 2017, this fire, called Cedar Fire, remains the largest recorded wildfire in California history, burning 273,246 acres.

2008: A storm packing winds of more than 60 mph hits central Alberta. In Edmonton, the strongest October wind ever recorded reaches 64 mph, cutting power to 4,000. The winds blow free sheet metal, parts of billboards, garbage cans, and pieces of trees around the city.

2017: The high temperatures in Denver, Colorado was 84 degrees. By the morning hours on the 27th, the temperature fell to 13 degrees, a 71-degree change.



Our Daily Bread®

Love God. Love Others.

## Running from God

Bible in a Year :

Jeremiah 6-8

1 Timothy 5

From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry.

Jonah 2:2

Today's Scripture & Insight :Jonah 2:1-10

Julie and Liz kayaked off the coast of California, scouting for humpback whales. Humpbacks are known for being active near the surface, making them easy to spot. The two women got the surprise of their lives when one surfaced directly underneath them. An onlooker caught footage of their encounter that showed the large mouth of the whale dwarfing the women and their kayaks. After briefly going underwater, the women escaped unharmed.

Their experience offers perspective on the biblical account of the prophet Jonah being swallowed by a "huge fish" (Jonah 1:17). God had instructed him to preach to the Ninevites, but because they'd rejected God, Jonah didn't feel they were worthy of His forgiveness. Instead of obeying, he ran away and took passage on a ship. God sent a dangerous storm, and he was thrown overboard.

God provided a way to preserve Jonah from certain death on the high seas, sparing him the far-worse consequences of his actions. Jonah "called to the Lord" and God listened (2:2). After Jonah admitted his wrongdoing and expressed his praise and acknowledgment of God's goodness, he was—at His command—expelled from the fish "onto dry land" (v. 10).

By God's grace, when we acknowledge our sin and express faith in Jesus' sacrifice, we're spared the spiritual death we deserve and experience new life through Him.

By: Kirsten Holmberg

### Reflect & Pray

When have you "run away" from God? How have you experienced new life through Jesus?

Dear God, I acknowledge my sin and thank You for providing for me a new life through Jesus.

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Groton Independent

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Groton, SD 57445-0034

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

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

10.22.24

8 43 48 58 60 4

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$229,000,000**

NEXT 17 Hrs 1 Mins 20  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

10.23.24

18 38 42 44 47 3

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$12,600,000**

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 16  
DRAW: Mins 20 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

10.24.24

2 4 9 29 32 8

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 16 Hrs 31 Mins  
DRAW: 20 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

10.23.24

10 16 17 31 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$73,000**

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 31  
DRAW: Mins 20 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

10.23.24

1 42 43 58 66 20

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 20  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

10.23.24

2 15 27 29 39 20

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$20,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 20  
DRAW: 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  
09/20/2025 NSU Gypsy Day  
10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm  
11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm

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

### Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Cheyenne-Eagle Butte def. St. Francis Indian, 25-13, 25-20, 30-28

Mahpiya Luta Red Cloud def. Little Wound, 25-21, 25-8, 25-23

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

### Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

Brandon Valley 28, Sioux Falls Jefferson 3

Brookings 40, Huron 14

Canton 37, Tri-Valley 34

Custer 69, Lakota Tech 16

Dell Rapids 26, Lennox 12

Madison 34, Milbank 6

Rapid City Central 35, Rapid City Stevens 33

Rapid City Christian 32, Belle Fourche 16

Sioux Falls Christian 22, Dakota Valley 20

Sioux Falls Lincoln 27, Harrisburg 17

Sioux Falls O'Gorman 42, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 0

Sturgis Brown High School 15, Spearfish 14

T F Riggs High School 34, Douglas 7

Tea 15, Sioux Falls Washington 14

Watertown 41, Aberdeen Central High School 14

West Central 43, Vermillion 6

Yankton 80, Mitchell 14

State Tournament=

Class 11B=

First Round=

Clark-Willow Lake 27, Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan 13

Elk Point-Jefferson 44, Flandreau 14

Mobridge-Pollock 36, McCook Central-Montrose 18

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 8, Wagner 0

Sioux Valley 47, Deuel 26

St Thomas More 40, Groton 13

WWSSC 14, Aberdeen Roncalli 13

Winner 38, Hot Springs 14

Class 9AA=

First Round=

Elkton-Lake Benton 54, Great Plains Lutheran 0

Freeman-Marion-FA 58, DeSmet 14

Hamlin 55, Waubay/Summit 0

Hanson 27, TDAACDC 26

Hill City 41, Bon Homme 20



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Leola-Frederick High School 22, Kimball-White Lake 14, OT  
Parkston 58, Stanley County 6  
Viborg-Hurley 28, Britton-Hecla 24  
Class 9A=  
First Round=  
Castlewood 22, Alcester-Hudson 18  
Dupree 50, Harding County 28  
Howard 60, Timber Lake 6  
Ipswich 44, Estelline-Hendricks 12  
Philip 44, Centerville 30  
Wall 52, Chester 0  
Warner 49, Gayville-Volin High School 6  
Wolsey-Wessington 50, Lemmon High School 20  
Class 9B=  
First Round=  
Avon 67, Jones County 6  
Canistota 44, Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 8  
Colman-Egan 52, Hitchcock-Tulare 12  
Corsica/Stickney 38, Herreid-Selby 6  
Dell Rapids St Mary 62, Irene-Wakonda 12  
Faulkton 44, Sunshine Bible Academy 0  
Kadoka 54, Burke 12  
Sully Buttes 54, Arlington 0

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

## President Biden to apologize for 150-year Indian boarding school policy

By GRAHAM LEE BREWER Associated Press

NORMAN, Okla. (AP) — President Joe Biden said he will formally apologize on Friday for the country's role in forcing Indigenous children for over 150 years into boarding schools, where many were physically, emotionally and sexually abused, and more than 950 died.

"I'm doing something I should have done a long time ago: To make a formal apology to the Indian nations for the way we treated their children for so many years," Biden said Thursday as he left the White House for Arizona.

Interior Secretary Deb Haaland launched an investigation into the boarding school system shortly after she became the first Native American to lead the agency, and she will join Biden during his first diplomatic visit to a tribal nation as president as he delivers a speech Friday at the Gila River Indian Community outside Phoenix.

"I would never have guessed in a million years that something like this would happen," Haaland, a member of the Pueblo of Laguna in New Mexico, told The Associated Press. "It's a big deal to me. I'm sure it will be a big deal to all of Indian Country."

The investigation she launched found that at least 18,000 children — some as young as 4 — were taken from their parents and forced to attend schools that sought to assimilate them into white society while federal and state authorities sought to dispossess tribal nations of their land.

The investigation documented 973 deaths — while acknowledging the figure is likely higher — and 74 gravesites associated with the more than 500 schools.

No president has ever formally apologized for the forced removal of these children — an element of genocide as defined by the United Nations — or the U.S. government's actions to decimate Native Ameri-

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can, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian peoples.

The Interior Department conducted listening sessions and gathered the testimony of survivors. One of the recommendations of the final report was an acknowledgement of, and apology for, the boarding school era. Haaland said she took that to Biden, who agreed that it was necessary.

"In making this apology, the President acknowledges that we as a people who love our country must remember and teach our full history, even when it is painful. And we must learn from that history so that it is never repeated," the White House said in a statement.

The forced assimilation policy launched by Congress in 1819 as an effort to "civilize" Native Americans ended in 1978 after the passage of a wide-ranging law, the Indian Child Welfare Act, which was primarily focused on giving tribes a say in who adopted their children.

The visit by Biden and Haaland to the Gila River Indian Community comes as Vice President Kamala Harris' campaign spends hundreds of millions of dollars on ads targeting Native American voters in battleground states including Arizona and North Carolina.

"It will be one of the high points of my entire life," Haaland said of Biden's apology Friday.

It's unclear what action, if any, will follow the apology. The Interior Department is still working with tribal nations to repatriate the remains of children on federal lands. Some tribes are still at odds with the U.S. Army, which has refused to follow federal law regulating the return of Native American remains when it comes to those still buried at the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania.

"President Biden's apology is a profound moment for Native people across this country," Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. said in a statement to the AP.

"Our children were made to live in a world that erased their identities, their culture and upended their spoken language," Hoskin said in his statement. "Oklahoma was home to 87 boarding schools in which thousands of our Cherokee children attended. Still today, nearly every Cherokee Nation citizen somehow feels the impact."

Friday's apology could lead to further progress for tribal nations still pushing for continued action from the federal government, said Melissa Nobles, chancellor of MIT and author of "The Politics of Official Apologies."

"These things have value because it validates the experiences of the survivors and acknowledges they've been seen," Nobles said.

The U.S. government has offered apologies for other historic injustices, including to Japanese families it imprisoned during World War II. President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act in 1988 to compensate tens of thousands of people sent to internment camps during the war.

In 1993, President Bill Clinton signed a law apologizing to Native Hawaiians for the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy a century earlier.

The House and Senate passed resolutions in 2008 and 2009 apologizing for slavery and Jim Crow segregation. But the gestures did not create pathways to reparations for Black Americans.

In Canada, a country with a similar history of subjugating First Nations and forcing their children into boarding schools for assimilation, former Prime Minister Stephen Harper made a formal apology in 2008. There was also a truth and reconciliation process, and later a plan to inject billions of dollars into communities devastated by the government's policies.

Pope Francis issued a historic apology in 2022 for the Catholic Church's cooperation with Canada's policy of Indigenous residential schools, saying the forced assimilation of Native people into Christian society destroyed their cultures, severed families and marginalized generations.

"I humbly beg forgiveness for the evil committed by so many Christians against the Indigenous peoples," Francis said.

In 2008, Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd formally apologized to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for his government's past policies of assimilation, including the forced removal of children. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern made a similar concession in 2022.

Hoskin said he is grateful to both Biden and Haaland for leading the effort to reckon with the country's role in a dark chapter for Indigenous peoples. But he emphasized that the apology is just "an important step, which must be followed by continued action."

## Forced assimilation and abuse: How US boarding schools devastated Native American tribes

By MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — The White House says President Joe Biden will apologize on behalf of the U.S. government Friday for its 150-year campaign to break up Native American culture, language and identity by forcing children into abusive Indian boarding schools.

More than 900 children died at the government-funded schools, the last of which closed or transitioned into different institutions decades ago. Their dark legacy continues to be felt in Native communities where survivors struggle with generational trauma from the torture, sexual abuse and hatred they endured.

Biden is expected to formally acknowledge the federal government's role and apologize for it during an appearance at the Gila River Indian Community outside Phoenix.

A closer look at the federal boarding school system:

150 years of forced assimilation

Congress laid the framework for a nationwide boarding school system for Native Americans in 1819 under the 5th U.S. President, James Monroe, with legislation known as the Indian Civilization Act. It was purportedly aimed at stopping the "final extinction of the Indian tribes" and "introducing among them the habits and arts of civilization."

Central to that effort was dissolving Native families and severing generational ties that had kept their cultures alive despite being forced onto reservations.

Over the next 150 years, government and religious institutions backed by taxpayer money operated at least 417 schools in 37 states. Staff at the schools worked to strip Native children of their traditions and heritage. Teachers and administrators cut their hair, forbade them from speaking their own languages and forced them into manual labor.

By the 1920s, most Indigenous school-age children — some 60,000 at one point — were attending boarding schools that were run either by the federal government or religious organizations, according to the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition.

The heaviest concentrations of the schools were in states with some of the largest Native populations: Oklahoma, Alaska, Arizona, New Mexico, Minnesota and the Dakotas. But the schools were in every region of the U.S. and students — some as young as 4 — were often sent to schools far from their homes.

The last of the schools opened in 1969, the same year that a Senate report declared the boarding school system a national tragedy. It found they were grossly underfinanced, academically deficient and had a "major emphasis" on discipline and punishment.

The forced assimilation policy was finally and officially rejected with the enactment of the Indian Child Welfare Act in 1978. Despite this policy shift, however, the government never fully investigated the boarding school system, until the Biden administration.

Survivors recount abuse

A nationwide re-examination of the system was launched in 2021 by Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, a member of Laguna Pueblo in New Mexico and the country's first Native American Cabinet secretary.

She and other Interior officials held listening sessions over two years on and off reservations across the U.S. to allow survivors of the schools and their relatives to tell their stories.

Former students recounted harmful and often degrading treatment they endured at the hands of teachers and administrators while separated from their families. Their descendants spoke about traumas that have passed down through generations and are manifest in broken relationships, substance abuse and other social problems that plague reservations today.

Haaland's grandparents were among them — taken from their community when they were 8 years old and forced to live in a Catholic boarding school until they were 13.

"Make no mistake: This was a concerted attempt to eradicate the quote, 'Indian problem' — to either assimilate or destroy Native peoples altogether," Haaland said in July when findings of the agency's investigation were released. The top recommendation from the agency was for the government to formally

apologize.

Unmarked graves and repatriations

At least 973 Native American children died in the boarding system. They included an estimated 187 Native American and Alaska Native children who perished at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in southeastern Pennsylvania. It's now the site of the U.S. Army War College. Its officials continue repatriations — just last month, the remains of three children who died at the school were disinterred and returned to the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation in Montana.

The Interior Department's investigation found marked and unmarked graves at 65 boarding schools. The causes of death included disease and abuse. More children may have died away from the campuses, after they became sick at school and were sent home, officials said.

The schools, similar institutions and related assimilation programs were funded by a total of \$23.3 billion in inflation-adjusted federal spending, officials determined. Religious and private institutions that ran many of the schools received federal money as partners in the campaign to "civilize" Indigenous students.

More than 200 of the schools supported by the government had a religious affiliation. The boarding school coalition has identified more than 100 additional schools not on the government list that were run by churches, with no evidence of federal support.

U.S. Catholic bishops in June apologized for the church's role in trauma the children experienced.

## **South Dakota committee endorses age verification requirement for porn sites**

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A legislative committee in South Dakota has endorsed a proposal requiring age verification before residents can access pornography on the internet.

The Artificial Intelligence and Regulation of Internet Access by Minors study committee said Wednesday that the goal is to protect children from pornographic content, South Dakota Public Broadcasting reported. The measure would be similar to a Texas law that's currently under review by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The South Dakota proposal would likely be introduced in 2025.

The state Senate earlier this year rejected an age verification requirement, but lawmakers established the interim study committee to examine the topic further.

"We heard from many parties and now have important amendments to make this a better bill. My goal all along was to find something that is constitutional and enforceable," said state Sen. Helene Duhamel, a Republican and a member of the interim committee.

The bill would require online platforms with pornography to add "reasonable age verification" methods to verify a person is at least 18 by showing a driver's license, military identification or bank account information. Companies would be prohibited from retaining identifying information.

The Texas law carries fines of up to \$10,000 per violation that could be raised to up to \$250,000 per violation by a minor.

Last year, a federal judge blocked the law's age verification requirement and health warnings, finding that they likely violated the U.S. Constitution. In March, a divided panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the age verification ruling, although it upheld the health warnings ruling that adult sites can't be forced to publish statements with which they disagree.

The health warnings, disputed by the industry, included that pornography is addictive, impairs mental development and increases the demand for prostitution, child exploitation and child sexual abuse images.

Similar age verification laws have passed in other states, including Arkansas, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Oklahoma, Utah and Virginia.

## 4 astronauts return to Earth after being delayed by Boeing's capsule trouble and Hurricane Milton

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Four astronauts returned to Earth on Friday after a nearly eight-month space station stay extended by Boeing's capsule trouble and Hurricane Milton.

A SpaceX capsule carrying the crew parachuted before dawn into the Gulf of Mexico just off the Florida coast after undocking from the International Space Station mid-week.

The three Americans and one Russian should have been back two months ago. But their homecoming was stalled by problems with Boeing's new Starliner astronaut capsule, which came back empty in September because of safety concerns. Then Hurricane Milton interfered, followed by another two weeks of high wind and rough seas.

SpaceX launched the four — NASA's Matthew Dominick, Michael Barratt and Jeanette Epps, and Russia's Alexander Grebenkin — in March. Barratt, the only space veteran going into the mission, acknowledged the support teams back home that had "to replan, retool and kind of redo everything right along with us ... and helped us to roll with all those punches."

Their replacements are the two Starliner test pilots Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams, whose own mission went from eight days to eight months, and two astronauts launched by SpaceX four weeks ago. Those four will remain up there until February.

The space station is now back to its normal crew size of seven — four Americans and three Russians — after months of overflow.

## International court prosecutor who charged Netanyahu faces sexual misconduct accusation

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and MOLLY QUELL Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — As the International Criminal Court's top prosecutor sought war crimes charges this year against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over actions in Gaza, he was engulfed in a very different personal crisis playing out behind the scenes.

Karim Khan faced accusations that he tried for more than a year to coerce a female aide into a sexual relationship and groped her against her will. He's categorically denied the allegations, saying there was "no truth to suggestions of misconduct." Court officials have said they may have been made as part of an Israeli intelligence smear campaign.

Two co-workers in whom the woman confided at the ICC's headquarters at The Hague reported the alleged misconduct in early May to the court's independent watchdog, which says it interviewed the woman and ended its inquiry after five days when she opted against filing a formal complaint. Khan himself was never questioned.

But the matter may not be over.

While the woman declined to comment to The Associated Press, people close to her say her initial reluctance was driven by distrust of the in-house watchdog and she has asked the body of member-states that oversees the ICC to launch an external probe. An ICC official with knowledge of the matter who spoke to AP on condition of anonymity confirmed that the request remains under consideration.

Those efforts were applauded by those close to the woman, who still works at the court.

"This wasn't a one-time advance or an arm around the shoulder that could be subject to misinterpretation," one of the people told AP, speaking on condition of anonymity to shield the woman's identity. "It was a full-on, repeated pattern of conduct that was carried out over a long period of time."

While the court's watchdog could not determine wrongdoing, it nonetheless urged Khan in a memo to minimize contact with the woman to protect the rights of all involved and safeguard the court's integrity.

Within days of the watchdog's shelving of the case, the court's work went on. Khan on May 20 sought arrest warrants against Netanyahu, his defense minister and three Hamas leaders on war crimes charges.

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A three-judge panel is now weighing that request.

U.S. President Joe Biden's administration said it was blindsided by the move, with the president calling the prosecution "outrageous" for implying an equivalence between Israel and Hamas.

In announcing the charges, Khan hinted that outside forces were waging a campaign to derail his investigation.

"I insist that all attempts to impede, intimidate or improperly influence the officials of this court must cease immediately," Khan said, adding he wouldn't hesitate to use his authority to investigate anyone suspected of obstructing justice.

The allegations

AP pieced together details of the accusations through whistleblower documents shared with the court's independent watchdog and interviews with eight ICC officials and individuals close to the woman. All spoke on the condition of anonymity due to the sensitive nature of the allegations or fear of retaliation.

Among the allegations told to AP is that Khan noticed the woman working at another department at ICC and moved her into his office, a transfer that included a pay bump. Their time together allegedly increased after a private dinner in London where Khan took the woman's hand and complained about his marriage. She became a presence on official trips and meetings with dignitaries.

During one such trip, Khan allegedly asked the woman to rest with him on a hotel bed and then "sexually touched her," according to the documents. Later, he came to her room at 3 a.m. and knocked on the door for 10 minutes.

Other allegedly nonconsensual behavior cited in the documents included locking the door of his office and sticking his hand in her pocket. He also allegedly asked her on several occasions to go on a vacation together.

Upon returning to ICC's headquarters after one trip, she tearfully complained to two co-workers about Khan's behavior and the anguish she felt for not standing up to a boss she once admired.

Those co-workers were shocked because Khan always seemed to show exemplary behavior around women and has been outspoken against gender-based crimes. They also weighed the accusations against the backdrop of well-publicized attempts by intelligence agents from Israel and elsewhere to penetrate the court, which created a work environment plagued by intrigue and mistrust.

But in the wake of the #MeToo movement, no powerful man is above scrutiny, and the co-workers complied with court workplace guidelines that encouraged the reporting of misconduct by senior officials.

After months of inaction and whispered rumors of a brewing scandal, an anonymous account on X called @ICC\_Leaks last week began bringing some of the allegations to light.

Israel's allies in the U.S. Congress have also seized on the would-be scandal. Sen. Lindsey Graham is seeking records about whether the misconduct accusations played any role in Khan's decision in May to cancel an aide's planned visit to Israel and move ahead with the war crimes charges.

"Another cloud — a moral one — hangs over prosecutor Khan's abrupt decision to abandon engagement with Israel and seek arrest warrants," the South Carolina Republican wrote in a letter to the court's oversight authority.

Khan, who is 54 and married with two children, said in a statement there was "no truth" to the accusations, and that in 30 years of scandal-free investigative work he always has stood with victims of sexual harassment and abuse.

Khan added that he would be willing, if asked, to cooperate with any inquiry, saying it is essential that any accusations "are thoroughly listened to, examined and subjected to a proper process."

Without naming any entity directly, he noted that both he and the court have been the target in recent months of "a wide range of attacks and threats," some also aimed at his wife and family. Khan's office declined to provide specifics because the incidents are under investigation.

A growing list of enemies

Under Khan, the ICC has become more assertive in combating crimes against humanity, war crimes and related atrocities. Along the way, it has added to a growing list of enemies.

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Last September, following the opening of a probe into Russian atrocities in Ukraine, the court suffered a debilitating cyberattack that left staff unable to work for weeks. It also hired an intern who was later criminally charged in the U.S. with being a Russian spy.

Israel has also been waging its own influence campaign ever since the ICC recognized Palestine as a member and in 2015 opened a preliminary investigation into what the court referred to as "the situation in the State of Palestine."

London's The Guardian newspaper and several Israeli news outlets reported this summer that Israel's intelligence agencies for the past decade have allegedly targeted senior ICC staff, including putting Khan's predecessor under surveillance and showing up at her house with envelopes stuffed with cash to discredit her.

Netanyahu himself, in the days leading up to Khan's announcement of war crimes charges, called on the world's democracies "to use all the means at their disposal" to block the court from what he called an "outrage of historic proportions."

The Israeli foreign ministry referred AP's inquiries about the case to the Prime Minister's office, which did not respond. The U.S. State Department declined to discuss the matter but said in a statement that it "takes any allegation of sexual harassment seriously, and we would expect the court to do the same."

The Dutch foreign ministry and several lawmakers in the Netherlands have called for an investigation into whether the Israeli embassy has been conducting covert activities against the ICC.

Who is Khan?

Khan, a British international lawyer, had a long history defending some of the world's most ruthless strongmen – including former Liberian President Charles Taylor and the son of the late Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi -- before being elected in 2021 in a secret ballot to become chief prosecutor.

The Rome Statute that established the court took effect in 2002, with a mandate to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide — but only when domestic courts fail to initiate their own investigations. Neither the U.S., Israel nor Russia are among the 124 member nations recognizing the court's authority, although their citizens can be charged with crimes committed in countries that are ICC members.

Still, Washington welcomed Khan's election, especially after he moved to "deprioritize" an investigation opened by his predecessor into abuses by U.S. military personnel in Afghanistan.

Khan also broadened the court's focus, bringing criminal charges for the first time against individuals outside Africa. He charged Russian President Vladimir Putin for kidnapping children in Ukraine and opened an investigation into Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro for his crackdown on protesters.

"He is by far the most professional jurist the court has had in its short history," said Kenneth Roth, founder and former executive director of Human Rights Watch. "He's articulate, sophisticated with the media and has extensive courtroom experience working with the highest standards of evidence."

But Khan's reputation with the U.S. came crashing down when he announced he was seeking the arrest of Netanyahu and Israel's defense minister for war crimes including starvation of civilians.

To insulate himself from attacks that he held an anti-Israel bias, Khan, a practicing Muslim whose father migrated to the UK from Pakistan, shared the evidence with a panel of experts including British human rights lawyer Amal Clooney, wife of actor George Clooney.

'Extreme fear' to report misconduct

Although the 900-employee ICC has long had a "zero-tolerance" policy on sexual harassment, an outside review of the court's inner-workings in 2020 found an unacceptable level of predatory behavior by male bosses, a lack of women in senior positions, and inadequate mechanisms for dealing with complaints and protecting whistleblowers.

"There is a general reluctance, if not extreme fear, among many staff to report any alleged act of misconduct or misbehavior" by a senior official, the review concluded. "The perception is that they are all immune."

Although the ICC's policies have been updated since the report, there's no explicit ban on romantic relationships like there is in many American workplaces. And while elected officials such as Khan are expected to show "high moral character," there's no definition of "serious misconduct" that would warrant removal.

"International organizations like the ICC are some of the last places where men in positions of power treat the organization like their playgrounds," said Sarah Martin, a gender equality expert who has consulted for several United Nations agencies. "There are so many complaints that don't even get investigated because there's a perception that senior officials protect each other."

People close to Khan's accuser say investigators from the court's watchdog — known as the Independent Oversight Mechanism — showed up for an interview at her home on a Sunday and asked for intimate details about her relationship with Khan as her child listened. Without any emotional support and wary of the process, she decided not to file a complaint at that moment.

In the weeks since, she's decided to go up the chain of command, reaching out to the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute, which oversees the court and has the ultimate say about Khan's future.

Paivi Kaukoranta, a Finnish diplomat currently serving as president of that body, did not comment specifically when asked if it had initiated a new investigation.

But in a statement she asked people to respect the integrity and confidentiality of the process, "including any further possible steps as necessary."

## Storm blows away from northern Philippines leaving 65 dead but forecasters warn it may do a U-turn

By JIM GOMEZ and HAU DINH Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Tropical Storm Trami blew away from the northwestern Philippines on Friday, leaving at least 65 people dead in landslides and extensive flooding that forced authorities to scramble for more rescue boats to save thousands of terrified people, who were trapped, some on their roofs.

But the onslaught may not be over: State forecasters raised the rare possibility that the storm — the 11th and one of the deadliest to hit the Philippines this year — could make a U-turn next week as it is pushed back by high-pressure winds in the South China Sea.

A Philippine provincial police chief said Friday that 33 people were killed mostly in landslides set off by Trami in Batangas province south of Manila. That brought the overall death toll from the storm to at least 65.

Eleven other villagers remain missing in Batangas, Col. Jacinto Malinao Jr. told The Associated Press by telephone from the lakeside town of Talisay, where he stood beside a villager whose wife and child were buried in the deep mound of mud, boulders and trees.

With the use of a backhoe and shovels, police scrambled to search into 10 feet (3 meters) of mud, rocks and debris and found a part of a head and foot that apparently were those of the missing woman and child.

"He's simply devastated," Malinao said of the villager, a fisherman, whose wife and child were buried in the landslide that happened Thursday afternoon amid torrential rains while he was away tending to fish cages in a lake.

"He's in shock and couldn't speak and we're only asking him to point to where their bedroom was located so we can dig in that part," Malinao said.

The storm was last tracked at dawn blowing 125 kilometers (78 miles) west of the coastal town of Bacnotan in northern La Union province with sustained winds of up to 95 kilometers (59 miles) per hour and gusts of up to 115 kph (78 mph). It was moving northwest at 25 kph (15 mph) toward Vietnam, which was forecast to be lashed by Trami starting on Sunday if it stays on course.

The Philippine weather agency, however, said it's possible that high-pressure winds and other weather factors in the South China Sea could force the storm to turn back toward the Philippines.

President Ferdinand Marcos, sounding exasperated, inquired about that prospect in an emergency meeting with Cabinet members and disaster-response officials Friday about the response to the widespread devastation.

"What is the forecast for that? Is it possible it would return?" Marcos asked.

A government forecaster told him Trami could turn toward the western Philippines early next week, but it's more likely to blow away from the Philippines again without making landfall.



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"It doesn't have to make landfall for the damage to occur," Marcos said, citing the continuing downpours set off by Trami in the Philippines.

Marcos also cited another brewing storm in the Pacific Ocean that could again threaten the country.

"Oh God, it is what it is. We just have to deal with it," Marcos said.

State forecaster Jofren Habaluyas told the AP that Trami's possible U-turn has drawn interest among government weather experts in Asia, including those from Japan, which has been providing information to the Philippines to help track the storm.

The 65 storm deaths included 26 villagers who died in floodwaters and landslides in hard-hit Bicol, an agricultural region and tourism destination southeast of Manila that is popular for Mayon, one of the country's 24 most active volcanoes that has a near-perfect cone.

Although Trami did not strengthen into a typhoon, it dumped unusually heavy rains in some regions, including some that saw one to two months' worth of rainfall in just 24 hours, inundating communities with flash floods.

Officials in Naga city, where 11 people died by drowning, and the outlying provinces of Camarines Sur and Albay pleaded for more rescue boats at the height of the onslaught to reach people trapped on the upper floors of their homes or on their roofs as floodwaters rose.

In the foothills of Mayon volcano in Albay province, mud and other debris cascaded toward nearby towns as the storm hit, engulfing houses and cars in black-colored mudflows.

More than 2.6 million people were affected by the deluge, with nearly 320,000 people fleeing into evacuation centers or relatives' homes, disaster-mitigation officials said.

The government shut down schools and government offices on the main northern island of Luzon. Inter-island ferry services were also suspended, stranding thousands.

In Vietnam, state forecasters warned of heavy rains in the central region. Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh ordered coastal provinces to stay vigilant, closely monitor Trami's course and brace for contingencies.

Last month, Typhoon Yagi battered Vietnam, killing 323 people and causing extensive damage valued at \$3.3 billion, according to a Vietnamese government report.

Each year, about 20 storms and typhoons batter the Philippines, a Southeast Asian archipelago which lies between the Pacific Ocean and the South China Sea. In 2013, Typhoon Haiyan, one of the strongest recorded tropical cyclones, left more than 7,300 people dead or missing and flattened entire villages.

## King Charles tells summit the past can't be changed as leaders ask Britain to reckon with slavery

By CHARLOTTE GRAHAM-McLAY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — King Charles III told a summit of Commonwealth countries in Samoa on Friday that the past could not be changed as he indirectly acknowledged calls from some of Britain's former colonies for a reckoning over its role in the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

The British monarch told leaders in Apia that he understood "the most painful aspects of our past continue to resonate." But Charles stopped short of mentioning financial reparations that some leaders at the event have urged, and instead exhorted them to find the "right language" and an understanding of history "to guide us towards making the right choices in future where inequality exists."

"None of us can change the past but we can commit with all our hearts to learning its lessons and to finding creative ways to right the inequalities that endure," said Charles, who is attending his first Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, or CHOGM, as Britain's head of state.

His remarks at the summit's opening ceremony were an acknowledgement of the strength of feeling on the issue in countries that Britain once colonized.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer also struck an emollient tone, after earlier insisting that the meeting should avoid becoming mired in the past and "very, very long endless discussions about reparations."

Starmer said at the summit that it was important to acknowledge a "hard" shared history, and that he understood the "strength of feeling here and that there are some calls to face up to the harms and injus-

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tics of the past through reparatory justice.”

Flanked by leaders from Uganda and Tanzania, Starmer said he wanted to work “together to make sure the future is not in the shadow of the past,” and promised to host a U.K.-Caribbean forum next year with leaders of the nations most impacted by slavery’s legacy.

Britain’s handling of its involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade is seen by many observers as a litmus test for the Commonwealth’s adaptation to a modern-day world. Other European nations and some British institutions have started to own up to their role in the trade.

“I think the time has come for this to be taken seriously,” said Jacqueline McKenzie, a partner at London law firm Leigh Day. “Nobody expects people to pay every single penny for what happened. But I think there needs to be negotiations.”

Such a policy would be costly and divisive at home, McKenzie said.

The U.K. has never formally apologized for its role in the trade, in which millions of African citizens were kidnapped and transported to plantations in the Caribbean and Americas over several centuries, enriching many individuals and companies. Studies estimate Britain would owe between hundreds of millions and trillions of dollars in compensation to descendants of slaves.

The Bahamas Prime Minister Philip Davis on Thursday said he wanted a “frank” discussion with Starmer about the matter and would seek mention of the reparations issue in the leaders’ final statement at the event. All three candidates to be the next Commonwealth Secretary-General — from Gambia, Ghana and Lesotho — have endorsed policies of reparatory justice for slavery.

Starmer said Thursday in remarks to reporters that the matter would not be on the summit’s agenda. But Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland told The Associated Press in an interview that leaders “will speak about absolutely anything they want to speak about” at an all-day private meeting scheduled for Saturday.

King Charles said in Friday’s speech that nothing would right inequality “more decisively than to champion the principle that our Commonwealth is one of genuine opportunity for all.” The monarch urged leaders to “choose within our Commonwealth family the language of community and respect, and reject the language of division.”

He has expressed “sorrow” over slavery at a CHOGM summit before, in 2022, and last year endorsed a probe into the monarchy’s ties to the industry.

Charles — who is battling cancer — and his wife, Queen Camilla, will return to Britain after visiting Samoa and Australia, where his presence prompted a lawmaker’s protest over his country’s colonial legacy.

He acknowledged Friday that the Commonwealth had mattered “a great deal” to his late mother Queen Elizabeth II, who was seen as a unifying figure among the group’s disparate and divergent states.

The row over reparations threatened to overshadow a summit that Pacific leaders — and the Commonwealth secretariat — hoped would focus squarely on the ruinous effects of climate change.

“We are well past believing it is a problem for the future since it is already undermining the development we have long fought for,” the king said Friday. “This year alone we have seen terrifying storms in the Caribbean, devastating flooding in East Africa and catastrophic wildfires in Canada. Lives, livelihood and human rights are at-risk across the Commonwealth.”

Charles offered “every encouragement for action with unequivocal determination to arrest rising temperatures” by cutting emissions, building resilience, and conserving and restoring nature on land and at sea, he said.

Samoa is the first Pacific Island nation to host the event, and Prime Minister Fiamē Naomi Mata’afa said in a speech Friday that it was “a great opportunity for all to experience our lived reality, especially with climate change,” which was “the greatest threat to the survival and security of our Pacific people.”

Two dozen small island nations are among the Commonwealth grouping’s 56 member states, among them the world’s most imperiled by rising seas. Her remarks came as the United Nations released a stark new report warning that the world was on pace for significantly more warming than expected without immediate climate action.

The population of the member nations of the 75-year-old Commonwealth organization totals 2.7 billion people.

## Erik and Lyle Menendez are a step closer to leaving prison, but freedom won't come quickly

By STEFANIE DAZIO, JAIMIE DING and CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Erik and Lyle Menendez still have a long way to go before they can walk out of prison, even though the Los Angeles County district attorney has recommended their life-without-parole sentences be thrown out and the brothers be resentenced and immediately eligible for parole.

The brothers, convicted in the 1989 killings of their parents at the family's Beverly Hills mansion, will need to get a judge to go along with the recommendation Los Angeles District Attorney George Gascón made Thursday and then a parole board must approve their release. The final stop is with Gov. Gavin Newsom, who could reject the board's decision.

It's an uncertain process likely to stretch out over months.

Lyle Menendez, then 21, and Erik Menendez, then 18, admitted they fatally shot their entertainment executive father, Jose Menendez, and their mother, Kitty Menendez. The brothers said they feared their parents were about to kill them to stop people from finding out that Jose Menendez had sexually abused Erik Menendez for years.

Prosecutors at the time contended that there was no evidence of molestation. The brothers' first trial ended in a hung jury, and prosecutors secured a conviction in the second after much of the evidence of abuse was disallowed from the trial. The district attorney's office also said back then that the brothers were after their parents' multimillion-dollar estate.

Now, the DA and relatives say the world better understands the role of trauma in sexual abuse cases.

Critics accuse DA of playing politics

Meanwhile, Gascón faces fights over his resentencing recommendation: His opponent in his bid for reelection next month, as well as some of his own prosecutors, have called the latest development in the case politically motivated and the result of a recent Netflix documentary about the notorious crime.

Michele Hanisee, president of the Association of Los Angeles Deputy District Attorneys, on Wednesday said Gascón's decision smacks of "opportunism" to get headlines.

"Throughout his disastrous tenure as DA, Gascón has consistently prioritized celebrity cases over the rights of crime victims, showing more interest in being in the spotlight than in upholding justice," Hanisee said in a statement.

But the district attorney said he made the final decision only an hour before Thursday's news conference and it was separate from politics.

Since their sentencing in 1996, the brothers have been model prisoners, Gascón and their attorney say, and committed themselves to rehabilitation and redemption.

"I came to a place where I believe, under the law, resentencing is appropriate," Gascón said during the news conference.

What comes next?

Gascón's office filed paperwork Thursday that recommends the brothers — now 54 and 56 years old — receive a new sentence of 50 years to life. Because they were under 26 years old at the time of the crimes, they would be eligible for parole immediately.

"I believe that they have paid their debt to society," the DA said.

A hearing before a judge could come within the next month or so. If the judge agrees to the resentencing, the state parole board will hold its own proceeding to determine whether they should go free. If the board recommends parole, Newsom would have 150 days to review the case. The governor could greenlight parole, or overrule the board and deny their release.

Despite Gascón's goal of freeing the brothers, Laurie Levenson, a professor of criminal law at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles, warned that the judge would not likely be a "rubber stamp" due to dissent within the DA's office.

"That puts the judge actually in a very challenging position," Levenson said, noting she had not heard of any cases until recently where the head of the office disagreed with other lawyers involved in the case.

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Ultimately, Gascón chose the “safest route” for his decision — leaving it up to the court and parole board, she said.

Mark Geragos, an attorney for the brothers, has said he’s hopeful the brothers could be freed by Thanksgiving. Levenson called that deadline “awfully hopeful.”

Family largely unites to call for brothers’ freedom

The brothers’ extended family has pleaded for their release. Several family members have said that in today’s world — which is more aware of the impact of sexual abuse — the brothers would not have been convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life without parole.

Anamaria Baralt, a niece of Jose Menendez, said the district attorney’s “brave and necessary” decision means “Lyle and Erik can finally begin to heal from the trauma of their past.”

Not all Menendez family members support resentencing. Attorneys for Milton Andersen, the 90-year-old brother of Kitty Menendez, filed a legal brief seeking to keep the brothers’ original punishment.

“They shot their mother, Kitty, reloading to ensure her death,” Andersen’s attorneys said in a statement Thursday. “The evidence remains overwhelmingly clear: the jury’s verdict was just, and the punishment fits the heinous crime.”

DA’s challenger weighs in

The LA district attorney is in the middle of a tough reelection fight against former federal prosecutor Nathan Hochman, who has blamed Gascón’s progressive reform policies for recent high-profile killings and increased retail crime.

Gascón said Thursday that his office has recommended resentencing for some 300 offenders, including people behind bars for murder.

Hochman questioned the timing of the Gascón’s announcement, coming less than two weeks before the election and calling it a “desperate political move.”

He said he is unable to form his own opinion on the case without access to confidential records and relevant witnesses.

“If I become DA and the case is still pending at that time, I will conduct a review consistent with how I would review any case,” Hochman said.

Geragos said the DA took the case seriously before there was any talk of him losing reelection.

New attention to case

The case has gained new traction in recent weeks after Netflix began streaming the true-crime drama “Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story.”

Roy Rossello, a former member of the Latin pop group Menudo, also recently came forward saying he was drugged and raped by Jose Menendez when he was a teen in the 1980s.

Rossello spoke about his abuse in the 2023 Peacock docuseries “Menendez + Menudo: Boys Betrayed.” His allegations are part of the evidence listed in the petition filed last year by the Menendez brothers’ attorney in seeking a review of their case.

Menudo was signed under RCA Records, which Jose Menendez headed at the time.

## Allies hope a Trump win changes the system for mortgages. Some warn it will make them pricier

By R.J. RICO Associated Press

If Donald Trump wins the presidential election, Republicans hope he will fulfill a longstanding GOP goal of privatizing the mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which have been under government control since the Great Recession.

But Democrats and some economists warn that, especially in this time of high mortgage rates, doing so will make buying a home even more expensive.

Republicans contend the Federal Housing Finance Agency has been overseeing the two firms far too long, stymying competition in the housing finance market while putting taxpayers at risk should another bailout

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be necessary, like in 2008. President Donald Trump sought to free the two companies from government control when he was in office, but Joe Biden's victory in 2020 prevented that from happening.

Democrats fear ending the conservatorship would cause mortgage prices to jump since Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac would need to raise fees to make up for the increased risks they would face without government support. The two firms guarantee roughly half of the \$12 trillion U.S. home loan market and are a bedrock of the U.S. economy.

Project 2025, a handbook for the next Republican administration, includes a key call for the conservatorship to end, though Trump has sought to distance himself from the 920-page document, which was drafted by longtime allies and former officials of his administration.

"If his (Donald Trump's) Project 2025 agenda is put into effect, it will add around \$1,200 a year to the typical American mortgage," Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris said during an August rally in North Carolina, building off of a 2015 analysis by economists Jim Parrott and Mark Zandi.

Parrott, a fellow at the Urban Institute, and Zandi, chief economist for Moody's Analytics, concluded that a privatized Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac "would need to hold more capital against riskier loans ... forcing them to either increase mortgage rates for these borrowers or lend less to them." Ultimately, they found that privatization would cause rates for 30-year mortgages to rise between 0.43% and 0.97%. Applying that to the average homeowner's mortgage balance of \$244,500 in 2023, that would be about \$730 to \$1,670 more per year.

Parrott told The Associated Press he was surprised to see his analysis resurfaced nearly a decade later, but he stands behind it. "Privatization would cause a pretty significant spike in the cost of buying a home for most Americans," said Parrott, who worked on the National Economic Council under then-President Barack Obama.

But to economist Mark Calabria, who headed the FHFA during Trump's presidency, those fears are unfounded and the federal government has what he considers a "statutory mandate" to return the companies to private ownership.

"I didn't find it to be a credible or compelling" argument, Calabria, now a senior adviser at the libertarian Cato Institute, said of Zandi's and Parrott's analysis.

Calabria said Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are much more financially healthy now and it's "completely doable" to remove them from conservatorship by 2027 once they raise the additional funds needed to strike out on their own.

"I don't think there should be any concerns that suddenly mortgages will become more or less expensive," Calabria said. "If you want to be able to strengthen our mortgage financial system so that we make sure that people are in reasonable, responsible loans and that we don't have to bail out the mortgage finance system again, we need to fix Fannie and Freddie."

Trump hasn't said whether he wants to revisit ending the conservatorship, but in 2021 he lamented to Republican Sen. Rand Paul that his privatization effort had failed.

"My Administration was denied the time it needed to fix this problem," he wrote to the Kentucky senator. The Trump campaign declined to comment Tuesday on whether Trump still wants to end the conservatorship.

Parrott said a key question is whether a privatized Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac would have a guarantee — either explicit or implicit — that the government would step in and rescue them if they failed.

How the Trump administration would handle that issue would dictate whether privatization is "only somewhat disruptive or dramatically disruptive," Parrott said.

Before they were taken over in 2008, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac were private companies but still enjoyed an implicit government guarantee — one that bailed them out after the collapse of the housing market and the wave of mortgage defaults.

The companies long ago paid back their \$187 billion bailouts and have given the government tens of billions more in dividends. But the bailouts enraged Republicans and many are loathe to reinstitute such a guarantee, arguing the government should not be spending billions of dollars in taxpayer money to save

mismanaged companies.

Without that guarantee, though, Parrott said there's an "enormous risk that the market will not accept Fannie and Freddie's privatization," throwing the housing finance market into chaos and preventing all but those with "pristine credit" from being able to secure a mortgage — something Parrott called a "worst-case scenario."

Calabria dismissed those fears and said there's no need for a federal guarantee. Other huge firms the government bailed out during the 2008 recession, including Citibank, AIG and General Motors, remain public companies and haven't needed a conservatorship, he said.

"The same set of law around Citibank exists for Fannie and Freddie — why are we treating them differently?" Calabria said. "There were implied guarantees behind the auto companies. We bailed out GM. Are people who are against the conservatorship ending also suggesting the government take over GM?"

With interest rates widely expected to continue to fall next year, Parrott believes those leading the Treasury Department under a new Trump presidency would realize the "market reality" that privatizing Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac will cause mortgage rates to bounce right back up.

For that reason, he's skeptical that privatization will happen, even if the failure to go through with the plan would anger Trump allies who hold large shares in the two mortgage giants and stand to get a huge windfall should they be privatized.

"It would be a pretty hard pill to swallow as president that you're going to have to tell homeowners that ... you're going to take steps that will crank the mortgage rate back up to where it was when everybody was in so much pain," Parrott said.

## **Biden heads to Indian Country as Harris steps up appeal to Native American voters**

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — President Joe Biden is at last making his way to Indian Country, paying a long-promised visit to a reservation in Arizona that Democrats hope could provide a boost to Vice President Kamala Harris' turnout effort in a key battleground state.

Biden's visit to the Gila River Indian Community's land on the outskirts of metro Phoenix will be his first to Indian Country as president — something he promised tribal leaders he would do nearly two years ago.

During the visit, Biden intends to formally apologize to Native Americans for the U.S. government's role in the abuse and neglect of Native children sent to federal boarding schools to assimilate them into white society, according to the White House.

But it is also a chance for Biden to spotlight his and Harris' support for tribal nations, a group that historically has favored Democrats, in a state he won just by 10,000 votes in 2020.

The race between Harris and former President Donald Trump is expected to be similarly close, and both campaigns are doing whatever they can to improve turnout among bedrock supporters.

"The race is now a turnout grab," said Mike O'Neil, a non-partisan pollster based in Arizona. "The trendlines throughout have been remarkably steady. The question is which candidate is going to be able to turn out their voters in a race that seems to be destined to be decided by narrow margins."

Biden has been used sparingly on the campaign trail by Harris and other Democrats since he ended his reelection campaign in July.

But analysts say Biden could help Harris in her appeal with Native American voters — a group that has trailed others in turnout rates.

In 2020, there was a surge in voter turnout on some tribal land in Arizona as Biden beat Trump and became the first Democratic presidential candidate to win the state since Bill Clinton in 1996.

Biden is making the visit in his official capacity and a formal apology — something tribes have long sought — seems certain to garner attention among Native Americans across the country.

At least 973 Native American children died in the U.S. government's abusive boarding school system over a 150-year period that ended in 1969, according to an Interior Department investigation that called

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for a U.S. government apology.

At least 18,000 children, some as young as 4, were taken from their parents and forced to attend schools that sought to assimilate them.

"President Biden deserves credit for finally putting attention on the issue and other issues impacting the community," said Ramona Charette Klein, 77, a boarding school survivor and an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa. "I do think that will reflect well on Vice President Harris, and I hope this momentum will continue."

She added that whoever is the next president must follow up with concrete action and begin making amends for the devastation the boarding schools wrought on tribes.

Democrats have stepped up outreach to Native American communities.

Both Harris and her running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, met with tribal leaders in Arizona and Nevada this month. And Clinton, who has been serving as a key surrogate for Harris, last week met in North Carolina with the chairman of the Lumbee Tribe.

The Democratic National Committee recently launched a six-figure ad campaign targeting Native American voters in Arizona, North Carolina, Montana and Alaska through digital, print and radio ads.

Democratic Rep. Ruben Gallego, who is locked in a competitive race with Republican Kari Lake for Arizona's open Senate seat, has visited all 22 of Arizona's federally recognized tribes.

Harris started a recent campaign rally in Chandler, near where the Gila River reservation is located, with a shoutout to the tribe's leader.

She also reminded the crowd that she was the first vice president to visit the Gila River reservation. She and husband Doug Emhoff visited the community last year.

"I strongly believe that the relationship between tribal nations and the United States is sacred ... and that we must honor tribal sovereignty, embrace our trust in treaty obligations, and ensure tribal self-determination," Harris said.

The White House says Biden and Harris have built a substantial track record with Native Americans over the last four years.

He designated the sacred Avi Kwa Ame, a desert mountain in Nevada and Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni-Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon in Arizona as national monuments and restored the boundaries for Bears Ears National Monument in Utah.

In addition, the administration has directed nearly \$46 billion in federal spending to tribal nations. The money has helped bring electricity to a reservation that never had electricity, expand access to high-speed internet, improve water sanitation, build roadways and more.

Biden picked former New Mexico Rep. Deb Haaland to serve as his Interior secretary, the first Native American to be appointed to a Cabinet position. Haaland is a member of Laguna Pueblo in New Mexico.

She, in turn, ordered the comprehensive review in June 2021 of the troubled legacy of the federal government's boarding school policies that is leading Biden to deliver the formal apology.

"He made commitments to Indian Country, and he has followed through on every single one of those commitments," Haaland said.

Thom Reilly, co-director of the Center for an Independent and Sustainable Democracy at Arizona State University, said both Harris' and Trump's campaigns — and their allies — have put a remarkable amount of effort into micro-targeting in Arizona.

Harris, Reilly noted, has also focused on whittling away at Trump's advantage among Mormon voters in the state, a group that historically has favored Republicans. Trump, meanwhile, has put special focus on young men as the campaign tries to narrow Democrats' advantage with younger voters.

"They are pulling out every stop just to see if they could wrangle a few more votes here and there," Reilly said. "The Indian community is one of those groups that Harris is hoping will overperform and help make the difference."

## AI-generated child sexual abuse images are spreading. Law enforcement is racing to stop them

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A child psychiatrist who altered a first-day-of-school photo he saw on Facebook to make a group of girls appear nude. A U.S. Army soldier accused of creating images depicting children he knew being sexually abused. A software engineer charged with generating hyper-realistic sexually explicit images of children.

Law enforcement agencies across the U.S. are cracking down on a troubling spread of child sexual abuse imagery created through artificial intelligence technology — from manipulated photos of real children to graphic depictions of computer-generated kids. Justice Department officials say they're aggressively going after offenders who exploit AI tools, while states are racing to ensure people generating "deepfakes" and other harmful imagery of kids can be prosecuted under their laws.

"We've got to signal early and often that it is a crime, that it will be investigated and prosecuted when the evidence supports it," Steven Grocki, who leads the Justice Department's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, said in an interview with The Associated Press. "And if you're sitting there thinking otherwise, you fundamentally are wrong. And it's only a matter of time before somebody holds you accountable."

The Justice Department says existing federal laws clearly apply to such content, and recently brought what's believed to be the first federal case involving purely AI-generated imagery — meaning the children depicted are not real but virtual. In another case, federal authorities in August arrested a U.S. soldier stationed in Alaska accused of running innocent pictures of real children he knew through an AI chatbot to make the images sexually explicit.

Trying to catch up to technology

The prosecutions come as child advocates are urgently working to curb the misuse of technology to prevent a flood of disturbing images officials fear could make it harder to rescue real victims. Law enforcement officials worry investigators will waste time and resources trying to identify and track down exploited children who don't really exist.

Lawmakers, meanwhile, are passing a flurry of legislation to ensure local prosecutors can bring charges under state laws for AI-generated "deepfakes" and other sexually explicit images of kids. Governors in more than a dozen states have signed laws this year cracking down on digitally created or altered child sexual abuse imagery, according to a review by The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

"We're playing catch-up as law enforcement to a technology that, frankly, is moving far faster than we are," said Ventura County, California District Attorney Erik Nasarenko.

Nasarenko pushed legislation signed last month by Gov. Gavin Newsom which makes clear that AI-generated child sexual abuse material is illegal under California law. Nasarenko said his office could not prosecute eight cases involving AI-generated content between last December and mid-September because California's law had required prosecutors to prove the imagery depicted a real child.

AI-generated child sexual abuse images can be used to groom children, law enforcement officials say. And even if they aren't physically abused, kids can be deeply impacted when their image is morphed to appear sexually explicit.

"I felt like a part of me had been taken away. Even though I was not physically violated," said 17-year-old Kaylin Hayman, who starred on the Disney Channel show "Just Roll with It" and helped push the California bill after she became a victim of "deepfake" imagery.

Hayman testified last year at the federal trial of the man who digitally superimposed her face and those of other child actors onto bodies performing sex acts. He was sentenced in May to more than 14 years in prison.

Open-source AI-models that users can download on their computers are known to be favored by offenders, who can further train or modify the tools to churn out explicit depictions of children, experts say. Abusers trade tips in dark web communities about how to manipulate AI tools to create such content, officials say.

A report last year by the Stanford Internet Observatory found that a research dataset that was the



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source for leading AI image-makers such as Stable Diffusion contained links to sexually explicit images of kids, contributing to the ease with which some tools have been able to produce harmful imagery. The dataset was taken down, and researchers later said they deleted more than 2,000 weblinks to suspected child sexual abuse imagery from it.

Top technology companies, including Google, OpenAI and Stability AI, have agreed to work with anti-child sexual abuse organization Thorn to combat the spread of child sexual abuse images.

But experts say more should have been done at the outset to prevent misuse before the technology became widely available. And steps companies are taking now to make it harder to abuse future versions of AI tools "will do little to prevent" offenders from running older versions of models on their computer "without detection," a Justice Department prosecutor noted in recent court papers.

"Time was not spent on making the products safe, as opposed to efficient, and it's very hard to do after the fact — as we've seen," said David Thiel, the Stanford Internet Observatory's chief technologist.

AI images get more realistic

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's CyberTipline last year received about 4,700 reports of content involving AI technology — a small fraction of the more than 36 million total reports of suspected child sexual exploitation. By October of this year, the group was fielding about 450 reports per month of AI-involved content, said Yiota Souras, the group's chief legal officer.

Those numbers may be an undercount, however, as the images are so realistic it's often difficult to tell whether they were AI-generated, experts say.

"Investigators are spending hours just trying to determine if an image actually depicts a real minor or if it's AI-generated," said Rikole Kelly, deputy Ventura County district attorney, who helped write the California bill. "It used to be that there were some really clear indicators ... with the advances in AI technology, that's just not the case anymore."

Justice Department officials say they already have the tools under federal law to go after offenders for such imagery.

The U.S. Supreme Court in 2002 struck down a federal ban on virtual child sexual abuse material. But a federal law signed the following year bans the production of visual depictions, including drawings, of children engaged in sexually explicit conduct that are deemed "obscene." That law, which the Justice Department says has been used in the past to charge cartoon imagery of child sexual abuse, specifically notes there's no requirement "that the minor depicted actually exist."

The Justice Department brought that charge in May against a Wisconsin software engineer accused of using AI tool Stable Diffusion to create photorealistic images of children engaged in sexually explicit conduct, and was caught after he sent some to a 15-year-old boy through a direct message on Instagram, authorities say. The man's lawyer, who is pushing to dismiss the charges on First Amendment grounds, declined further comment on the allegations in an email to the AP.

A spokesperson for Stability AI said that man is accused of using an earlier version of the tool that was released by another company, Runway ML. Stability AI says that it has "invested in proactive features to prevent the misuse of AI for the production of harmful content" since taking over the exclusive development of the models. A spokesperson for Runway ML didn't immediately respond to a request for comment from the AP.

In cases involving "deepfakes," when a real child's photo has been digitally altered to make them sexually explicit, the Justice Department is bringing charges under the federal "child pornography" law. In one case, a North Carolina child psychiatrist who used an AI application to digitally "undress" girls posing on the first day of school in a decades-old photo shared on Facebook was convicted of federal charges last year.

"These laws exist. They will be used. We have the will. We have the resources," Grocki said. "This is not going to be a low priority that we ignore because there's not an actual child involved."

## Harris, Beyoncé team up for a Texas rally on abortion rights — hoping battleground states hear them

By COLLEEN LONG, DARLENE SUPERVILLE and NADIA LATHAN Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris will team up with Beyoncé on Friday for a rally in solidly Republican Texas aimed at highlighting the perilous medical fallout from the state's strict abortion ban and putting the blame squarely on Donald Trump.

It's a message intended to register far beyond Texas in the political battleground states, where Harris is hoping that the aftereffects from the fall of *Roe v. Wade* will spur voters to turn out to support her quest for the presidency.

Harris will also be joined at the rally by women who have nearly died from sepsis and other pregnancy complications because they were unable to get proper medical care, including women who never intended to end their pregnancies.

Some of them have already been out campaigning for Harris and others have told their harrowing tales in campaign ads that seek to show how the issue has ballooned into something far bigger than the right to end an unwanted pregnancy.

Since abortion was restricted in Texas, the state's infant death rate increased, more babies have died of birth defects and maternal mortality has risen.

With the presidential election in a dead heat, the Democratic nominee is banking on abortion rights as a major driver for voters — including for Republican women, particularly since Trump appointed three of the Supreme Court justices who voted to overturn the constitutional right and he has been inconsistent about how he would approach the issue if voters return him to the White House.

Harris' campaign has taken on Beyoncé's 2016 track "Freedom" as its anthem, and the message dovetails with the vice president's push for reproductive freedom. The singer's planned appearance Friday adds a high level of star power to Harris' visit to the state. While in Texas, Harris also will tape a podcast with popular host Brené Brown.

There is some evidence to suggest that abortion rights may drive women to the polls as it did during the 2022 midterm elections. Voters in seven states, including some conservative ones, have either protected abortion rights or defeated attempts to restrict them in statewide votes over the past two years.

"Living in Texas, it feels incredibly important to protect women's health and safety," said Colette Clark, an Austin voter. She said voting for Harris is the best way to prevent further abortion restrictions from happening across the country.

Another Austin resident, Daniel Kardish, didn't know anyone who has been personally affected by the restrictions, but nonetheless views it as a key issue this election.

"I feel strongly about women having bodily autonomy," he said.

Harris said this week she thought the issue was compelling enough to motivate even Republican women, adding, "for so many of us, our daughter is going to have fewer rights than their grandmother."

"When the issue of the freedom of a woman to make decisions about her own body is on the ballot, the American people vote for freedom regardless of the party with which they're registered to vote," Harris said.

Harris isn't likely to win Texas, but that isn't the point of her presence Friday.

"Of all the states in the nation, Texas has been ground zero for harrowing stories of women, including women who have been denied care, who had to leave the state, mothers who have had to leave the state," said Skye Perryman, president of Democracy Forward, a legal group behind many lawsuits challenging abortion restrictions. "It's one of the major places where this reality has been so, so devastatingly felt."

Democrats warn that a winnowing of rights and freedoms will only continue if Trump is elected. Republican lawmakers in states across the U.S. have been rejecting Democrats' efforts to protect or expand access to birth control, for example.

Democrats also hope Harris' visit will give a boost to Rep. Colin Allred, who is making a longshot bid to unseat Republican Texas Sen. Ted Cruz. Allred will appear at the rally with Harris.

When *Roe* was first overturned, Democrats initially focused on the new limitations on access to abor-

tion to end unwanted pregnancies. But the same medical procedures used for abortions are used to treat miscarriages.

And increasingly, in 14 states with strict abortion bans, women cannot get medical care until their condition has become life-threatening. In some states, doctors can face criminal charges if they provide medical care.

About 6 in 10 Americans think their state should generally allow a person to obtain a legal abortion if they don't want to be pregnant for any reason, according to a July poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Trump has been inconsistent in his message to voters on abortion and reproductive rights. He has repeatedly shifted his stance and offered vague, contradictory and at times nonsensical answers to questions on an issue that has become a major vulnerability for Republicans in this year's election.

Texas encapsulates the post-Roe landscape. Its strict abortion ban prohibits physicians from performing abortions once cardiac activity is detected, which can happen as early as six weeks or before.

As a result, women, including those who didn't intend to end a pregnancy, are increasingly suffering worse medical care. That's in part because doctors cannot intervene unless a woman is facing a life-threatening condition, or to prevent "substantial impairment of major bodily function."

The state also has become a battleground for litigation. The U.S. Supreme Court weighed in on the side of the state's ban just two weeks ago.

Complaints of pregnant women in medical distress being turned away from emergency rooms in Texas and elsewhere have spiked as hospitals grapple with whether standard care could violate strict state laws against abortion.

Several Texas women have lodged complaints against hospitals for not terminating their failing and dangerous pregnancies because of the state's ban. In some cases, women lost reproductive organs.

Of late, Republicans have increasingly tried to place the blame on doctors, alleging that physicians are intentionally denying services in an effort to undercut the bans and make a political point.

Perryman said that was gaslighting.

"Doctors are being placed in a position where they are having to face the prospect of criminal liability, of personal liability, threat to their medical license and their ability to care for people — they're faced with an untenable position," she said.

## One year after a massacre in Maine, survivors and loved ones search for new beginnings

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

LEWISTON, Maine (AP) — Ben Dyer was shot five times during Maine's deadliest mass shooting, when a gunman killed 18 people at a bowling alley and a bar.

A year later, Dyer and fiancée Keela Smith want to turn the worst day of their lives into the best.

As Lewiston prepares to mark the grim first anniversary Friday, Dyer and Smith are looking ahead to the second with hope. Dyer proposed to Smith this spring, bolstered by a new outlook on life and determined to not hold back. They've chosen Oct. 25 as next year's wedding date, the same day as the shooting. They want to reclaim the day.

"So that we can always have it be a good reminder for us. Something that we don't dread every year, and that doesn't break our hearts every year," Smith said. "Because it will be 'Oh, that's our wedding day. That's the day that we took back, and we made it ours.'"

The couple, both 48, are among dozens of people directly affected by the shooting who are still trying to find ways to work through the physical and emotional trauma. For many, the anniversary is bringing back unwelcome memories.

The nightmares haven't gone away

"I have nightmares every day," said Megan Vozzella, 39, whose husband Steve Vozzella was killed at Schemengees Bar & Grille. "I'm always going to have nightmares. As we get closer and closer, I don't

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sleep well.”

Megan says her husband managed to crawl outside before he died. Thinking about him in pain and trying to hold on is what gives her the nightmares.

Vozzella, who is deaf, talks through a sign language interpreter. Her husband was one of four deaf people killed while playing cornhole at the bar. Megan went to the same school as three of them, and they all knew each other well.

Megan and Steve were two weeks away from celebrating their first wedding anniversary when Steve was killed. They'd met back in 2009 and got to know each other on a camping trip, something they continued to love doing together. They have a 13-year-old daughter, Bella. That night, Megan lost both her husband and a big part of her community.

“We thought we'd have a future, raising the family and growing old together. And they're just all gone,” she said. “The world is upside-down.”

### Lewiston plans ceremony to honor the victims

Lewiston is planning an anniversary ceremony Friday to honor the victims, survivors, first responders and others affected by the tragedy. The evening will include music, speeches and two moments of silence.

The shooting began just before 7 p.m. at the bowling alley, Just-In-Time Recreation. Armed with a semi-automatic rifle fitted with a scope and laser, Army reservist Robert Card killed eight people in 45 seconds. He then drove 4 miles to the bar, where he killed another 10 people. He later killed himself.

“We were just a group of people hanging out, doing something we love,” recalls Dyer, who was playing cornhole at the bar. “Eating snacks and food, having a couple of drinks, and throwing bags. And then, all hell broke loose.”

Dyer lay on the ground after being shot, trying to stanch the blood flowing from his right arm. He looked up to see Card staring at him. As the gunman took aim, Dyer raised his arms and ducked his head away, saving him from a fatal shot. He closed his eyes and tried not to breathe.

Dyer lost a finger and the use of his right arm. These days, he buys clothes that are a size too big so he can slide them on more easily with one hand. He's still figuring out how to cook and toss cornhole bags left-handed. Every time he looks at his scars in the shower or fumbles buttoning his shirt, he's reminded.

“I still live that day,” he said. “But I'm alive.”

### The Army and police missed chances to seize guns

In the months before the shooting, both the Army and police failed to seize Card's guns, despite knowing his mental health was unraveling and he was making ominous threats, an investigating commission found. About 100 survivors and relatives of the victims are now taking steps to sue the Army.

Since the shooting, Maine has strengthened its ‘yellow flag’ law and made other changes to gun laws. But it did not ban assault weapons like some advocates wanted.

The U.S. surgeon general in June declared gun violence a public health crisis. Dr. Vivek Murthy said Americans want to be able to go to school, the supermarket or their house of worship without worrying about getting killed. He called for a ban on assault weapons and large-capacity magazines for civilian use.

Dyer, who like many people living in rural Maine likes to hunt, said his experience hasn't changed his views on guns.

“Your car can be a lethal weapon if you want it to be, if you drove it into a parade and mowed people down,” he said. “So, my take on guns is no different. I still own them, and I still buy them.”

As Dyer speaks on the deck of his Auburn home, the sound of gunshots can be heard in the woods beyond. Dyer said the volleys don't bother him, as they're far away. In fact, he said, he's excited to learn how to hunt again, this time using only his left arm.

Like Dyer, Vozzella doesn't see guns as the problem, but instead blames failures in the mental health system. She remains angry at the police and military for not confiscating Card's guns before the massacre.

“They missed a lot of opportunities,” she said.

Vozzella's daughter remains fearful of going to school, worried a shooter might show up. It's been a rough year for both of them, Vozzella said, but they've found some solace by going on camping trips and

spending time with family and friends.

Vozzella shows the arm tattoo she got soon after the shooting -- a heart with angel wings and the inscription: "In Loving Memory Stephen M Vozzella."

"It's never easier," she said. "For the rest of my life, it's not going to be easy to keep going. But I'm slowly moving on every day and finding my new normal."

## **In a suburban Miami shopping center, Kmart's last 'Blue Light Specials' flicker**

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — The last Kmart on the U.S. mainland sits at the west end of a busy suburban Miami shopping center, quiet and largely ignored.

All around it are thriving chain stores attracting steady streams of customers in sectors where the former box-store chain was once a major player: Marshalls, Hobby Lobby, PetSmart and Dollar Tree.

But at this all-but-last outpost of a company once famed for its "Blue Light Specials," only an occasional shopper pops in, mostly out of curiosity or nostalgia, then leaves after buying little or nothing.

"I hadn't seen Kmart in so long," said Juan de la Madriz, who came to the shopping center on a recent weekday to buy dog food at PetSmart. The architect spotted the Kmart and wondered if he could find a gift for his newborn grandson. He exited 10 minutes later having spent \$23 on a stuffed dog and a wooden toy workbench.

"It will be sad if it closes," he said about the store, "but everything now is on computers."

The last full-size Kmart in the 50 states closed Sunday in Long Island, New York, making the Miami store — now a fraction of its former size — the last operating in the continental U.S. At its peak 30 years ago, Kmart operated about 2,500 locations. Today, four others remain: three in the U.S. Virgin Islands and one in Guam. There is also a website.

Transformco, the Illinois-based holding company that owns Kmart and what's left of another former retail behemoth, Sears, did not respond to email requests for comment or allow the store manager to speak. The company's plans for the Miami location are unknown — but there is no indication it will close soon.

The last outpost

If the Miami Kmart were a brand new mom-and-pop retailer, a shopper might think it could eventually thrive with advertising and a little luck. Kmart's long had a reputation for clutter and mess, but this store is immaculate and the merchandise is precisely stacked and displayed.

The size of a CVS or Walgreens drug store, the branch occupies what was its garden section during its big-box days. A couple years ago, an At Home department store took over the rest of the space.

"Get it all! Must Haves. Wish Fors. Friendly Faces," the sign next to the door reads.

Halloween and Christmas decorations line the entryway, next to the 30 shopping carts that no one is using. A robotic voice says "Welcome," as does a cheery employee, one of three spotted in the store. A lone customer checks out the Halloween candy.

Straight ahead are a few dishwashers, refrigerators, washing machines and dryers: the appliance department. In the store's main room, there is a large section of toiletries and diapers, a few hardware essentials and some cleaning and pet supplies. The toy department comprises a couple rows of dolls, action figures, games and squirt guns. Sun dresses, summer tops and sweatshirts make up the small clothing section. Oh, and there are snacks.

Also still present: a recorded voice intoning a once-familiar message over a loudspeaker.

"Attention Kmart shoppers," it says, announcing that almost all items are on sale.

If there were only customers to hear it, like there used to be.

A fast rise and a slow death

Kmart was founded by the retailer S.S. Kresge Co. in Michigan in 1962 and grew quickly, reaching 2,000 stores in 20 years. The company sold almost everything, from clothing to jewelry, TVs to dog food, appliances to toys to sporting goods. By the mid-1980s, it was the nation's second-largest retailer behind

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Sears, and there were stores in Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

The roots of Kmart's decline were laid during that decade when management bought Waldenbooks, Borders Books, Builders Square, The Sports Authority and a stake in OfficeMax, thinking the company needed diversification. They were wrong. By the late 1990s, the company had sold those retailers yet still needed \$5 billion in refinancing — the equivalent of \$9 billion today.

In 2002, Kmart declared bankruptcy as Walmart and Target devoured its market share. Its website never took off, allowing Amazon to beat it in the e-commerce space. There were executive pay scandals, a purchase by a hedge fund manager who stripped it bare and a disastrous 2005 acquisition of Sears.

Mark Cohen, a former Sears Canada CEO and former director of retail studies at Columbia University's graduate school of business, said Kmart would have thrived if not for the top executives who ran it into the ground. It could have been Walmart.

"It sold in its heyday things that people continue to buy in large quantities today," Cohen said. "Kmart went down the drain because it was led by incompetent managers."

Transformco bought Kmart and Sears out of another bankruptcy in 2019 for \$5 billion — its critics say mostly for the stores' real estate. There were 202 Kmarts remaining.

Over the past five years, the firm has kept closing Kmarts until all that's left in the states is Miami Store #3074.

Nostalgia does not translate into sales

On the day that de la Madriz dropped in to buy his grandson's gift, only a few customers trickled in and out of the store every hour.

College students Joey Fernandez and Wilfredo Huayhua spent five minutes inside before leaving empty-handed. They knew about the chain's near-demise, spotted the store while in the shopping center and went in to reminisce. It seemed small, they said, compared to the Kmarts they remembered.

"We were bummed out — I spent a lot of my childhood at Kmart," said Fernandez, 18. Still, he might be back — the store has good prices on the facial cleanser he uses.

Teacher Oliver Sequin had been entering Marshalls when he spotted the Kmart. That too triggered nostalgia, but also reminded him he needed Band-Aids for his 5-year-old son. That was all he purchased.

"I remember when Kmarts were bigger," Sequin said. "But, to be honest, I like this one better. It is clean and organized, not like they were."

## Progressives warn Harris must change her closing message as the election looms

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Progressive Democrats warn Kamala Harris risks losing the support of a small but significant portion of her political base unless she changes her campaign's closing message — and its messengers — immediately.

Specifically, several progressive leaders believe that the Democratic nominee has been too focused on winning over moderate Republicans in recent days at the expense of her own party's passionate liberals. And they say that Harris' closing message, which is increasingly centered on Republican Donald Trump and the threat he poses to U.S. democracy, ignores the economic struggles of the nation's working class.

Some far-left leaders are also irked that Harris has shared the stage in recent days with former House Republican leader Liz Cheney and billionaire businessman Mark Cuban while progressive icons like Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez have been relegated to low-profile roles.

"The truth of the matter is that there are a hell of a lot more working-class people who could vote for Kamala Harris than there are conservative Republicans," Sanders told The Associated Press in an interview Thursday.

Sanders noted that he's been doing whatever he's asked to help Harris win. He has participated in two dozen Harris campaign related-events this month alone, although they're largely in rural areas. None have been with Harris.

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"She has to start talking more to the needs of working-class people," Sanders said. "I wish this had taken place two months ago. It is what it is."

The Harris campaign believes there are still undecided moderates

Less than two weeks before Election Day, Harris is trying to assemble a sprawling coalition featuring voting groups with conflicting priorities.

She's relying on the traditional Democratic base — African Americans, Latinos and young people who overwhelmingly lean left. Harris' team is aware that some liberals are frustrated by her approach, especially on her support for Israel's war against Hamas. But the campaign sees a major opportunity to expand her coalition by winning over disaffected Republicans, especially college-educated voters in the nation's suburbs, who are uneasy about Trump.

From the Harris campaign's perspective, the focus on moderate Republicans at this moment is simply a matter of math.

The Democrat's campaign assesses that 10% of swing-state voters are still undecided or persuadable, according to an aide who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal strategy. Of that 10%, some 7% are considered "Cheney Republicans" who are receptive to messages attacking Trump, the aide said.

At the same time, the Harris campaign believes her chief political liability is the perception that she's too far left. Trump's allies are pounding the airwaves accusing the former California senator of being a "radical-left liberal." Therefore, she has been reluctant to appear with progressive icons like Sanders, a self-described democratic socialist.

Harris instead made three swing-state appearances this week with Cheney, a stalwart conservative who was a Trump ally before turning sharply against him after the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection.

Harris is scheduled to deliver a major address next week, a formal closing argument of sorts, focused on the danger Trump poses to U.S. democracy. She will deliver the speech on Tuesday at the Ellipse in Washington, the same location where Trump hosted the rally that preceded the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Progressives want Harris to talk more about the economy

Frustrated progressives do not discount the need to warn voters of Trump's authoritarian leanings, but some wish her closing message was more focused on addressing voters' overwhelming pessimism about the state of the economy and the direction of the country.

Adam Green, co-founder of the Progressive Change Campaign Committee, praised Harris' advertising team for "smartly" investing hundreds of millions of dollars behind ads focusing on grocery prices, taxing billionaires and Social Security — "things that both win swing voters and pump up the base."

But, Green said, "there's been an odd disconnect between the campaign's economic populist ad strategy and the event strategy that focuses almost exclusively on Liz Cheney kumbaya optics that depress the base right as voting begins and don't provably win more swing voters than bread-and-butter issues."

Other are frustrated that the Harris campaign hasn't featured progressive leaders like Sanders or Ocasio-Cortez in higher-profile spots.

Joseph Geevarghese, executive director of the progressive group Our Revolution, suggested that as many as 10% of progressives may not vote for Harris because of their frustrations. Some may not cast a ballot at all, he said, while some may even support Trump. The former president has called Cheney, a backer of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, a "stupid war hawk" as he tries to win over Arab Americans in Michigan angry about the more than 42,000 Palestinians killed in Israel's Gaza offensive.

"We just want to raise a red flag. Don't take the progressive movement for granted," Geevarghese said. "There's got to be an economic argument at the end of the day. That's the No. 1 thing that matters to voters."

Indeed, about 4 in 10 likely voters in a recent CNN poll said the economy was their most important issue when deciding how to vote, and about 2 in 10 said protecting democracy was. About 1 in 10 named either immigration or abortion and reproductive rights.

To be sure, Harris is not ignoring the economy or other progressive priorities.

She has outlined plans to crack down on price gouging by corporations to help reduce the cost of groceries in addition to reducing the cost of prescription drugs, cutting taxes on the middle class while raising taxes on billionaires, offering a \$25,000 tax credit for first-time homebuyers to help lower housing costs, and expanding Medicare to cover vision and hearing coverage, among other things.

Ocasio-Cortez made three stops in swing-state Pennsylvania last week on Harris' behalf. United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain, a key Harris ally, has also been a steady presence on the campaign trail.

Former President Barack Obama, still beloved by many progressive voters, has been active in the campaign's closing days. He headlined an event with Harris for the first time on Thursday night in Georgia.

Meanwhile, Trump is continuing to lean in on the issues that his campaign sees as his strongest: the economy and inflation, immigration, crime and foreign policy.

The Republican nominee is set to outline his formal closing message Sunday at Madison Square Garden in New York City that's expected to focus on average Americans' displeasure with the direction of the country. He begins virtually every rally with a variation of: Are you better off now than you were four years ago?

"Kamala Harris broke the economy. She broke the border. President Trump very clearly is going to fix the economy and fix the border," said Trump campaign senior adviser Jason Miller, who argued Harris, with her focus on Trump, wasn't talking about how she will make life better for the vast majority of Americans.

Harris acknowledged during a CNN town hall this week that some progressives may be unhappy with her leadership, particularly on Israel.

"But I also do know that for many people who care about this issue, they also care about bringing down the price of groceries," she said. "They also care about our democracy and not having a president of the United States who admires dictators and is a fascist."

## **Trump says China's leader will bully Harris 'like a baby' as his allies try to infantilize her**

By DAN MERICA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump said Thursday that China's leader would handle Vice President Kamala Harris "like a baby" if she's elected to the White House, as the former president and his top allies increasingly have moved to infantilize the Democratic nominee.

"If somehow Kamala wins, she'd have to deal with Xi Jinping," conservative radio host Hugh Hewitt said of the Chinese president. "How would he handle her?"

Trump replied, "Like a baby."

"He'd take all the candy away very quickly," Trump continued. "She wouldn't have any idea what happened. It would be like a grand chess master playing a beginner."

Trump has built his political career around name-calling, inventing jeers for his opponents going back to his first run for president in 2016, when he slammed Republican primary rivals like "Low Energy" Jeb Bush, the former governor of Florida, and "Little" Marco Rubio, the Florida senator. The former president also has a long history of belittling women.

But Trump has unleashed a special array of personal — often condescending — attacks against Harris, from calling her "lazy" — a word long used to demean Black people in racist terms — to insisting she's a "stupid person" and asking whether she is "on drugs." He's also called Harris, the first woman of color to lead a major-party ticket, "slow" and has accused her of having a "low IQ."

The latest line of attack, combining sexism and deeply personal jeers with referring to Harris as a child, comes with Election Day now barely a week off. His campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the remarks.

The former president, who has escalated his already dark and inflammatory rhetoric in the race's final stretch, spoke at a rally later Thursday in Tempe, Arizona, where he criticized Harris' handling of immigration. He accused Harris of perpetrating "a wicked betrayal of America" and having "orchestrated the most egregious betrayal that any leader in American history has ever inflicted upon our people," even though



crime is down.

During an evening event in Las Vegas, Trump compared Harris to "a vulture" in the way he characterized her approach to tax increases.

"Even after Kamala wrecked your economy with inflation, she came after you with tip income, like sort of like a vulture would do," Trump said. "If she gets four more years, Kamala Harris will pick your pockets."

Harris has offered her own share of insults against Trump, calling him "increasingly unhinged and unstable." During a CNN town hall Wednesday she also called Trump a "fascist." She was set to join a rally Thursday night in the Atlanta suburbs with former President Barack Obama and musician Bruce Springsteen.

In his Thursday morning interview with Hewitt, Trump said he watched Harris' town hall on CNN and described her as coming off "like a child, almost."

"She's an empty vessel," Trump said. "But she's beautifully pushed around by a very smart, very powerful, very liberal, viciously liberal but very, very smart, powerful party called the Democrats."

Some of Trump's allies have used similar attack lines. On Wednesday, former Fox News Channel host Tucker Carlson was warming up the crowd at a Trump rally in Georgia when he suggested that Trump was ready to punish the vice president.

"Dad is pissed," Carlson told the crowd. "And when dad gets home, you know what he says? 'You've been a bad girl. You've been a bad little girl, and you're getting a vigorous spanking right now.'"

## **Obama, Springsteen boost Harris as she warns of 'brutally serious' consequences if Trump wins**

By DAN MERICA and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

CLARKSTON, Ga. (AP) — Bruce Springsteen and Barack Obama lent their star power to Kamala Harris' quest for the presidency on Thursday, as the vice president implored Georgia voters to consider the "brutally serious" consequences if Donald Trump wins a second term in the White House.

Harris asked voters to imagine who'll be sitting in the Oval Office just three months from now and think about the new president's priorities.

"It's either Donald Trump in there stewing over his enemies list, or me working for you, checking off my to-do list," she said. "You have the power to make that decision."

The presence of Springsteen, whose career spans five decades, and former President Obama, still one of the biggest names in Democratic politics, highlights how Harris is leaning on some of the most noteworthy names in the party to help her deliver her closing message and lambast her opponent.

Obama, who got a rousing reception from the rally crowd at a packed high school football stadium outside Atlanta, told his audience, "I get why people are looking to shake things up, but what I cannot understand is why anybody would think that Donald Trump would shake things up in ways that are good for you."

Harris echoed that message in her speech, warning that "the consequences of him being president again are brutally serious."

The lengthy rally ran well behind schedule and seemingly took a toll on attendees. While the vast majority of seats remained full, hundreds of people streamed out of the event early as Harris spoke after hours of programming.

The other speakers wasted no time attacking Trump.

Obama argued his successor was always "trying to sell you stuff," was someone who only cares about "his ego, his money, his status," and regularly gives lengthy speeches that are "just word salad."

"We do not need four years of a wannabe king, a wannabe dictator," Obama said before offering Harris as someone "ready for the job."

After arguing Trump is focused only on himself, Obama added, "If you elect Kamala Harris ... she will be focused on you."

Springsteen, too, focused on Trump.

After a performance of "The Promised Land," a ballad off his 1978 album "Darkness on the Edge of Town," Springsteen told the Georgia audience he was backing Harris because he wants "a president who

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reverses the Constitution.”

“There is only one candidate in this election who holds those principles dear, Kamala Harris. She’s running to be the 47th president of the United States. Donald Trump is running to be an American tyrant,” Springsteen added before playing “Land of Hope and Dreams” and “Dancing in the Dark.”

The Trump campaign called Harris’ use of Obama and Springsteen “a desperate, last-ditch effort to salvage her spiraling campaign.”

“Relying on celebrities is nothing new for the party of Hollywood elites — and as voters realize the depths of Kamala’s incompetence and radicalism, she needs an added draw,” the campaign said in a statement.

Harris’ rally in Clarkston — an eastern Atlanta suburb — reflected the suburb’s reputation as the “most diverse square mile in America.” The community has taken in waves of immigrants and refugees, and 40% of its population was foreign-born in 2020.

The DJ working the crowd before the event started called out not only to graduates of historically Black colleges and universities, but to West Indians. Among those in the snaking line to enter were people of Asian descent and women in hijabs.

Many attendees said they were trying to push their relatives and neighbors to the polls to vote for Harris, either through formal volunteer efforts or on their own. “I decided to go volunteer because I couldn’t keep my mouth shut,” said Beverly Payne, who lives in Cumming, a Republican suburban stronghold north of Atlanta.

Payne said she is still working on persuading her mother but has already swung one Georgia vote to Harris. “My 85-year-old father has gone Democratic for the first time in his life,” she said.

Actor Samuel L. Jackson, director Spike Lee and actor and filmmaker Tyler Perry also spoke at the start of the event.

“No matter what kind of shenanigans, skullduggery and subterfuge, the okie-doke, we’re not going back,” Lee proclaimed.

Harris’ run of events with celebrities will continue Friday when she travels to Texas for a Houston rally with Beyoncé, according to three people familiar with the matter. The singer is a Houston native, and her 2016 song “Freedom” has become Harris’ campaign anthem.

While the Friday rally is in a red state that even the most optimistic Democrat knows the vice president is unlikely to turn blue in November, the event Thursday in Georgia highlights that state’s prominent place in her possible path to defeating Trump.

Democrats, led by then-former Vice President Joe Biden and Harris, won Georgia in 2020, becoming the first Democratic presidential campaign to win the Southern state since Bill Clinton in 1992. Harris’ campaign is hopeful she can keep the state blue in 2024.

Polls of likely voters in Georgia from NYT/Siena to Fox News to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution show a tight race between Trump and Harris.

Thursday’s event is the first in the campaign’s “When We Vote We Win” concert series that aims to encourage Harris supporters to vote before Election Day.

Harris is not the only member of the Democratic campaign to lean on star power in the final days. Gov. Tim Walz, her running mate, had events in North Carolina on Thursday alongside singer-songwriter James Taylor.

Democrats are known for leaning on high-profile surrogates in the final days of presidential races.

Springsteen has long been a supporter of Democratic presidential campaigns. The artist backed Obama in 2008 and 2012, even endorsing the would-be president in the contentious 2008 Democratic primary. He backed former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 2016, performing at a Philadelphia rally on the eve of Election Day, and endorsed Biden in 2020. The New Jersey artist endorsed Harris earlier this month, calling Trump the “most dangerous candidate for president in my lifetime.”

Beyoncé, too, backed Clinton in 2016, performing at an event in Cleveland alongside husband and rapper Jay Z just days before Election Day that year. And Taylor has become a staple at Democratic events and fundraisers.

But Clinton's loss to Trump in 2016, despite the considerable star power behind her, serves as a warning for Democrats that energy provided by big-name artists like Springsteen and Beyoncé is often not enough to win an election.

Harris campaign advisers, though, see events like those in Georgia and Texas as major moments to mobilize voter enthusiasm and get out the vote before Election Day.

According to the Associated Press count, 2,025,645 people in Georgia have already voted early in-person, while an additional 134,336 mail-in ballots have been submitted in the 2024 general election.

## The Dodgers and Yankees are ready for the starriest World Series in decades

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Even 8-year-old Charlie Freeman is excited about a Dodgers-Yankees World Series. "He's at Universal (Studios) right now with a couple of his buddies, but he goes, 'Daddy, I can't wait for the World Series to start tomorrow,'" Los Angeles first baseman Freddie Freeman said at the last workout before Friday's opener. "He's on YouTube and seeing all the videos about Yankees-Dodgers. So you're starting to get a hint of how big this could be."

This will be the 12th Dodgers-Yankees matchup and the first in 43 years. The rivalry dates to 1941, when the Dodgers were in Brooklyn and Joe DiMaggio's Yankees were seeking their fifth title in six years.

"You can be the best player. You can do whatever you want," Yankees star Juan Soto said, "but at the end of the day, people remember you because you won a World Series."

Broadway vs. Hollywood has produced the starriest Series in decades, if not ever. The League Championship Series had the highest U.S. TV ratings since 2017, and that's been dwarfed by viewership of the Dodgers from Japan driven by interest in Shohei Ohtani.

"You could easily argue that on a global scale, the Yankees and the Dodgers are the most followed, the most supported, the most visible," Los Angeles manager Dave Roberts said.

This figures to be the first World Series featuring five MVPs: the Dodgers' Ohtani, Freeman and Mookie Betts, and the Yankees' Aaron Judge and Giancarlo Stanton. There hasn't been even been a Fall Classic with four since 1971.

Ohtani and Judge are the likely MVPs this year, marking the first Series to feature both since San Francisco's Buster Posey and Detroit's Miguel Cabrera in 2012. This will be the first Series with a pair of 50-home run hitters in Judge (58) and Ohtani (54).

In an age of expanding playoffs, this is just the fifth World Series since the Wild Card Era started in 1995 involving the teams with the best records in each league.

"I'm sure I'm going to feel how special it is," Ohtani said through an interpreter.

Players practiced in 85-degree weather as the sun highlighted Dodger Stadium's sky blue, yellow, light orange and sea foam green seats. Freeman, slowed by a bad ankle, insisted he will be in the lineup for the opener.

While the Dodgers are seeking their eighth title and second in five years, the Yankees are in the World Series for the first time since winning No. 27 in 2009.

"This is where the real fun starts," Judge said.

Judge realizes a title is necessary for membership among the Yankees' greats.

"They definitely got a different aura walking around here when you got a couple of rings on your fingers," he said. "I think that's the biggest thing, is that you see that they're battle-tested. They've been through the grind. They've been through the ups and downs and they came out on top."

Old rivals

Roberts and Yankees manager Aaron Boone have faced each other since April 3, 1992, when Roberts' UCLA Bruins beat Boone's Southern California Trojans' 11-1 UCLA's Jackie Robinson Stadium.

"As we all know in here, you're a Trojan for life. You're a Bruin for four years," Boone said playfully.

Told of Boone's shot, Roberts said: "Ouch! That hurts" and "absolutely disagree, 100 percent."

Boone texted a Yankees emoji to Roberts when New York's charter flight landed Wednesday. "There was another emoji I thought about sending him with one finger, but I didn't," Roberts said. "I just gave a laughing emoji back."

For starters

Dodgers starter Jack Flaherty, who starts the opener against the Yankees' Gerrit Cole, was high school teammates with Max Fried and Lucas Giolito at Harvard-Westlake School in Los Angeles. Three years ago, Flaherty was at Houston's Minute Maid Park for World Series Game 6 along with Giolito to watch Fried get the win that finished off the Atlanta Braves' World Series title.

"It's a funny feeling watching that," Flaherty said, "because you're excited for one of your best friends and you're incredibly happy for him, also at that same moment you're a competitor and you want to be in that situation, you want to be on the field."

Flaherty is 1-2 with a 7.04 ERA in three postseason starts this year. Cole is 1-1 with a 3.31 ERA in three starts.

Like Roberts, Cole went to UCLA. The pitcher's college rooting aligns more with the Dodgers manager than his own.

"Aaron and I don't always agree on everything," he said.

Memories

Yankees owner Hal Steinbrenner was 7 years old in 1977 when the Yankees won their first title under his father, George. New York clinched the title over the Dodgers with a Game 6 win in the Bronx as Reggie Jackson hit three homers on three straight swings.

"I'd say my two most prevalent memories are Reggie's third home run, and of course the final popup that was caught by (Mike) Torrez and the pandemonium that ensued," he recalled this week. "Was a great day!"

## Prosecutors seek resentencing for Erik and Lyle Menendez in 1989 killings of their parents

By STEFANIE DAZIO, JAIMIE DING and CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Prosecutors recommended Thursday Erik and Lyle Menendez be resentenced for the 1989 killings of their parents in the family's Beverly Hills home, providing the brothers with a chance at freedom after 34 years behind bars.

Los Angeles County District Attorney George Gascón announced during a Thursday news conference that his office would recommend the brothers receive a new sentence of 50 years to life. Because they were under 26 years old at the time of the crimes, they would be eligible for parole immediately, he said.

Resentencing must now be approved by a judge, and the state parole board would have to sign off on the brothers' release.

"I came to a place where I believe, under the law, resentencing is appropriate," Gascón said. He said some members of his office oppose the decision.

Prosecutors filed the petition Thursday and a hearing before a judge could come within the next month or so.

The Menendez brothers were sentenced in 1996 to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Lyle Menendez, then 21, and Erik Menendez, then 18, admitted they fatally shot their entertainment executive father, Jose Menendez, and their mother, Kitty Menendez. The brothers said they feared their parents were about to kill them to stop people from finding out that Jose Menendez had sexually abused Erik Menendez for years.

Family largely unites to call for brothers' freedom

The brothers' extended family has pleaded for their release, saying they deserve to be free after decades behind bars. Several family members have said that in today's world — which is more aware of the impact of sexual abuse — the brothers would not have been convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life.

Multiple members of their extended family, including their aunt Joan Andersen VanderMolen, sat in the first few rows of Thursday's news conference. VanderMolen was Kitty Menendez's sister and has publicly

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supported their release. Family members said they flew across the country on six hours' notice to be in attendance.

Mark Geragos, an attorney for the brothers, would not say whether he had spoken to Lyle and Erik on Thursday but said he believes they have heard about the district attorney's decision. Geragos said a "re-entry plan" has already been drafted if the brothers get released to help them reacclimate to being free.

Anamaria Baralt, a niece of Jose Menendez, said the district attorney's "brave and necessary" decision means "Lyle and Erik can finally begin to heal from the trauma of their past."

Not all Menendez family members support resentencing. Attorneys for Milton Andersen, the 90-year-old brother of Kitty Menendez, filed a legal brief asking the court to keep the brothers' original punishment. "They shot their mother, Kitty, reloading to ensure her death," Andersen's attorneys said in a statement Thursday. "The evidence remains overwhelmingly clear: the jury's verdict was just, and the punishment fits the heinous crime."

Geragos declined to comment on the statement by Andersen's attorneys.

District attorney believes Erik and Lyle 'paid their debt'

Gascón said he made the final decision only an hour before the news conference and that family members were told just minutes before.

Despite their life sentences, Gascón said the brothers worked on redemption and rehabilitation inside prison.

"I believe that they have paid their debt to society," he said.

Though Kitty Menendez was not accused of abusing her sons, she appears to have facilitated the abuse, according to her sons' legal filings. One cousin testified during the brothers' first trial that Lyle told her he was too scared to sleep in his room because his father would come in and touch his genitals. When the cousin told Kitty Menendez, she "angrily dragged Lyle upstairs by his arm," the petition said.

Another family member testified that when Jose Menendez was in the bedroom with one of the boys, no one was allowed to walk down the hallway outside.

The Menendez brothers were tried twice for their parents' murders, with the first trial ending in a hung jury.

Prosecutors at the time contended that there was no evidence of molestation, and many details in the story of sexual abuse were not permitted in the second trial. The district attorney's office also said back then that the brothers were after their parents' multimillion-dollar estate.

How Los Angeles politics could play a role

The LA district attorney is in the middle of a tough reelection fight against former federal prosecutor Nathan Hochman, who has blamed Gascón's progressive reform policies for recent high-profile murders and increased retail crime.

Gascón said Thursday that his office has recommended resentencing for some 300 offenders, including people behind bars for murder.

Hochman on Thursday questioned the timing of the Gascón's announcement, coming less than two weeks before the election and calling it a "desperate political move."

He said he is unable to form his own opinion on the case without access to confidential records and relevant witnesses.

"If I become DA and the case is still pending at that time, I will conduct a review consistent with how I would review any case," Hochman said.

Geragos said the DA took the case seriously long before there was any talk of him losing reelection.

Laurie Levenson, a professor of criminal law at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles, warned that the judge would not likely be a "rubber stamp" on the resentencing recommendation due to dissent within Gascón's office.

"That puts the judge actually in a very challenging position," Levenson said, who noted that she had not heard of any cases until recently where the head of the office disagreed with other lawyers involved in the case. Ultimately, Gascón chose the "safest route" for his decision — leaving it up to the court and parole board, she said.

Geragos has said he's hopeful the brothers could be freed by Thanksgiving. Levenson called that deadline "awfully hopeful."

Recent documents bring new attention to case

The Menendez case has gained new traction in recent weeks after Netflix began streaming the true-crime drama "Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story."

Roy Rossello, a former member of the Latin pop group Menudo, also recently came forward saying he was drugged and raped by Jose Menendez, the boys' father, when he was a teen in the 1980s.

Rossello spoke about his abuse in the 2023 Peacock docuseries "Menendez + Menudo: Boys Betrayed." His allegations are part of the evidence listed in the petition filed last year by the Menendez brothers' attorney, seeking a review of their case. Rossello's assertion that he was raped twice by Jose Menendez is part of the Menendez brothers' petition.

Menudo was signed under RCA Records, which Jose Menendez headed at the time.

## **Thousands were adopted to the US but not made citizens. Decades later, they risk being deported**

By CLAIRE GALOFARO and KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

The United States has brought hundreds of thousands of children from abroad to be adopted by American families. But along the way it left thousands of them without citizenship, through a bureaucratic loophole that the government has been aware of for decades, and hasn't fixed.

Some of these adoptees live in hiding, fearing that tipping off the government could prompt their removal back to the country the U.S. claimed to have rescued them from. Some have already been deported.

A bill to help them has been introduced in Congress for a decade, and is supported by a rare bipartisan coalition — from liberal immigration groups to the Southern Baptist Convention. But it hasn't passed. Advocates blame the hyper-partisan frenzy over immigration that has stalled any effort to extend citizenship to anyone, even these adoptees who are legally the children of American parents.

They say they are terrified about what could happen if former President Donald Trump is reelected because he has promised massive immigration raids and detention camps.

Here are the findings of the AP report:

How did this happen?

The modern system of intercountry adoption emerged in the aftermath of the Korean War. American families were desperate for children because access to birth control and societal changes had caused the domestic supply of adoptable babies to plummet. Korea wanted to rid itself of mouths to feed.

Adoption agencies rushed to meet intense demand for babies in the United States. But there were few protections to ensure that parents were able to take care of them, and that they acquired citizenship.

The U.S. had wedged foreign adoptions into a system created for domestic ones. State courts give adopted children new birth certificates that list their adoptive parents' names, purporting to give them all the privileges of biological children.

But state courts have no control over immigration. After the expensive, long process of adoption, parents were supposed to naturalize their adopted children, but some never did.

Has the U.S. tried to rectify this?

In 2000, U.S. Congress recognized it had left adoptees in this legal limbo and passed the Child Citizenship Act, conferring automatic citizenship to adopted children. But it was designed to streamline the process for adoptive parents, not to help adoptees, and so applied only to those under 18 when it took effect. Everyone born before the arbitrary date of Feb. 27, 1983, was not included. Estimates for how many lack citizenship range from around 15,000 to 75,000.

Efforts since to close that loophole have failed.

"It's the most classic example of wanting to bang your head against the wall, because how in the world have we not fixed this?" said Hannah Daniel, director of public policy for the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, the lobbying arm of the Southern Baptist Convention. Foreign adoption is particularly poignant

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for Evangelical churches, which preach it as a Biblical calling.

“In this day and age in Congress, if not doing anything is an option,” Daniel said, “that is the bet I’m going to take.”

How do adoptees find out they aren’t citizens?

There is no government mechanism for alerting adoptees that their parents did not secure their citizenship. They usually find out by accident, when applying for passports or government benefits. One woman learned as a senior citizen, when she was denied the Social Security she’d paid into all her life. If they ask the government about their status, they risk tipping authorities off to them being here illegally.

For some, their legal status is fixable through the arduous naturalization process — they have to join the line as though they’d just arrived. It takes years, thousands of dollars, wasted days, routine rejections from immigration offices on technicalities, the wrong form, an errant typo. But others are told there’s nothing that can be done. The difference is in visas: Some American parents brought babies in via the fastest route — like a tourist or medical visa — not imagining complications down the road. This was particularly prominent in military families, who adopted children where they were rather than going through an adoption agency that brought them to the U.S.

Their status can mean they can’t get jobs or driver’s licenses, and some aren’t eligible for government benefits like financial aid and Social Security. Some who have criminal histories, even drug charges, have been deported back to the countries where their American parents adopted them from.

How are the adoptees affected?

— One was brought from Iran by her father, an Air Force veteran working there as a military contractor in 1972. She works in corporate health care, owns her own home and has never been in trouble. She is in her 50s, and she doesn’t know if she’ll be eligible for Social Security or other benefits. She lives in fear that the government will come for her.

— Joy Alessi was adopted from Korea as a 7-month-old in 1967. She learned as an adult that her parents never naturalized her, and she lived in hiding for decades. She was finally naturalized in 2019 at 52 years old. She says she was deprived all those years of what American citizens take for granted, like educational loans.

— Mike Davis was adopted to the United States from Ethiopia in the 1970s by his father, an American soldier. Davis, now 61, got into trouble with drugs as a young man, but then grew up, got married and had children. Years later, he was deported. Without him as breadwinner, the family lived in cars and motels, and are desperate to bring him home. He’s lived in Ethiopia for two decades now, in a room with a mud floor and no running water.

— Leah Elmquist served for a decade in the U.S. Navy, but she wasn’t a citizen. She was adopted from South Korea as a baby in 1983, just 6 months too old to be grandfathered into citizenship by the 2000 legislation. When Trump won in 2016, she said she felt fear more intense than the night before she deployed to Iraq. She was eventually naturalized, after what she describes as a crushing process with immigration, including having to take a civics test.

— Debbie and Paul, a couple in California, adopted two special needs children, a boy and a girl, from a Romanian orphanage in the 1990s. Debbie sometimes lays awake at night thinking that her children wouldn’t survive a detention camp. The girl is a Special Olympian who can’t compete in international competitions because she can’t get a passport.

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This story is part of an ongoing investigation led by The Associated Press in collaboration with FRONTLINE (PBS). The investigation includes several stories:

Widespread adoption fraud separated generations of Korean children from their families, AP finds Western nations were desperate for Korean babies. Now many adoptees believe they were stolen. A South Korean adoptee needed answers about the past. She got them — just not the ones she wanted

It also includes an interactive and documentary, South Korea’s Adoption Reckoning.

Contact AP’s global investigative team at [Investigative@ap.org](mailto:Investigative@ap.org).

## Australia's leader rejects Beijing's claims that his country is rife with 'racism and hate crimes'

By CHARLOTTE GRAHAM-McLAY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has rejected accusations from Beijing that his country is "plagued by systemic racism and hate crimes" after an Australian diplomat led a group of Western nations in renewing concerns about human rights violations in China.

"When it comes to China, we've said we'll cooperate where we can, we'll disagree where we must, and we'll engage in our national interest, and we've raised issues of human rights with China," Albanese told reporters on Thursday as he arrived in the Pacific Island nation of Samoa for a Commonwealth leaders' summit.

A day earlier, China's foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian had denounced a statement made by 15 nations to the United Nations General Assembly this week — presented by a top Australian envoy — underscoring "ongoing concerns" about "serious human rights violations" in Xinjiang and Tibet.

James Larsen, Australia's ambassador to the U.N., urged China to "uphold the international human rights obligations that it has voluntarily assumed" by releasing "all individuals arbitrarily detained in both Xinjiang and Tibet, and urgently clarifying the fate and whereabouts of missing family members."

The statement amounted to "political manipulation under the pretext of human rights," Jian said Wednesday.

Singling out Australia for rebuke, Jian said the country was "long plagued by systemic racism and hate crimes" and should resolve its own affairs rather than criticizing China's.

Albanese said Australia would "always stand up for Australia's interests" and had raised the matter of human rights with Beijing in a "consistent and clear way."

The Chinese government launched in 2017 a campaign of assimilation in the northwestern Xinjiang region — home to 11 million Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities — that has included mass detentions, alleged political indoctrination, alleged family separations and alleged forced labor among other methods.

More than 1 million Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and other ethnic minorities are estimated to have been held in extralegal internment camps. The Chinese government at the time described the camps as "vocational training centers."

The U.N. Human Rights Office in 2022 found accusations of rights violations in Xinjiang "credible" and said China may have committed crimes against humanity in the region.

Larsen in his statement also cited "credible" reports of China subjecting Tibetans to coercive labor, separation of children from their families, erosion of cultural and religious freedoms, and detention for peaceful political protests.

He urged "unfettered and meaningful access" to Xinjiang and Tibet for independent observers.

"No country has a perfect human rights record, but no country is above fair scrutiny of its human rights obligations," Larson added.

In response, Jian decried what he said was Australia's hypocrisy, citing the country's treatment of refugees, immigrants and Indigenous people.

"Australian soldiers have committed abhorrent crimes in Afghanistan and other countries during their military operations overseas," Jian said.

Jian appeared to be referring to allegations that elite Australian troops unlawfully killed 39 Afghan prisoners, farmers and civilians between 2005 and 2016, which led to a number of senior military officers recently being stripped of their medals. Australia's past policy of refusing to allow asylum seekers who attempt to reach its shores by boat to ever settle in the country is also often cited by China as tarnishing the country's standing on human rights.

Beijing's economic ties with Canberra are thawing after several years of official and unofficial trade blocks. But the relationship remains tense on matters of human rights and geopolitics as China becomes militarily more belligerent in the Asia-Pacific region and Australia grows closer to its Western-intelligence sharing partners, particularly the U.S.



Chinese Premier Qiang Li said during a state visit to Australia in June that he had agreed with Albanese to “properly manage” their nations’ differences.

However Justin Bassi, executive director of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, said China’s rebuke this week was an “overreaction” intended to warn Canberra to pull its punches.

“By limiting all but the most unavoidable criticisms of China to statements delivered by officials rather than ministers, Australia was offering Beijing a compromise,” Bassi said. “Instead of taking that as a win, China is biting back hard.”

## **‘US doesn’t see me as an American’: Thousands of adoptees live in limbo without citizenship**

By CLAIRE GALOFARO and KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

HENDERSON, Nev. (AP) — The 50-year-old newspaper was turning yellow and its edges fraying, so she had it laminated, not as a memento but as proof — America made a promise to her, and did not keep it.

She pointed to the picture in the corner of her as a little girl in the rural Midwest, hugging the family Yorkshire terrier, with dark pigtails and brown eyes so round people called her Buttons. Next to her sit smiling, proud parents — her father an Air Force veteran who had survived a German prison camp in World War II and found her in an orphanage in Iran. She was a skinny, sickly 2-year-old; he and his wife decided in 1972 to take her home and make her their American daughter.

They brought her to the United States on a tourist visa, which in the eyes of the government she soon overstayed as a toddler — and that is an offense that cannot be rectified. She is one of thousands of children adopted from abroad by American parents — many of them military service members — who were left without citizenship by loopholes in American law that Congress has been aware of for decades, yet remains unwilling to fix.

She is technically living here illegally, and eligible for deportation.

“My dad died thinking, ‘I raised my daughter. I did my part,’ but not knowing it put me on a path of instability and fear,” she said. The Associated Press is using only her childhood nickname, Buttons, because of her legal status. “Adoption tells you: You’re an American, this is your home. But the United States doesn’t see me as an American.”

Every time she turns on the news, she hears former President Donald Trump, in his bid for reelection, promising to round up immigrants living illegally in the U.S. Now she lays awake at night, wondering what it would be like to be sent back to Iran.

“What is a detention camp even like?” she wondered.

“We have a plan, we won’t let that happen,” her friend Joy Alessi, a Korean adoptee, assured her. They have lawyers, media statements prepared, phone numbers of sympathetic congressmembers.

But they slumped their shoulders — they know it could happen, because it already has.

Out of the shadows

These two women grew up in military families, and were taught to be grateful to the nation that celebrated saving them. Then one day, as adults, they walked into passport offices and learned the news that would unspool their lives.

Their adoption paperwork, signed by judges and stamped by governments, declared they enjoyed all the privileges of being daughters of American families. But that was untrue in one critical respect: Adoption for decades did not automatically make children citizens.

They both hid for years, thinking they were the only one who fell through the cracks. Then Trump stormed into politics in 2015 on a promise to rid America of undocumented immigrants. They weren’t citizens, so they couldn’t even vote to try to stop him. Each decided they had nothing left to lose, emerged and found each other.

Other adoptees found them, too, and told stories of indignities endured by those not fully American — they can’t get jobs or driver’s licenses or passports, every interaction with the government is terrifying, some panic when there’s a knock on the door.

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No one knows how many of them there are — estimates range from 15,000 to 75,000. Many were adopted from South Korea, home to the world's longest and largest adoption program, but they'd also been brought from Ethiopia, Romania, Belize, more than two dozen countries.

They started the Adoptee Rights Campaign, and were joined by an unexpected coalition, from the Southern Baptist Convention to liberal immigration advocates, all baffled that the government let this linger.

The Adoptee Rights Campaign has heard from people who'd been deported, some still living in hiding, others freshly discovering they'd never been made citizens. There is no government mechanism for alerting them. They find out by accident, when applying for passports or government benefits. One woman learned as a senior citizen, when she was denied the Social Security she'd paid into all her life.

Buttons calls herself the group's "adoptee wrangler;" she was visiting Alessi in Nevada, sitting at her kitchen table, fielding inquiries and checking in on people.

She's 54 and has never been in trouble; she has a corporate job in health care, owns her own home in California. She was raised a Christian, so fears that deportation to Iran would be "a death sentence." Still legislators won't help.

She had hope. She's lost that now. For a decade, legislation has been introduced over and over, it dies, and nothing happens.

So she lugs around the laminated newspaper clipping, stacks of adoption files and court records as proof she's supposed to be here.

"It's hard to give hope," she said, "when I don't feel like I have any left."

'One piece of paper can ruin your life'

Alessi anointed her friend Buttons "an honorary Korean."

This problem they have both endured was born there, in Alessi's motherland, and to her it represents the most glaring example of the neglectful system that brought them here.

The international adoption industry grew out of the wreckage of the Korean War in the 1950s. Americans were desperate for babies — the domestic supply of adoptable children had plummeted — and South Korea wanted to rid itself of mouths of feed. Alessi was among this early wave of adoptees, taken from South Korea at 7 months old in 1967.

The system focused on shipping children abroad as quickly as possible. Korea's government, eager to curry favor with the U.S., did everything it could to speed up the process, including relaxing the obligation of agencies to ensure citizenship for adoptees.

The adoption industry took the model created in South Korea into poor countries around the world, shipping babies in bulk to American families.

South Korea has struggled to track the citizenship of children placed in U.S. homes, and the status of more than 17,550 remains unconfirmed, according to government data AP obtained. The Adoptee Rights Campaign used Korean figures to estimate up to 75,000 adoptees from all over the world could lack citizenship. But groups like the National Council for Adoption put the number somewhere between 15,000 and 18,000.

The Korean adoption diaspora has been hit particularly hard — there are simply more of them. At least 11 adoptees have been deported to South Korea since 2002, where they don't know the language or the culture. An adoptee named Phillip Clay, sent to the U.S. at 8 years old in 1983, was deported. He killed himself by jumping from an apartment building in Seoul in 2017 at 42 years old.

Adam Crapser, adopted at 3 years old in 1979, was also deported to South Korea. The married father of two says he was abused and abandoned by two different adoptive families who never filed his citizenship papers. He got into trouble with the law — once for breaking into his adoptive parents' home to retrieve the Bible that came with him from the orphanage.

He sued his Korean adoption agency, Holt Children's Services, and a court last year ordered the agency to pay him damages for failing to inform his adopters that they should take steps to secure his citizenship.

For some adoptees, their status is fixable through the arduous naturalization process — they have to join the line as though they'd just arrived. It takes years, thousands of dollars, wasted days, routine rejections

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from immigration offices on technicalities, the wrong form, an errant typo.

Alessi looked at a picture of herself standing in a high school gymnasium, finally being made an American citizen at 52. "We welcome you!" she remembers the announcer saying, and the crowd cheered. But her body looks stiff, her mouth pursed.

"You don't welcome us," she thought that day in 2019.

Her friend, the adoptee called Buttons, was at the ceremony crying, genuinely happy for her friend, but also devastated for herself. Alessi felt a sort of survivor's guilt.

"You were sitting right there, and I felt so conflicted, so shameful," Alessi told her.

Because for some adoptees, there is no clear solution. The difference between them is what visa their adoptive parents brought them in on, and many chose the fastest route — like a tourist or medical visa — not imagining complications down the road.

"One piece of paper," Buttons said, "can ruin your life."

'A collective failure'

A quarter-century ago, the U.S. Congress recognized it had left adoptees in this legal limbo.

By 2000, nearly 20,000 children were coming to America each year. But the U.S. had wedged foreign adoptions into a system created for domestic ones. State courts give adopted children new birth certificates that list their adoptive parents' names, purporting to give them all the privileges of biological children.

But state courts have no control over immigration. After the expensive, long process of adoption, parents were supposed to naturalize their adopted children, but some never did.

Those early decades of adoption were a "wild west," said Greg Luce, a lawyer who has represented many non-citizen adoptees; there was no standardized procedure to help adoptive families.

"It's a combination of adoption agencies that were neglectful, adoptive parents who should have known better, and the U.S. government that had lax oversight and a visa system that could allow this to happen," Luce said. "It's a collective failure on the part of everyone who was involved except the adoptee. They were a child, and they're the ones left holding the bag."

The U.S. is unique in this: No other nation that has taken in adopted children deprives them of citizenship.

In 2000, Congress acknowledged that injustice and passed the Child Citizenship Act, conferring automatic citizenship to adopted children. But it was designed to streamline the process for adoptive parents, not to help adoptees, and so applied only to those younger than 18 when it took effect. Everyone born before the arbitrary date of Feb. 27, 1983, was not included.

Hannah Daniel, director of public policy for the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, the lobbying arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, said lawmakers often find this situation hard to believe.

"I agree that it feels unbelievable," she said. "It's the most classic example of wanting to bang your head against the wall, because how in the world have we not fixed this?"

Adoption has been a rare issue championed by lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, a way of saving children by making them American. Many churches preach intercountry adoption as a Biblical calling.

Daniel is part of a bipartisan coalition lobbying for a decade for a bill that extends citizenship to everyone legally adopted by American parents. The groups insist that families formed by adoption are due the same respect, the same rights, as biological ones, including equal treatment under the criminal justice system.

But that argument has been consumed by the country's hyper-partisan frenzy over immigration. Any bills offering paths to citizenship have stalled out.

Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley, among those skeptical of the legislation, declined an interview. A spokesperson wrote in a statement that he is "a longtime adoption advocate" but "believes that any adult seeking U.S. citizenship should have their criminal records taken into consideration."

That is a sentiment that advocates of the bill say undermines the very meaning of adoption. If a foreign adopted sibling and a biological sibling commit a crime together, the biological child would pay their debt to society and move on. The adopted child might face a second, severe punishment: getting sent back to where the U.S. professed to have rescued them from.

A bill is before Congress again now. But Daniel isn't hopeful.

"In this day and age in Congress, if not doing anything is an option," she said, "that is the bet I'm going

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to take.”

‘The American dream’

Laura Lynn Davis called her representatives, her senators. She’s written to celebrities and talk show hosts, thinking surely someone would help.

Mike Davis, her husband of 27 years, was adopted by a soldier, a Vietnam veteran stationed in Ethiopia, who met him there as a boy and brought him to the U.S.

He was deported to Ethiopia two decades ago, and now lives in a room with a mud floor and running water only once a month and even when the tap works, it isn’t safe to drink.

Davis, now 61, remembers his father telling him that everything would be OK because he was an American now. He pledged allegiance to the flag every morning and considered himself a happy military brat, moving around Army bases.

“I was living the American dream,” Davis said.

He worked at a pizza shop through high school and when he graduated, he opened his own.

In the 1990s, he was charged with possession of a firearm, marijuana and cocaine. He didn’t go to prison; he was sentenced to 120 days in a boot camp program. He found out he’d never been naturalized when he reported to his probation officer.

Nothing happened for years. He married Laura Lynn, they had children to raise, and he pushed it to the back of his mind.

Then one day in 2003, he closed his pizza shop and went to bed, someone banged on their door at 5 a.m.

“My kids were sleeping,” he said, “When they woke up, their dad was gone.”

He languished in a detention center for over a year, terrified, because he had the same perception of Ethiopia as every American: The State Department advises its citizens to not go there because of unpredictable violence, kidnappings, terrorism.

Then officers took him to the airport and put him on a plane, he said. One officer felt sorry for him and gave him \$20; Davis promised to pay him back when he returned to the U.S.

He sold his wedding ring to pay rent, and that was the darkest moment. His adoptive father grew sicker, and Davis anguished over not being with him in the end.

His wife sold their house and moved their family to be with him. But life was hard in Ethiopia: There were people with M16s on the street, they couldn’t work or speak the language. Laura Lynn lost 30 pounds. She and their children went home to Georgia.

Mike was their breadwinner, and they struggled without him. They lived in cars and motels, but never blamed him.

Laura Lynn kept all his things neatly packed and awaiting his return: clothes, sports memorabilia, his favorite music — on cassette tapes, a reminder of how the world changed since he left. He gets sick a lot as he’s getting older, she said, and can’t access medications in Ethiopia.

He has five grandchildren he’s never met. His youngest son, Adam, 26 now, recently moved into his first apartment, and thought how nice it would be to have his father there to see it.

Laura Lynn has more hope than she has in a long time, she said, because a group she never expected came to their aid: Koreans. They’ve offered advocacy and legal help. He’s being represented by groups like Asian Americans Advancing Justice and Adoptees for Justice.

“I pray we can make them see that he didn’t ask to come here, he was adopted and brought here. He became a really good man,” she said. “He has a family who loves him and we’re ready for him to come back home to us.”

‘A spin of the roulette wheel’

Emily Howe, a lawyer in California, carries around a 5-inch binder, which she calls “the simplified version” of the labyrinthine set of laws that dictate which adoptees have been able to become citizens and which have not.

Howe was adopted from South Korea in 1984, barely young enough to be granted citizenship by the 2000 law. By a twist of luck and timing, this could have been her, she said. So she represents many adoptive families for free.

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"It shouldn't be a spin of the roulette wheel," she said. She now asks every adoptee if they know their citizenship status. It gets complicated quickly; if they ask the government and find out they aren't citizens, they tip off authorities to them living here illegally.

Her clients are panicking about what will happen if Trump wins reelection.

"I'm terrified," a mother named Debbie cried in Howe's San Diego office. "What if he gets back in? I'm hearing him talk about mass deportations."

Debbie and her husband, Paul, adopted two special-needs children from a Romanian orphanage in the 1990s, and they've been trying to make them citizens almost ever since. The Associated Press is using only the first names of the parents because they fear endangering their adopted children.

The California couple watched a "20/20" television special about the plight of children there — they called them "unsalvagables," they didn't learn to read, there wasn't enough food.

The couple was middle-class, with three biological children. But Debbie couldn't sleep thinking about those kids, cold and hungry. So they refinanced their house to bring home two, a boy and a girl.

"We thought we had to get these children out of there. Then we'll deal with what we need to deal with," Debbie said.

The boy was 10, and so small, just 40 pounds, that the school allowed him in kindergarten. The girl was 14 and legally blind, with limited vision in just one eye. They both had physical and cognitive impairments; the doctors believed the boy suffered fetal alcohol poisoning.

The family was overwhelmed by their needs. Their new son was curious — in another life, he might have been an engineer, Debbie thinks. But in this one, they had to nail the front door shut because he'd wander out at night. He was fascinated by electricity, and couldn't be left alone without fear he'd start a fire.

Howe assures them they did everything they could.

"We thought we did it the right way, we tried to, I hope we did," Debbie said. "Maybe we were naive. Maybe there was something we missed."

They consulted with dozens of lawyers, who all said it couldn't be fixed — it was a convoluted calculation of the children's ages, how their birth certificates were written, their visas. They can't tally how many thousands of dollars they've spent.

"It's dumb, it's outrageously dumb, it should not be this monstrous task," Howe said. "This could be fixed in a month if anyone had the political will to do it."

Their son, 43, doesn't understand the situation he's in. But their daughter understands. She's a Special Olympian, now 46, with a stack of gold medals. She can't compete in international competitions because she can't get a passport.

"I want to be a citizen really bad," their daughter said. "I want to be here for a long, long time."

They've called their legislators. Debbie wept again and again: "My adopted children deserve all the privileges of my birth children. They are no different in our eyes. Why are you looking at them differently?"

Everyone told them not to worry because they aren't the type of people on immigration's radar.

Then Trump's administration terrified them. Debbie lay in bed, thinking her children couldn't survive a detention camp. She imagined someone barging into their home and snatching them. It made her physically sick.

Debbie and Paul are in their late 60s, and feel an urgent need to fix this.

"The clock is ticking," Debbie said. "I have zero regrets about adding these two to my family. But this country let them down, absolutely, without a doubt."

'It's time for my country to fight for me'

For most of her life, Joy Alessi was a proud patriot, who got teary-eyed when Garth Brooks sang about America. But patriotism is confusing for her now — as it is for many of the adoptees who've found themselves in this predicament.

Alessi and Buttons hadn't seen their friend and fellow adoptee, Leah Elmquist, since she became naturalized.

"Do you feel different? Do you feel like a citizen?" Alessi asked her, when they met for dinner at a Korean barbeque.

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Elmquist had always considered herself “super-duper American.” She served in the Navy for 10 years; she was in a USAA commercial. That was all before she was actually made an American.

She told Alessi she doesn’t feel any differently now.

“I felt like a citizen for the decade I was in the Navy. And I wasn’t one,” she said.

Elmquist was adopted from South Korea as an infant in 1983, just six months too old to get citizenship by the 2000 legislation.

She grew up in a white family in a Nebraska town with two stop lights. She can cite what her adoption decree declared her parents had done: they “do hereby bestow upon said minor child equal rights, privileges and immunities with children born in lawful wedlock.”

That was not true, but she only learned that later.

“That’s why I joined the military. I felt so lucky to be an American, ironically. I wanted to thank this country for raising me,” she said. “I didn’t think about citizenship because I felt I was being more American than most Americans.”

She excelled in the military, but wasn’t eligible for certain security clearances. She’s wanted to serve as a linguist, but couldn’t. After leaving, she laid low, terrified of deportation. When Trump won election in 2016, she felt a fear more intense than the night before she deployed to Iraq.

Alessi pulled up a photo of Elmquist in 2019, standing behind a podium marked with the seal of the U.S. House of Representatives. Elmquist was wearing her military uniform, and Alessi recalled that the room went quiet, all you could hear was the “click click click” of cameras.

Elmquist remembered what she’d said: “I fought for my country, now it’s time for my country to fight for me.”

It didn’t.

That session, the bill didn’t pass.

Elmquist was rejected multiple times by immigration. Finally, she made it to an interview, and had to prove she could read and write English. Her interviewer was a veteran, like her, and said it seemed weird she was there. “Tell me about it,” she remembers responding.

She was naturalized in 2022, the day before her 40th birthday. She likes to look back at her picture on the front page of the local newspaper.

“I can see how happy I was,” she says. “I almost cried.”

“I can imagine,” Buttons responded.

She smiled, and wiped away a tear, imagining that one day maybe she’d feel that too.

## What is fascism? And why does Harris say Trump is a fascist?

By WILL WEISSERT and LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris was asked this week if she thought Donald Trump was a fascist, and she replied, “Yes, I do.” She subsequently called him the same thing herself, saying voters don’t want “a president of the United States who admires dictators and is a fascist.”

But what exactly is a fascist? And does the meaning of the word shift when viewed through a historical or political prism — especially so close to the end of a fraught presidential race?

Here’s a closer look:

What is fascism?

An authoritarian, ultranationalist political ideology and movement. It is often associated with the far right and characterized by a dictatorial leader who uses military forces to help suppress political and civil opposition.

History’s two most famous fascists were Nazi chief Adolf Hitler in Germany and Italian dictator Benito Mussolini. Known as Il Duce, or “the duke,” Mussolini headed the National Fascist Party, which was symbolized by an eagle clutching a fasces — a bundle of rods with an axe among them.

At Mussolini’s urging, in October 1922, thousands of “Blackshirts,” or “squadristi,” made up an armed fascist militia that marched on Rome, vowing to seize power. Hitler’s Nazis similarly relied on a militia, known as the “Brownshirts.” Both men eventually imposed single-party rule and encouraged violence in the

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streets. They used soldiers, but also fomented civilian unrest that pit loyalists against political opponents and larger swaths of everyday society.

Hitler and Mussolini censored the press and issued sophisticated propaganda. They played up racist fears and manipulated not just their active supporters but everyday citizens.

Today, the term fascism has taken on a looser political definition and is often evoked as a catch-all for efforts to spread oppression and racism — as well as to decry dictators or leaders who embrace totalitarian tactics.

It is not just the left that has used the term, denouncing a push rightward in the U.S. and in many parts of the world. Some conservatives decried lockdowns imposed during the coronavirus pandemic as “fascist.”

What are other historical examples of fascism?

Hitler and Mussolini are its two biggest names, but it gets murkier from there.

Does military dictator Augusto Pinochet’s 17-year, ironfisted rule in Chile qualify? What about Indonesian strongman Suharto or Spain’s Francisco Franco? Were the regimes of Ferenc Szálasi in Hungary and Brazil’s Plínio Salgado fascist? Where does American neo-Nazi leader David Duke fit?

Indeed, critics sometimes describe modern U.S. extremist groups — including movements that have cheered Trump, like the Proud Boys — as fascists or neo-fascists. Those labels may be more steeped in political ideology than clear historical parallels.

Why is Harris calling Trump a fascist?

The vice president has long criticized Trump as being mentally unstable and not a true believer in, or defender of, the nation’s founding democratic principles.

She notes that Trump suggested he’d deploy the military to target political opponents, including people he has decried as the “enemy from within.” The former president has long talked about attacking his enemies and declared to his supporters that he would be their “retribution.”

“He’s talking about the American people. He’s talking about journalists, judges, nonpartisan election officials,” Harris said Wednesday night at a CNN town hall.

Trump has threatened to take action against television networks and news organizations for coverage he deems unfavorable. And, when now-President Joe Biden challenged him during a 2020 debate to denounce the Proud Boys, Trump replied: “Proud Boys, stand back and stand by.”

A mob of pro-Trump supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, seeking to overturn Trump’s loss to Biden after Trump gave a speech propagating falsehoods about the election and exhorting the crowd to “fight like hell.” Among the people imprisoned in connection with Jan. 6 was the leader of the Proud Boys, accused of orchestrating a failed plot to keep Trump in power.

Harris has been building toward the characterization. During an interview with her in Detroit on Oct. 15, radio host Charlamagne Tha God, said Trump was increasingly embracing fascism and asked, “Why can’t we just say it?” “Yes, we can say that,” Harris replied.

Then, Trump’s longest-serving former chief of staff, retired Marine Corps Gen. John Kelly, warned that the former president meets the definition of a fascist. He said Trump, while in office, suggested that Hitler “did some good things,” and that Trump valued personal loyalty above the Constitution.

Trump’s campaign has accused Kelly of lying and brushed aside Harris’ criticism, with spokesperson Karoline Leavitt responding, “Kamala will say anything to distract from her open border invasion and record high inflation.” Trump has described Jan. 6 as a “day of love.”

Trump himself rejected the fascist label in an interview Thursday with Fox News.

“Everyone knows that’s not true,” he said. “They call me everything until something sticks.”

How do experts on fascism view Trump?

They are divided.

Robert Paxton, a Columbia University professor emeritus who wrote “The Anatomy of Fascism,” has cited the Jan. 6 attack as evidence of Trump’s fascism.

“It’s bubbling up from below in very worrisome ways, and that’s very much like the original fascisms,” Paxton told The New York Times Magazine in a piece published this week. “It’s the real thing. It really is.”

Some do not see Trump as meeting the classic historical definition of a fascist, but rather increasingly

moving toward politics that have fascist tendencies.

David Kertzer, a Brown University professor and Italian historian, said he was "a little horrified" to hear Harris call Trump a fascist given the term's "historical resonance." He said there are some similarities, including "mass movement, a cult of the strongman." He noted that Trump sometimes juts out his chin, though he isn't prone to tearing off his shirt and bare his chest, like Mussolini did.

Kertzer said that fascism involved "a one-party state, a banishing of all opposition newspapers and jailing people who disagreed," and that, while Trump has talked about jailing opponents, he's not moved toward embracing other key facets of the movement.

"There are certain echoes, but in terms of turning the Republican Party into a one-party state, that seems rather farfetched at the moment," said Kertzer, author of "The Pope and Mussolini: The Secret History of Pius XI and the Rise of Fascism in Europe."

David Clay Large, a senior fellow at the University of California, Berkeley's Institute of European Studies, said "the alarm bells now going off may be somewhat overblown."

"Our democratic institutions, however beleaguered, remain much stronger than those of the European nations that turned fascist in the '20s and '30s," Large said. Still, he added, there would be "a real danger to these institutions" in a second Trump presidential term.

The rise of far-right parties across Europe and Trump's control of the GOP, Large said, carves out "an entirely new situation: The center cannot hold as it once did."

Add to that mix social media, which in the digital age mirrors the use of propaganda, amping up emotions and division, he said.

"Where everyone's an expert, we've lost respect for factuality, objectivity, and actual expert opinion," Large said.

## **Gangs in Haiti open fire and hit a UN helicopter midair as violence surges**

By DÁNICA COTO and EVENS SANON Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Gangs on Thursday opened fire and hit a U.N. helicopter, forcing it to land in Port-au-Prince in the latest attack in Haiti's capital as violence surges once again.

No one was injured as several rounds of gunfire hit the helicopter that was carrying three crew members and 15 passengers, according to a U.N. source who was not authorized to confirm the incident. The helicopter, which had departed from Port-au-Prince before it was attacked, landed safely, the source said.

The attack comes five months after Haiti's main international airport reopened following coordinated gang attacks that forced it to close for nearly three months.

The violence has spilled to nearby areas including Arcahaie, where some 50 suspected gang members died this week after attacking the coastal town located just northwest of the capital. Among the dead are at least a dozen gunmen who drowned after their boat capsized, a government official said Thursday.

While the majority were killed by police, a group of gunmen drowned on Wednesday after their boat hit the reef as they ferried ammunition to gangs attacking the town of Arcahaie, said Wilner René from Haiti's Civil Protection Agency.

He told Radio Caraïbes that the attack began on Monday, with gunmen burning homes and cars across Arcahaie.

When the gangs ran out of ammunition, they hid in nearby areas and were ferreted out by residents and police, he said.

The attack is still ongoing, and René warned that officers on the scene urgently need reinforcements from soldiers and special police units.

The attack is blamed on a gang coalition called Viv Ansanm, which also has targeted communities in Port-au-Prince in recent days. Those attacks have displaced more than 10,000 people in the capital in just one week, according to a report released Thursday by the U.N.'s International Organization for Migration. More than half of those left homeless crowded into 14 makeshift shelters, including schools. The remainder



are temporarily staying with relatives.

The spike in gang violence comes just months after a U.N.-backed mission led by Kenyan police began with the aim of quelling a surge in violence from gangs, who control more than 80% of Port-au-Prince. More than 700,000 people have been left homeless, and thousands have been killed.

The U.S. government and top Haitian officials have warned that the Kenyan-led mission lacks personnel and funding and have asked that it be replaced with a U.N.-peacekeeping mission.

## **McDonald's says onions from California-based produce company linked to deadly E. coli outbreak**

By JONEL ALECCIA and DEE-ANN DURBIN Associated Press

A California-based produce company was the source of fresh onions linked to a deadly E. coli food poisoning outbreak at McDonald's, officials with the restaurant chain said Thursday. Meanwhile, other fast-food restaurants — including Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, KFC and Burger King — pulled onions from some menus.

McDonald's officials said that Taylor Farms, of Salinas, California, sent onions to one distribution facility, which led the fast-food chain to remove Quarter Pounder hamburgers from restaurants in several states. McDonald's didn't say which facility it was.

An outbreak tied to the burgers has sickened at least 49 people in 10 states, including a person who died, federal health officials have said. Investigators said they were focused on slivered onions as a potential source of the infections.

U.S. Foods, a major wholesaler to restaurants across the country, said Thursday that Taylor Farms had issued a recall this week for peeled whole and diced yellow onions for potential E. coli contamination. The recalled onions came from a Taylor Farms facility in Colorado, a U.S. Foods spokesperson said. But the wholesaler also noted that it wasn't a McDonald's supplier and that its recall didn't include any products sold at the fast-food chain's restaurants.

Taylor Farms did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Officials with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration did not confirm that the agency is investigating Taylor Farms. A spokesperson said Thursday that the agency is "looking at all sources" of the outbreak.

In the meantime, other national restaurant chains temporarily stopped using fresh onions.

"As we continue to monitor the recently reported E. coli outbreak, and out of an abundance of caution, we have proactively removed fresh onions from select Taco Bell, Pizza Hut and KFC restaurants," Yum Brands said in a statement.

Louisville, Kentucky-based Yum Brands wouldn't say where onions were removed or whether the company uses the same supplier as McDonald's. Yum Brands said it will continue to follow guidance from regulators and its suppliers.

Restaurant Brands International, which owns Burger King, said Thursday that 5% of its restaurants use onions distributed by Taylor Farms' Colorado facility. Burger King restaurants get deliveries of whole, fresh onions and its employees wash, peel and slice them.

Even though it wasn't contacted by health officials and it had no indications of illness, Restaurant Brands said it asked the restaurants that received onions from the Colorado facility to dispose of them two days ago. The company said it's restocking with onions from other suppliers.

Chipotle said Thursday it doesn't source onions from Taylor Farms or use any other ingredients from the Colorado facility.

Onions have been implicated in previous outbreaks. In 2015, Taylor Farms recalled a celery and onion mix used in Costco chicken salads after 19 people were sickened with E. coli. Last year, 80 people were sickened and one died in an outbreak of salmonella poisoning tied to bagged diced onions from Gills Onions of Oxnard, California.

At least 10 people have been hospitalized in the McDonald's outbreak, including a child who suffered a severe kidney disease complication as a result of the infection. Illnesses were confirmed between Sept. 27 and Oct. 11, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Victims were infected with E. coli 0157:H7, a type of bacteria that produces a dangerous toxin. It causes about 74,000 infections in the U.S. annually, leading to more than 2,000 hospitalizations and 61 deaths each year, according to CDC.

A Greeley, Colorado, man is suing McDonald's after contracting an E. coli infection. In a lawsuit filed this week, Eric Stelly said he ate food from local McDonald's on Oct. 4 and fell ill two days later. After he sought emergency care, health officials confirmed his infection was part of the outbreak.

Symptoms occur of E. coli poisoning can occur quickly, within a day or two of eating contaminated food. They typically include fever, vomiting, diarrhea or bloody diarrhea and signs of dehydration — little or no peeing, increased thirst and dizziness. The infection is especially dangerous for children younger than 5, people who are elderly, pregnant or who have weakened immune systems.

## County judge strikes down Ohio abortion ban, citing voter-approved reproductive rights amendment

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — The most far-reaching of Ohio's laws restricting abortion was struck down on Thursday by a county judge who said last year's voter-approved amendment enshrining reproductive rights renders the so-called heartbeat law unconstitutional.

Enforcement of the 2019 law banning most abortions once cardiac activity is detected — as early as six weeks into pregnancy, before many women know they're pregnant — had been paused pending the challenge before Hamilton County Common Pleas Judge Christian Jenkins.

Jenkins said that when the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade and returned power over the abortion issue to the states, "Ohio's Attorney General evidently didn't get the memo."

The judge said Republican Attorney General Dave Yost's request to leave all but one provision of the law untouched even after a majority of Ohio's voters passed an amendment protecting the right to pre-viability abortion "dispels the myth" that the high court's decision simply gives states power over the issue.

"Despite the adoption of a broad and strongly worded constitutional amendment, in this case and others, the State of Ohio seeks not to uphold the constitutional protection of abortion rights, but to diminish and limit it," he wrote. Jenkins said his ruling upholds voters' wishes.

Yost's office said it was reviewing the order and would decide within 30 days whether to appeal.

"This is a very long, complicated decision covering many issues, many of which are issues of first impression," the office said in a statement, meaning they have not been decided by a court before.

Jenkins' decision comes in a lawsuit that the ACLU of Ohio, Planned Parenthood Federation of America and the law firm WilmerHale brought on behalf of a group of abortion providers in the state, the second round of litigation filed to challenge the law.

"This is a momentous ruling, showing the power of Ohio's new Reproductive Freedom Amendment in practice," Jessie Hill, cooperating attorney for the ACLU of Ohio, said in a statement. "The six-week ban is blatantly unconstitutional and has no place in our law."

An initial lawsuit was brought in federal court in 2019, where the law was first blocked under the landmark 1973 Roe v. Wade decision. It was briefly allowed to go into effect in 2022 after Roe was overturned. Opponents of the law then turned to the state court system, where the ban was again put on hold. They argued the law violated protections in Ohio's constitution that guarantee individual liberty and equal protection, and that it was unconstitutionally vague.

After his predecessor twice vetoed the measure citing Roe, Republican Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine signed the 2019 law once appointments by then-President Donald Trump had solidified the Supreme Court's conservative majority and raised hopes among abortion opponents.

The Ohio litigation has unfolded alongside a national upheaval over abortion rights that followed the Dobbs decision that overturned Roe, including constitutional amendment pushes in Ohio and a host of other states. Issue 1, the amendment Ohio voters passed last year, gives every person in Ohio "the right to make and carry out one's own reproductive decisions."

Yost acknowledged in court filings this spring that the amendment rendered the Ohio ban unconstitutional, but sought to maintain other elements of the 2019 law, including certain notification and reporting provisions.

Jenkins said retaining those elements would have meant subjecting doctors who perform abortions to felony criminal charges, fines, license suspensions or revocations, and civil claims of wrongful death — and requiring patients to make two in-person visits to their provider, wait 24 hours for the procedure and have their abortion recorded and reported.

## Israeli strike on Gaza shelter kills 17 as Blinken says cease-fire talks will resume

By WAFSA SHURAF, FARNOUSH AMIRI and FATMA KHALED Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — An Israeli strike on a school where displaced people were sheltering in the central Gaza Strip killed at least 17 people on Thursday, nearly all women and children, Palestinian medical officials said.

The strike came as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Israel had accomplished its objective of “effectively dismantling” Hamas, and that negotiations over a cease-fire and the release of dozens of Israeli hostages would resume “in the coming days.”

Another 42 people were wounded in the strike in the built-up Nuseirat refugee camp, according to the Awda Hospital, which received the casualties. Among the dead were 13 children under the age of 18 and three women, according to the hospital’s records.

The Israeli military said it targeted Hamas militants inside the school, without providing evidence. Israel has carried out strikes on several schools-turned-shelters in recent months, saying it precisely targets militants hiding out among civilians. The strikes often kill women and children.

### New talks in Qatar planned

Blinken, speaking to reporters in Qatar, which has served as a key mediator between Israel and Hamas, said negotiators would return to Doha to renew the talks.

“What we really have to determine is whether Hamas is prepared to engage,” Blinken said on his 11th visit to the region since the start of the war.

Hamas’s political representatives have not so far signaled a softer stance.

“There is no change in our position,” senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan told Al Mayadeen, a Lebanese broadcaster seen as closely aligned with Iran and its allies.

Hamdan said Hamas delegates heard from mediators in Cairo about the potential to revive cease-fire negotiations but reiterated that the group still insists on an end to Israel’s offensive in Gaza, as well as its complete withdrawal from the territory.

The Israeli prime minister’s office said the head of the Mossad, the country’s spy agency, would travel to Qatar on Sunday to meet with CIA director Bill Burns and the Qatari prime minister.

The United States hoped to revive the negotiations after Israeli forces killed top Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar in Gaza last week, but neither side has shown signs of moderating its demands from months of negotiations that sputtered to a halt over the summer.

Blinken also announced an additional \$135 million in U.S. aid to the Palestinians, while again urging Israel to allow more assistance to enter the territory.

### Supplies run low in northern Gaza

Health workers in besieged northern Gaza meanwhile warned of a catastrophic situation there, where Israel has been waging an air and ground offensive for over two weeks.

Hundreds of people have been killed and tens of thousands have fled their homes in northern Gaza in recent days. The military says it is battling Hamas fighters who regrouped in the north, which was one of the first targets of the ground offensive at the start of the war.

Dr. Hossam Abu Safiyeh, the director of the Kamal Adwan Hospital in the north, said in a video message released Wednesday that some 150 wounded people were being treated there, including 14 children in

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intensive care or the neonatal department.

"There is a very large number of wounded people, and we lose at least one person every hour because of the lack of medical supplies and medical staff," he said.

"Our ambulances can't transfer wounded people," he said. "Those who can arrive by themselves to the hospital receive care, but those who don't just die in the streets."

Footage shared with The Associated Press shows medical staff tending to premature babies and several older children in hospital beds, some with severe burns. One child is seen attached to a breathing machine, with bandages on her face and flies hovering over her.

"We are providing the bare minimum to patients. Everyone is paying the price of what is happening now in northern Gaza," Abu Safiyeh said.

Kamal Adwan is one of three hospitals in the north left largely inaccessible because of the fighting. The war has gutted the health system across Gaza, with only 16 of 39 hospitals even partially functioning, according to the World Health Organization.

In another one of the besieged hospitals in Gaza's northernmost end, the Indonesian Hospital, patients say they're struggling to stay alive in the face of power outages and shortages of food, water and medical supplies.

"The pain is horrible, but there are no painkillers here, no antibiotics," said 39-year-old Nidal al-Darini, whose foot, wounded in an Israeli airstrike, has become infected. "It's becoming unbearable."

First responders halt operations after saying Israel fired on them

The Civil Defense, first responders who operate under the Hamas-run government, said they had suspended operations in the north. They said Israeli forces fired on one of their teams in the town of Beit Lahiya after ordering them to relocate to the Indonesian Hospital, where troops are stationed.

Three Civil Defense members were wounded in the strike, and a firetruck was destroyed, it said. It said another five of its personnel were detained by Israeli forces at the hospital.

"As a result, we declare that Civil Defense operations in the northern Gaza Strip have been completely halted, leaving these areas without any firefighting, rescue, or emergency medical services," it said in a statement.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military on the allegations.

The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting another 250. Around 100 hostages are still inside Gaza, a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed over 42,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many were combatants but says women and children make up more than half the fatalities. The Israeli military says it has killed over 17,000 fighters, without providing evidence.

The war has displaced around 90% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million, often multiple times. Hundreds of thousands of people are crammed into tent camps along the coast after entire neighborhoods in many areas were pounded to rubble.

Meanwhile the Israeli campaign has expanded to Lebanon, where Israel launched a ground invasion over three weeks ago after trading fire with the Hezbollah militant group for much of the past year.

Lebanese health officials reported another day of intense airstrikes and shelling Thursday, which they said killed 19 people over the last 24 hours and raised the overall Lebanese death toll to 2,593 since the conflict started in October 2023.

The Israeli military on Thursday announced the deaths of four reservists who were killed the day before in combat in southern Lebanon, making Wednesday one of the deadliest days for Israel in Lebanon since it launched its ground invasion on Sept. 30.

## Argentine police raid the Buenos Aires hotel where One Direction's Liam Payne died

By ALMUDENA CALATRAVA undefined

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Argentina's police raided the Buenos Aires hotel where ex-One Direction singer Liam Payne stayed before dying last week after falling from a third-floor balcony, a government official said Thursday.

A police special investigations unit went to the Casa Sur hotel Wednesday night on orders from the public prosecutors' office. Officers seized items including computer hard drives and footage from hotel cameras, a government official told The Associated Press, speaking on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak publicly.

The singer died Oct. 16 after falling from the third-floor balcony in the up-market, touristy Palermo district. According to the autopsy, Payne died from multiple injuries as well as both internal and external bleeding caused by the fall. His body was found in the hotel's internal courtyard.

Initial investigations suggest that the musician was alone and experiencing a "breakdown" due to consumption of substances that have not yet been determined. Following Payne's death, police found substances in his hotel room, as well as several destroyed objects and furniture, according to the public prosecutors' office.

The British boyband star had cocaine in his system, according to a preliminary toxicology report published by local press Monday and confirmed to the AP by a source familiar. Definitive results aren't expected to be made public for several weeks.

The Casa Sur hotel has become a place for Payne's fans to pay their respects. They have left flowers, candles and photos of the singer in a makeshift shrine around a tree at the hotel's entrance.

The singer's father, Geoff Payne, is in Buenos Aires arranging the repatriation of his son's body, which is expected to be released around Oct. 28.

Payne's family — which includes his mother Karen Payne and his two sisters Ruth and Nicola — have expressed their devastation over the loss, as have his former bandmates. Artists and celebrities from various countries continue to share their grief.

One Direction was among the most successful boy bands of recent times. It announced an indefinite hiatus in 2016 and Payne — like his former bandmates Zayn Malik, Harry Styles, Niall Horan, and Louis Tomlinson — pursued a solo career.

The singer had posted on his Snapchat account that he traveled to Argentina to attend Horan's concert in Buenos Aires on Oct. 2. He shared videos of himself dancing with his girlfriend, American influencer Kate Cassidy, and singing along in the stands. Cassidy had left Argentina after the show, but Payne stayed behind.

## By moving to podcasts, Harris and Trump are turning away from legacy media to spread their messages

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Among the legacy news outlets that have come up empty in their efforts to interview Kamala Harris and Donald Trump during the general election campaign: NPR, The New York Times, PBS and The Washington Post.

Yet Harris chose to meet with Alex Cooper for her "Call Her Daddy" podcast and talk a little Bay Area basketball with the fellows on "All the Smoke." Trump rejected "60 Minutes," but has hung out with the bros on the "Bussin' With the Boys" and "Flagrant." Harris sat Thursday for an interview in Georgia with former NFL player Shannon Sharpe for his podcast "Club Shay Shay."

During this truncated campaign, some of the traditional giants of journalism are being pushed aside. The growing popularity of podcasts and their ability to help candidates in a tight race target a specific sliver of the electorate is a big reason why.

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There are certainly exceptions. Harris spoke to NBC News' Hallie Jackson on Tuesday and held a CNN town hall on Wednesday. But political columnist John Heilemann of Puck noticed what he called "an ancient, dying beast railing against the diminishment of its status and stature in the new world."

"The campaigns have their structures and their media plans are very carefully thought through, even if we don't agree with them," said Sara Just, senior executive producer of the PBS "NewsHour." "Obviously, we hope they will do long, probing interviews with PBS."

Journalists consider that an important service. Said Eric Marrapodi, vice president for news programming at NPR: "I think Americans deserve to hear the candidates have their ideas challenged."

Big-media interviews used to be a staple for candidates

That sounds like a campaign staff's worst nightmare, infinite opportunities for their candidates to trip up and have an unplanned story dominate the news cycle. And to what end? Most legacy news organizations don't have the reach they used to, and their audience skews old.

For half a century, a "60 Minutes" interview near the election was considered a key stop for presidential candidates. But Trump shunned broadcast television's most influential news show this year, and has criticized the way its interview with Harris was edited.

The former president has stuck largely to what he perceives as friendly venues with direct access to his base audience, and continually feeds interviews to Fox News Channel despite grumbling he doesn't find the network loyal enough. Indeed, Fox has also proven important to the Democratic ticket, which believes that appearing on its shows demonstrates willingness to deal with a hostile environment.

Harris' interview with Bret Baier was so contentious that it became fodder for a "Saturday Night Live" parody. After her running mate, Tim Walz, was interviewed by Shannon Bream on "Fox News Sunday" earlier this month, the campaign sought and received a return engagement the next week.

"I was a little surprised," Bream admitted to Walz. "What's that about?"

Many news outlets don't reach as many people as they used to

In general, television networks don't have the audience they once did. CNN, for example, reached 1.24 million viewers per evening during the third quarter of 2016, when Trump first ran, and 924,000 this year, according to the Nielsen company. Broadcast networks are so named for their ability to reach a broad audience; sometimes candidates need that, often they don't.

The picture is more dire at newspapers, which collectively boasted 37.8 million in Sunday circulation in 2016 and dropped to 20.9 million by 2022, the Pew Research Center said. Candidates once submitted to tough interviews with newspaper editorial boards in the hope of winning an endorsement; now many newspapers don't even bother making that choice.

For years, candidates have been able to target advertising messages with great specificity — a swing state, even competitive cities, for example. The media now offers more opportunities to micro-message in the same way. Eager to shore up support among Black men, Harris appeared on Charlamagne The God's influential radio program — CNN and MSNBC even simulcast it — and was interviewed by MSNBC's Al Sharpton.

"The View" and Stephen Colbert's "Late Show," where Harris has appeared, enabled her to talk to people less inclined to follow the news.

Podcasts allow for more precise audience targeting

Few outlets offer the opportunity to zero in on an audience better than podcasts, which have essentially doubled in listenership since 2016.

The format is narrowcasting at its finest, said Andy Bowers, co-founder of the on-demand audio company Spooler Media. People who listen to podcasts often feel an intense loyalty to their favorites, almost like they're part of a club of people with similar traits and interests — and a candidate has been invited into that club for a day.

"You're talking to a specific audience with a specific bent and frame of mind," said Tom Bettag, a University of Maryland journalism professor. "That's very helpful to somebody who is trying to avoid saying the wrong thing at the wrong time."

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For her interview with Alex Cooper on "Call Her Daddy," Harris appeared on the most popular podcast for women. They discussed abortion, and one of Cooper's questions sounded like a grooved pitch: "What do you think of Trump saying he will be a protector of women?"

On the "Flagrant" podcast, hosts asked questions about Trump's children and how he felt during his assassination attempt. Host Akaash Singh interrupted Trump at one point to compliment him on how he raised his children.

"I think I like this interview," Trump said. His appearance on the podcast, one of several efforts he has made to reach young men, has been seen by nearly 5.5 million people on YouTube alone.

Issues come up during these discussions, often mixed with the personal. On "All the Smoke," the hosts began by asking Harris about the blind date where she met her husband.

Don't write off legacy outlets yet

Certainly not everyone is writing an obituary for traditional journalists and their coverage of campaigns. "I don't view it as a big break that takes away from legacy media," said Rick Klein, ABC's Washington bureau chief. ABC's opportunity to question the candidates came in the most public of forums, when the network hosted the only debate between Harris and Trump.

Of the 10 sources of campaign news with the most views on TikTok over the past 60 days, six were legacy news outlets, according to Zelf, a social video analytics company. They were ABC News, CNN, NBC News, MSNBC, Univision and the Daily Mail.

For a strong news organization, there's also a lot more that goes into covering a presidential campaign than sit-down interviews with candidates.

"I don't think journalists should worry too much about access journalism," said Mark Lukasiewicz, dean of the Hofstra University School of Communication and a former NBC News producer. "We should do journalism."

David Halbfinger, political editor of The New York Times, cautioned against drawing too many conclusions based on a campaign that was unusually short due to Harris' late entrance into the race. The Times has followed the campaign aggressively with trend stories, investigations and spot news coverage.

"It's hard to know what the lessons will be," Halbfinger said. "For a long time, candidates have tried to go around the news media. One way or another, the mainstream media does its job so I don't know how effective that strategy is. But it will be an interesting case study someday to see."

## **McDonald's and Boar's Head outbreaks may have you worried.**

### **Experts say the food supply is safe**

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

From Boar's Head deli meat and waffles to McDonald's Quarter Pounders, this year's illness outbreaks — some deadly — and food recalls may have Americans wondering whether there are new risks in the U.S. food supply.

But experts say it's business as usual when it comes to the complicated task of keeping food safe.

The U.S. ranks near the top for food safety out of 113 countries included in the Global Food Security Index, which measures aspects of food availability and quality, according to the Food and Drug Administration.

"The U.S. food supply remains one of the safest in the world," FDA officials said in a statement.

People might be alarmed at the "number of really high-profile recalls that affect a lot of people," said Teresa Murray, who directs the consumer watchdog office for the consumer-interest advocacy group PIRG.

"These are products that people eat on a regular basis," she said.

On average, the two federal agencies that oversee the U.S. food supply — the FDA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture — announce more than 300 food recalls and alerts each year. The FDA regulates about 80% of foods, including dairy products, fruit and vegetables, while the USDA regulates meat and poultry, among other foods.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention annually tracks about 800 foodborne illness out-

breaks, in which two or more people are sickened by the same food or drink. Most of the estimated 48 million cases of food poisoning each year are not related to confirmed outbreaks, the agency said.

The pace of food recalls and alerts appears to be brisk this year, with more than 300 logged already as of mid-October. But recalls are different than illness outbreaks, which are increasingly detected by sophisticated genetic sequencing, said Donald Schaffner, a food science expert at Rutgers University.

"I don't think the food supply is getting less safe," Schaffner said. "I think we're stuck in place. We're not getting any better."

Federal data shows the U.S. has made little progress toward reducing rates of foodborne illness as called for in Healthy People 2030, an effort to boost population-level health and well-being.

The nation has budged only slightly since 2016-2018 in reducing infections caused by salmonella and listeria — the latter being the germ behind the deadly Boar's Head outbreak, in which at least 10 people died and nearly 50 were hospitalized.

And there has been little or no progress in cutting infections caused by campylobacter or the type of toxin-producing *E. coli* linked to this week's McDonald's outbreak.

"People should be reminded that food safety is a serious public health issue. All food carries risk" said Barbara Kowalcyk, director of the Institute for Food Safety and Nutrition Security at George Washington University. "We need to remember that most of our food comes from the ground or from animals."

The landmark Food Safety Modernization Act, enacted in 2011, gave the FDA new authority to regulate the way foods are grown, harvested and processed. Under a rule finalized in 2022, which takes effect in 2026, suppliers will be required to keep records to trace fresh produce like the onions in the McDonald's outbreak back to the source.

Such efforts alone can't guarantee safety, Kowalcyk said. Testing, inspections, training and education can all reduce the chances that food becomes contaminated and potentially causes illnesses.

"In food safety, no mitigation or risk strategy is perfect," she said. "You build in hurdles across the system and with the combination of the hurdles, you will catch the problem."

Limited funding for public health agencies may erode those efforts, Kowalcyk noted.

On a recent call with food safety advocates and reporters, FDA chief Dr. Robert Califf said funding for the agency's food safety duties has remained stagnant for years.

"It has kept up with the cost of living but nothing incrementally for three decades in an environment which is really complicated, if you look at the human food system," Califf said.

People can cut their risk of foodborne illness by following safe handling practices, including avoiding cross-contamination of foods, proper storage and frequent handwashing and sanitizing surfaces and kitchen tools at home. Beyond that, they can put pressure on stores, restaurants and government officials to ensure food safety.

"You can reach out to your congressional representative and tell them food safety is important to you," Kowalcyk said. "You can also contact food companies. If you see something, say something."

## **The RNC is rebuilding its legal operation after Trump allies' failed effort to undo the 2020 race**

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The last time Donald Trump ran for president, the lawyers most directly involved in his efforts to overturn the election wound up sanctioned, criminally prosecuted or even sued for millions of dollars.

This time around, Republican party leaders are working to present a more organized, skilled legal operation even as Trump continues to deny he lost the 2020 election and sows doubt about the integrity of the upcoming one.

"It has been very important to make sure that in every aspect, we are going to have a fully professional operation," RNC Chairman Michael Whatley told The Associated Press.



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As Republicans and Democrats fight in court over election rules, the Trump team finds itself under a particularly intense microscope given the aftermath of the 2020 race when meritless legal efforts challenging the results were repeatedly rejected by judges appointed by presidents of both political parties. Scrambling to undo the results, Trump's supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, in a violent clash with law enforcement.

The chaotic court challenges were pushed by a loosely organized group of lawyers who ascended in Trump's orbit after experienced, establishment attorneys who had advised the then-president during the campaign backed away from his false claims of widespread fraud. This year, the Republican National Committee has launched a coordinated "election integrity" initiative that involves the recruitment of thousands of lawyers, polling-place monitors and poll workers and that officials insist will operate within the law.

"What we have seen in court over the course of the last six months and as we've ramped up to these 130-plus lawsuits is a testament to making sure that we're working with the states and working with the courts to get a really truly, responsible program up and running," Whatley added.

But there's no guarantee that a well-credentialed team will equal better results if the arguments are again rooted in baseless claims, or that the effort, like in 2020, won't be co-opted after the election by different attorneys.

A new legal team takes shape

Among the lawyers with prominent roles are Steven Kenny, the RNC's senior counsel, who worked at the high-powered law firm of Jones Day; Gineen Bresso, who was nominated by then-President George W. Bush to serve on the U.S. Election Assistance Commission and later became chair; and Josh Helton, general counsel for Mike Huckabee's 2016 presidential campaign.

David Warrington, who represented Trump during the congressional Jan. 6 investigation, has also been involved in lawsuits, including one in Michigan challenging the designation of voter registration agencies.

The RNC's litigation so far has been aimed at ensuring voter ID requirements; asserting that non-citizens are improperly voting; and challenging what they see as lax rules on mail-in and absentee voting.

Democrats have sounded alarms about the election integrity initiative, calling it an effort to sow distrust in the process and pave the way to cry foul if Trump loses, and have warned that election deniers installed in voting-related positions may refuse to certify legitimate results. They've assembled a team of veteran attorneys, including longtime Democratic lawyer Marc Elias, and filed their own lawsuits, including challenging Georgia rules they fear could be used by Trump allies to delay or avoid certification. A judge last week invalidated seven of the rules.

The flurry of litigation is hardly surprising in a competitive election between Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee, that could turn on about a half-dozen battleground states.

Familiar figures from 2020 have resurfaced

Cleta Mitchell, an attorney who participated in a January 2021 phone call in which Trump implored Georgia officials to "find" enough votes to declare him the winner, has championed lawsuits challenging rules on how overseas voters, including military members abroad, cast their ballots. (On Monday, judges in North Carolina and Michigan rejected efforts to disqualify ballots of certain overseas voters.)

The RNC earlier this year named Christina Bobb to head its election integrity division. A former reporter for the conservative One America News Network, Bobb has been indicted by Arizona's attorney general, accused of joining an effort to promote a slate of Trump electors after the 2020 election even though Democrat Joe Biden won the state. Her attorney, Thomas Jacobs, said Bobb "had no involvement in the arrangements to select or present these alternate electors" and would seek to dismiss the charges.

Trump says there's no evidence of cheating so far in 2024

Trump has been criminally charged with trying to overturn the 2020 election, yet his continued insistence that the contest was marred by fraud has been adopted by many within the party even though judges, election officials and Trump's own attorney general found no evidence of that.

It's also created continued divisions within the party.

In May, Charlie Spies, a veteran election law attorney with ties to Mitt Romney and Ron DeSantis, re-

signed as the RNC's chief counsel after about two months. He made waves at the 2021 Conservative Political Action Conference by saying there was "zero evidence" a voting machine software glitch had caused thousands of votes to switch in the 2020 election.

Whatley said in a radio interview in the weeks after the 2020 election that there was "massive fraud." But he has largely avoided using Trump's characterization of Biden's victory, and said in one 2021 interview that Biden "absolutely" was legitimately elected.

Standing together Monday in North Carolina, Trump praised Whatley as having been "very much into stopping the steal" in 2020. Though Trump has said he hasn't seen evidence of cheating in 2024, he has repeatedly raised doubts about the process, telling his supporters they need to turn out to make the result "too big to rig."

Among the established Republican political lawyers who resisted the legal challenges in 2020 was Justin Riemer, a lawyer for John McCain's 2008 campaign who was later chief counsel for the RNC but clashed with Trump allies after the election. He warned an RNC colleague in a November 2020 email that the legal efforts by lawyers including Rudy Giuliani and Jenna Ellis were getting "laughed out of court."

"It's setting us back in our fight for election integrity and they are misleading millions of people who have wishful thinking that the president is going to somehow win this thing," Riemer wrote in the email about Giuliani and Ellis, who were both instrumental in engineering Trump's failed efforts to overturn the election.

Consequences for Trump-allied lawyers

Giuliani was disbarred in New York and Washington; Ellis lost her law license in Colorado. The two, along with Sidney Powell, another lawyer central to advancing Trump's claims, were among 19 people charged in Fulton County, Georgia, with conspiring to overturn the election.

Both Powell and Ellis pleaded guilty.

Giuliani was ordered to pay \$148 million to two former Georgia poll workers who sued him over lies he spread about them in 2020 that upended their lives. He subsequently filed for bankruptcy.

"All of that," said UCLA law professor Rick Hasen, "should be a deterrent to a thinking lawyer who might want to replicate something like that."

## **Trump says if he takes office, he'll fire special counsel Jack Smith 'within 2 seconds'**

By DAN MERICA and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump said Thursday that if he wins the White House, he will fire special counsel Jack Smith "within two seconds" of taking office.

Trump was asked during an interview with conservative radio host Hugh Hewitt whether he would first pardon himself or terminate Smith to remove the legal cloud hanging over him. Smith, who was appointed by Attorney General Merrick Garland in 2022, has charged the former president over his efforts to overturn the 2020 election and his mishandling of classified documents.

"It's so easy. I would fire him within two seconds," Trump responded. "He'll be one of the first things addressed."

Trump, who regularly assails Smith and has suggested before that he would fire him if he were president, called Smith a "crooked person."

Trump, if elected, could order the Justice Department to remove Smith. Trump probably would not be able to do it on his own because Smith is not a presidential appointee.

When Trump, while president, was investigated by special counsel Robert Mueller, Trump urged his then-White House counsel, Don McGahn, to press the Justice Department to terminate Mueller. McGahn refused.

Smith has brought two federal cases against Trump. One, accusing him of illegally retaining classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, was dismissed in July, a decision that Smith is appealing. The other, charging him with plotting to overturn the 2020 presidential election, has been delayed by a Supreme Court opinion conferring broad immunity for official acts made while president.

After Trump said he would fire Smith, Hewitt raised the possibility that Congress could impeach Trump over that move. Trump said he did not believe that would happen.

"I don't think they'll impeach me if I fire Jack Smith," Trump said. "Jack Smith is a scoundrel."

Democrat Kamala Harris' campaign has sought to use revelations from Smith's investigations into Trump against the Republican candidate. They released an ad earlier this month that featured video from the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol and headlines from Smith's investigation.

"He knew what he was doing," the ad shows on screen.

While Trump criticized Smith, he praised U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon, the Trump appointee who dismissed the classified documents case against the former president in July.

"We had a brave, brilliant judge in Florida," Trump said. "She's a brilliant judge, by the way. I don't know her. I never spoke to her. Never spoke to her. But we had a brave and very brilliant judge."

## **The Paris conference for Lebanon raises \$1 billion in pledges for humanitarian and military support**

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — An international conference for Lebanon in Paris on Thursday raised \$1 billion in pledges for humanitarian aid and military support to help the country where war between Hezbollah militants and Israel has displaced a million people, killed over 2,500, and deepened an economic crisis, French organizers said.

In his closing speech, France's foreign minister Jean-Noël Barrot said: "We have collectively raised \$800 million in humanitarian aid and \$200 million for the security forces, that's about \$1 billion." The Paris conference gathered over 70 nations and international organizations.

French President Emmanuel Macron had called on participants to bring "massive aid" to support the country, as France promised \$100 million.

"We're up to the challenge," Barrot said. The United States pledged to provide about \$300 million, he added.

Germany pledged a total of 96 million euros in humanitarian aid to both Lebanon and neighboring Syria, also deeply affected by escalating violence in the Middle East. Italy announced this week an additional 10 million euros (\$10.8 million) in aid for Lebanon.

The United Nations had previously estimated the urgent humanitarian needs in Lebanon to be \$426 million.

However, experts warn that delivering aid could be challenging as Lebanon's growing dependence on informal and cash economy increases lack of transparency and corruption risks.

Strengthening Lebanon's armed forces

The Paris conference also aimed at coordinating international support to strengthen Lebanon's armed forces so they can deploy in the country's south as part of a potential deal to end the war. Such a deal could see Hezbollah withdraw its forces from the border.

This support to the Lebanese military includes "helping with health care, fuel, small equipment, but also supporting the plan to recruit at least 6,000 additional soldiers and to enable the deployment of at least 8,000 additional soldiers in the south," Macron said.

Paris also seeks to help restore Lebanon's sovereignty and strengthen its institutions. The country, where Hezbollah effectively operates as a state within a state, has been without a president for two years while political factions fail to agree on a new one.

U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres, in a pre-recorded video, called on Lebanon's leaders "to take decisive action to ensure the proper functioning of state institutions in order to meet the country's urgent political and security challenges."

Lebanese prime minister urges international action

Acting Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati urged the international community to take action.

"The devastating impact of this war on our nation cannot be overstated, and it has left a trail of destruction and misery in its wake. The Israelis' aggression has not only caused immense human suffering and

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loss of lives, but also inflicted severe damage to the country's infrastructure, economy and social fabric," Mikati said Thursday in Paris.

In Lebanon, an Israeli airstrike killed early Thursday three Lebanese soldiers, including an officer, as they were evacuating wounded people in southern Lebanon. The Lebanese army said Israeli forces have targeted it on eight occasions since an all-out war broke out between Israel and Hezbollah in September.

The Israeli army apologized for a strike on Sunday that it said mistakenly killed three soldiers, and on Wednesday said it was looking into whether "a number of soldiers of the Lebanese army were accidentally harmed" after it targeted what it says was Hezbollah infrastructure.

Israel in the past month has launched a major aerial bombardment and ground invasion of Lebanon as it says it's targeting Hezbollah, with strikes hitting the capital, Beirut, and elsewhere.

The International Organization for Migration has said about 800,000 people are displaced, with many now in overcrowded shelters, while others have fled across the border into Syria. Mikati on Thursday estimated the number of displaced people is over 1.4 million, including 500,000 children.

A government ill-prepared to deal with the crisis

The cash-strapped Lebanese government is ill-prepared to deal with the crisis or the increased demands on its health system. Several have been evacuated because of nearby airstrikes and fears that they might be targeted.

Lebanon's army has been hit hard by five years of economic crisis. It has an aging arsenal and no air defenses, leaving it in no position to defend against Israeli incursions or confront Hezbollah.

The Lebanese army has about 80,000 troops, around 5,000 of them deployed in the south. Hezbollah has more than 100,000 fighters, according to the militant group's late leader, Hassan Nasrallah. The militant group's arsenal, built with support from Iran, is more advanced.

Supporting U.N. peacekeeping forces

Conference participants discussed how to support the 10,500-soldier-strong U.N. peacekeeping mission, UNIFIL. European nations including France, Italy and Spain provide a third of its troops.

Italy, which has over 1,000 troops in UNIFIL, is pushing for the peacekeeping force to be strengthened to "be able to face the new situation" on the ground, an Italian diplomat said, speaking anonymously to discuss ongoing talks.

Guterres said Thursday that "attacks on U.N. peacekeepers are totally unacceptable and are contrary to international law, contrary to international humanitarian law and may constitute a war crime."

France's historic links with Lebanon, a former colony, and its influential diplomacy give Paris momentum to coordinate "a proper response to the massive challenge that the war in Lebanon now poses," said Middle East expert Rym Montaz, editor-in-chief of Carnegie Europe's blog Strategic Europe.

"What we do know is that without a strengthened Lebanese armed forces and UNIFIL, there can be no sustainable peace and stability at the border between Lebanon and Israel," Montaz said. "As such, the French efforts are important and crucial for the way forward."

## One Tech Tip: How to prepare your online accounts for when you die

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — Most people have accumulated a pile of data — selfies, emails, videos and more — on their social media and digital accounts over their lifetimes. What happens to it when we die?

It's wise to draft a will spelling out who inherits your physical assets after you're gone, but don't forget to take care of your digital estate too. Friends and family might treasure files and posts you've left behind, but they could get lost in digital purgatory after you pass away unless you take some simple steps.

Here's how you can prepare your digital life for your survivors:

Apple

The iPhone maker lets you nominate a "legacy contact" who can access your Apple account's data after you die. The company says it's a secure way to give trusted people access to photos, files and messages. To set it up you'll need an Apple device with a fairly recent operating system — iPhones and iPads need

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iOS or iPadOS 15.2 and MacBooks needs macOS Monterey 12.1.

For iPhones, go to settings, tap Sign-in & Security and then Legacy Contact. You can name one or more people, and they don't need an Apple ID or device.

You'll have to share an access key with your contact. It can be a digital version sent electronically, or you can print a copy or save it as a screenshot or PDF.

Take note that there are some types of files you won't be able to pass on — including digital rights-protected music, movies and passwords stored in Apple's password manager. Legacy contacts can only access a deceased user's account for three years before Apple deletes the account.

## Google

Google takes a different approach with its Inactive Account Manager, which allows you to share your data with someone if it notices that you've stopped using your account.

When setting it up, you need to decide how long Google should wait — from three to 18 months — before considering your account inactive. Once that time is up, Google can notify up to 10 people.

You can write a message informing them you've stopped using the account, and, optionally, include a link to download your data. You can choose what types of data they can access — including emails, photos, calendar entries and YouTube videos.

There's also an option to automatically delete your account after three months of inactivity, so your contacts will have to download any data before that deadline.

## Facebook and Instagram

Some social media platforms can preserve accounts for people who have died so that friends and family can honor their memories.

When users of Facebook or Instagram die, parent company Meta says it can memorialize the account if it gets a "valid request" from a friend or family member. Requests can be submitted through an online form.

The social media company strongly recommends Facebook users add a legacy contact to look after their memorial accounts. Legacy contacts can do things like respond to new friend requests and update pinned posts, but they can't read private messages or remove or alter previous posts. You can only choose one person, who also has to have a Facebook account.

You can also ask Facebook or Instagram to delete a deceased user's account if you're a close family member or an executor. You'll need to send in documents like a death certificate.

## TikTok

The video-sharing platform says that if a user has died, people can submit a request to memorialize the account through the settings menu. Go to the Report a Problem section, then Account and profile, then Manage account, where you can report a deceased user.

Once an account has been memorialized, it will be labeled "Remembering." No one will be able to log into the account, which prevents anyone from editing the profile or using the account to post new content or send messages.

## X

It's not possible to nominate a legacy contact on Elon Musk's social media site. But family members or an authorized person can submit a request to deactivate a deceased user's account.

## Passwords

Besides the major online services, you'll probably have dozens if not hundreds of other digital accounts that your survivors might need to access. You could just write all your login credentials down in a notebook and put it somewhere safe. But making a physical copy presents its own vulnerabilities. What if you lose track of it? What if someone finds it?

Instead, consider a password manager that has an emergency access feature. Password managers are digital vaults that you can use to store all your credentials. Some, like Keeper, Bitwarden and NordPass, allow users to nominate one or more trusted contacts who can access their keys in case of an emergency such as a death.

But there are a few catches: Those contacts also need to use the same password manager and you might have to pay for the service.

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## Today in History: October 25, Teapot Dome Scandal conviction

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Oct. 25, the 299th day of 2024. There are 67 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Oct. 25, 1929, former Secretary of the Interior Albert B. Fall was convicted of accepting bribes in exchange for oil field leases at Teapot Dome in Wyoming and the Elk Hills and Buena Vista oil fields in California. As a result of the "Teapot Dome Scandal," Fall would become the first U.S. cabinet member to be imprisoned for crimes committed while in office.

Also on this date:

In 1760, Britain's King George III succeeded his late grandfather, George II.

In 1859, radical abolitionist John Brown went on trial in Charles Town, Virginia, for his failed raid at Harpers Ferry. (He was convicted and later hanged.)

In 1962, during a meeting of the U.N. Security Council, U.S. Ambassador Adlai E. Stevenson II demanded that Soviet Ambassador Valerian Zorin confirm or deny the existence of Soviet-built missile bases in Cuba. Stevenson then presented photographic evidence of the bases to the council.

In 1983, a U.S.-led force invaded Grenada at the order of President Ronald Reagan, who said the action was needed to protect U.S. citizens there.

In 1986, in Game 6 of the World Series, the New York Mets rallied for three runs with two outs in the 10th inning, defeating the Boston Red Sox 6-5 and forcing a seventh game; the tie-breaking run scored on Boston first baseman Bill Buckner's error on Mookie Wilson's slow grounder. (The Mets went on to win Game 7 and the Series.)

In 1999, golfer Payne Stewart and five others were killed when their Learjet crashed in a field in South Dakota; Stewart was 42.

In 2002, Democratic U.S. Sen. Paul Wellstone of Minnesota was killed in a plane crash in northern Minnesota along with his wife, daughter and five others, a week and a-half before the election.

In 2022, Rishi Sunak became Britain's first prime minister of color after being chosen to lead a governing Conservative Party.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Marion Ross is 96. Author Anne Tyler is 83. Rock singer Jon Anderson (Yes) is 80. Political strategist James Carville is 80. Basketball Hall of Famer Dave Cowens is 76. Olympic gold medal wrestler Dan Gable is 76. Olympic gold medal hockey player Mike Eruzione is 70. Actor Nancy Cartwright (TV: "The Simpsons") is 67. Rock drummer Chad Smith (Red Hot Chili Peppers) is 63. Actor-comedian-TV host Samantha Bee is 55. Country singer Chely (SHEL'-ee) Wright is 54. Violinist Midori is 53. Baseball Hall of Famer Pedro Martinez is 53. Actor Craig Robinson is 53. Author Zadie Smith is 49. Actor Mehcad (muh-KAD') Brooks is 44. Pop singer Katy Perry is 40. Singer Ciara is 39. Golfer Xander Schauffele is 31. MLB All-Star Juan Soto is 26.