

Groton Daily Independent

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Thursday, Oct. 31

Senior Menu: Chili, cornbread, coleslaw, fruit.
School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.
School Lunch: Slugs and cheese (Mac and cheese), frog eyes (peas).
Football Playoffs
Downtown Trick or Treat, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.
United Methodist Trunk or Treat, 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Friday, Nov. 1

Senior Menu: Pork cutlet, creamy noodles, California blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Egg wraps.
School Lunch: Sweet and sour chicken, rice.

Saturday, Nov. 2

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 209 N Main

Sunday, Nov. 3

Standard Time: Turn clocks back one hour
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; Milestones 2nd and 3rd graders, Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's, 9 a.m., and at Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.
United Methodist: Worship with communion at Conde, 8:30 a.m., and at Groton, 10:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:30 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.
SEAS Fall Dinner, 5 p.m.

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

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1440

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

Virginia's Voter Rolls

The US Supreme Court temporarily allowed a voter-removal program to continue in Virginia yesterday after a federal judge blocked the initiative last week. The emergency stay comes less than a week before the general election, in which over 56 million people across the US have already cast votes.

Gov. Glenn Youngkin (R) signed an order in August to remove registered voters whose driver's license applications suggested they might be noncitizens, canceling roughly 1,600 voter registrations. A federal judge last week ruled the program violated federal laws prohibiting states from systematically removing ineligible voters within 90 days of an election. The case is expected to resume after the election.

The stay comes as the candidates lay out final arguments ahead of Election Day (read summaries). National polls indicate a virtual tie between former President Donald Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris, with a slight lead for Trump in most of the seven battleground states.

Dodgers Win Series

The Los Angeles Dodgers won the 2024 World Series last night, beating the New York Yankees 7-6 in Game 5. The victory marks the Dodgers' eighth championship title and the team's first full season championship win since 1988; the Dodgers secured the title during a shortened season in 2020.

The team's win came after a turnaround fifth inning, in which the Dodgers ended the Yankees' 5-0 lead following three defensive miscues, tying up the game 5-5. Despite the Yankees regaining the lead in the sixth inning, the Dodgers pulled ahead in the eighth. Dodgers first baseman Freddie Freeman was named the 2024 World Series MVP after becoming the first player to hit homers in the first four games of a World Series.

The Dodgers parade will take place tomorrow morning in downtown Los Angeles.

Record Spain Flooding

Flash flooding has killed at least 95 people across eastern and southern Spain since Tuesday, with the death toll expected to rise. The floods—the result of months' worth of rainfall in the span of hours—are Spain's worst in at least three decades.

The vast majority of deaths were concentrated in the coastal region of Valencia, where about 155,000 customers lost electricity. The damage is extensive, with rainfall turning village streets into nearly 10-foot-high rivers at some points, transforming trash, cars, and debris into projectiles. Countless residents are still missing, with search and rescue efforts ongoing.

The storms have been attributed to a weather pattern known as a high-altitude isolated depression, when cold and warm air meet to form especially strong rain clouds. In this case, low pressure near the Strait of Gibraltar combined with above-average water surface temperatures from the Mediterranean Sea.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Soccer's European governing body UEFA pledges \$1B over the next six years to develop women's soccer across Europe.

Actors Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney sell minority stake in Welsh soccer club Wrexham to New York family.

Morgan Wallen's "Love Somebody" ends Shaboozey's "A Bar Song (Tipsy)" nearly four-month reign atop the Billboard Hot 100 chart.

Grammy Awards to be simulcast across ABC, Hulu, and Disney+ beginning in 2027; CBS has hosted the awards show since 1973.

Federal grand jury in New York is hearing new evidence in Sean "Diddy" Combs' racketeering and sex trafficking case.

Science & Technology

Study finds autism diagnoses in the US rose by 175% between 2011 and 2022, with people aged 26 to 34 seeing a 450% increase; researchers attribute rise to improved screening and other unidentified factors.

Deep sleep helps recovery from heart attacks, researchers discover; immune cells that stimulate sleep neurons are released following heart attacks, which in turn reduces inflammation in the heart.

Researchers create ultra-precise 3D tumor maps of kidney, colon, breast, and other types of cancers; "tumor atlases" reveal of the cancers evolve with single-cell resolution.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.3%, Dow -0.2%, Nasdaq -0.6%) after report shows US economy grew slower-than-expected in Q3 at a 2.8% annual rate.

Super Micro Computer shares close down 33% after auditor resigns.

Reddit shares close up 42% after reporting first-ever profit a day before.

Microsoft earnings top expectations, with revenue up 16% year-over-year thanks to cloud business.

Meta beats earnings expectations, posts lower-than-expected daily active users.

Russia fines Google \$20 decillion over channel bans on YouTube; figure exceeds world's total GDP.

Estée Lauder appoints longtime senior executive Stéphane de la Faverie as CEO.

Dropbox to lay off 528 people—about 20% of workforce.

Politics & World Affairs

Pentagon says North Korean troops in Russian uniforms are headed toward Russia's Kursk region, where Ukraine has launched a counter-offensive; number of troops estimated to be between 3,000 and 11,000 people.

Taliban bars Afghan women from praying loudly, reciting prayers in front of other women in latest ruling.

McDonald's E. coli outbreak spreads to 90 people across 13 states; CDC says sliced onions are the likely source.



**3 bedroom apartment for rent.
Above laundromat in Downtown Groton.
Call/Text Tina 605-397-7285
Or Paul at 605-397-7460
\$650/Month Includes utilities**



**1 bedroom apartment for rent.
Above laundromat in Downtown Groton.
Call/Text Tina 605-397-7285
Or Paul at 605-397-7460
\$500/Month Includes utilities**

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Groton Area October Students of the Month



Emma Kutter
Senior



Rylee Dunker
Junior



Ashlynn Warrington
Sophomore



TC Schuster
Freshman



Neely Althoff
Eighth Grade



Hudson Eichler
Seventh Grade



Gracie Borg
Sixth Grade

Groton Area School works to ensure that all levels of academic instruction also include the necessary life skills teaching, practicing, and modeling that encourages essential personal life habits that are universally understood to facilitate helping our students become good human beings and citizens.

It is learning with our heads, hearts, and hands to be caring and civil, to make healthy decisions, to effectively problem solve, to be respectful and responsible, to be good citizens, and to be empathetic and ethical individuals.

Students are selected based on individual student growth in the areas of: positive behavior, citizenship, good attendance, a thirst for knowledge, and high academic standards.

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Class A - Region 1 Volleyball

#1 - Webster Armory

| | | | |
|---|------------------------|-------|---|
|  | 4 Webster Area | 12-11 | 11/5 7:00 PM CT |
|  | 5 Britton-Hecla | 14-11 |  |

#2 - Aberdeen Catholic Schools

| | | | |
|---|---------------------------|------|---|
|  | 2 Aberdeen Ronc... | 14-8 | 11/5 6:00 PM CT |
|  | 7 Redfield | 6-19 |  |

#3 - Aberdeen Catholic Schools

| | | | |
|---|-------------------|-------|---|
|  | 3 Sisseton | 14-12 | 11/5 7:30 PM CT |
|  | 6 Milbank | 13-15 |  |

#4 - Groton Area High School

| | | | |
|---|----------------------|------|-----------------------|
|  | 1 Groton Area | 18-6 | 11/7 6:00 PM CT |
| #1 WINNER | | | |

SODAK 16 QUALIFIER



#5 - Groton Area High School

| | | | |
|------------------|--|--|-----------------------|
| #2 WINNER | | | |
| #3 WINNER | | | |
| | | | 11/7 7:30 PM CT |

SODAK 16 QUALIFIER

Seed Points Averages (calculated Oct. 29)

#1 Groton Area 43.375 - #2 Aberdeen Roncalli 42.182 - #3 Sisseton 40.538 - #4 Webster Area 40.304 - #5 Britton-Hecla 40.000 - #6 Milbank 39.929 - #7 Redfield 38.160

NOTICE OF SALE

November 9th, 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 3rd, 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 1st Ave SE, Aberdeen, SD 57401 on November 9th, 2024, at 10:00 AM.

DAVE LUNZMAN, SHERIFF OF BROWN COUNTY.

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

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

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

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Working to Protect & Promote Traditional American Values

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



Visit the Campaign Site
ManhartForHouse.com



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MANHART

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

DISTRICT 1

facebook.com/ManhartLogan | ManhartForHouse.com

General Election - Nov. 5
Absentee Voting has begun



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Health-related nonprofits are funding opposition to the Medicaid work requirement ballot question

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - OCTOBER 30, 2024 3:04 PM

Most of the campaign spending on a ballot question regarding work requirements for Medicaid expansion recipients has been on the “no” side, with major donations from nonprofits that advocate for people with serious medical conditions.

Amendment F would change the South Dakota Constitution to allow legislative consideration of work requirements for people receiving Medicaid under expanded eligibility approved by voters in 2022.

The sole statewide ballot question committee organized in response to the measure is Vote “No” on Amendment F. The committee recently reported raising \$470,000 since September and spending \$250,000. Contributions included \$313,000 from the American Cancer Society, \$65,000 from the American Heart Association and \$33,000 from the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

Additionally, AARP South Dakota reported spending \$97,000 directly on Amendment F advertising, without giving the money to a ballot question committee. The group has a page on its website that encourages South Dakotans to vote no on the measure.

There is no ballot question committee organized specifically to support Amendment F. Ads on YouTube urging a yes vote on Amendment F and a no vote on other ballot questions identify a political action committee, Concerned Citizens of South Dakota, as the responsible entity. The committee reported spending about \$6,000 on advertising in its most recent report.

In 2022, South Dakota voters expanded Medicaid eligibility to adults with incomes up to 138% of the poverty level. The expansion is now part of the state constitution and can only be altered by voters. It includes a ban on “greater or additional burdens or restrictions” such as a work requirement.

Earlier this year, legislators decided to put Amendment F on the Nov. 5 ballot. It would allow lawmakers to consider a work requirement if the federal government permits it. The Democratic Biden administration does not allow it, but future Republican presidents might.

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.

Police commission eases reentry conditions for suspended Brookings officer

BY: JOHN HULT - OCTOBER 30, 2024 11:08 AM

SIoux FALLS — A former Brookings Police Department officer suspended last year for roughing up an intoxicated man at the county jail will be able to reenter law enforcement without a second psychological evaluation.

The state Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Training Commission voted 6-4 to suspend Damian Weets on Oct. 25, 2023. The suspension, which took effect Dec. 5 of that year, required Weets to complete remedial training on de-escalation and two psychological evaluations within 60 days of his reinstatement, with the second doubling as a fit-for-duty evaluation.

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Hank Prim, South Dakota's law enforcement training director, told the commission Wednesday that Weets completed one psychological evaluation in January. The psychologist who conducted that evaluation concluded that there was "a low probability of future violence," Prim said, and did not recommend another evaluation.

Given the results of the first evaluation and Weets' completion of remedial training, Prim asked if the commission would be willing to scrap the requirement for a second fit-for-duty evaluation to avoid wasting resources. The commission pays for evaluations it orders officers to undergo to prove their fitness for duty, and the evaluations cost about \$5,000, Prim said.

The commission voted unanimously to waive the second evaluation. Weets plans to seek employment as an officer again, but Prim told the commission that Weets can't begin applying until his suspension ends Dec. 5.

Weets threw a man named Esai Kaiyou against a wall after picking him up at a Brookings Walmart. Weets had argued during his October 2023 hearing that he'd been attempting to stand Kaiyou up, but the commission concluded that he'd used unnecessary force.

Weets settled a lawsuit from Kaiyou for an undisclosed sum in the run-up to his 2023 commission hearing.

The four commissioners who voted against the yearlong suspension for Weets had argued for a full revocation of his law enforcement certification.

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

Rallying on the Ellipse, Harris calls on voters to reject Trump's 'chaos and division'

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT, ARIANA FIGUEROA AND ASHLEY MURRAY - OCTOBER 30, 2024

WASHINGTON — Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris, with the White House as her backdrop, gave what she called her closing argument Tuesday evening, pressing voters to support her bid over that of "unstable" Republican candidate Donald Trump.

The 30-minute speech on the Ellipse was the same location where Trump, then president, held a rally nearly four years ago before his supporters attacked the U.S. Capitol. Harris highlighted Democrats' core argument that another term for the former president would present a threat to the country's future.

"This election is more than just a choice between two parties and two different candidates," Harris said. "It is a choice about whether we have a country rooted in freedom for every American, or ruled by chaos and division."

Harris evoked the conception of the United States, how it was "born when we wrested freedom from a petty tyrant." She said since then, Americans across generations have fought to protect those freedoms and expand them, from those who marched in the civil rights movement to the troops who stormed the beaches of Normandy.

"They didn't do that only to see us submit to the will of another petty tyrant," she said. "We are not a vessel for the schemes of wannabe dictators."

Karoline Leavitt, Trump campaign national press secretary, said in a statement that Trump's "closing argument to the American people is simple: Kamala broke it; he will fix it."

In the crowd of tens of thousands of rallygoers was LaShaun Martin, 52, of Prince George's County, Maryland, who said she is voting for Harris because the vice president is "incredibly positive."

"She has been for all people, Republicans and Democrats," she said. "It doesn't matter what walk of life you come from. She really wants to represent you, and whatever it is you need to be able to be a prosperous person."

One week until Election Day

Harris' speech took place just one week before voting ends on Nov. 5, following a history-making campaign

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that began when President Joe Biden withdrew from the race following a disastrous debate this summer.

Biden's endorsement of Harris and widespread support from Democrats throughout the country forced the GOP to overhaul its approach to the campaign, as Democrats shifted their focus from the policies that Biden wanted to champion to those important to Harris.

In her remarks, Harris rebuked Trump and his supporters for their disparaging comments about immigrants living in the country illegally, a main element of his campaign.

"Politicians have got to stop treating immigration as an issue to scare up votes in an election," Harris said. "And instead treat it as the serious challenge that it is, that we must finally come together to solve."

Harris pledged to work with Congress on immigration policy as well as a pathway to citizenship for farmworkers and for the more than 500,000 children brought into the country without authorization. They are known as Dreamers, enrolled in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

Harris touched on several of her top policy issues, including housing affordability, abortion access nationwide, a ban on price gouging at grocery stores and expansion of the child tax credit.

Reaching out to the undecided

Harris campaign communications director Michael Tyler previewed the speech earlier Tuesday, telling reporters the vice president would speak directly to undecided voters' "sense of frustration, their sense of exhaustion with the way that our politics have played out under the Trump era — and offer them directly a vision that something is different, that something different is possible."

Trump on Sunday appeared at a six-hour campaign event at Madison Square Garden in New York City that brought bipartisan condemnation for a comedian who called Puerto Rico a "floating island of garbage in the middle of the ocean."

Ahead of Harris' Tuesday speech, Trump gave remarks at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Florida, accusing her of trying to divide the country and seeking to distance himself from the racist and vulgar remarks made by the comedian and other speakers during the rally.

Trump did not take questions, but told ABC News earlier in the day he did not hear the comedian's remarks. "I don't know him," Trump said. "Someone put him up there."

With the presidential race essentially tied, Harris and Trump have both focused their final campaign push on the crucial swing states of Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Harris promised the crowd during her speech that if elected she will protect institutions and the democratic ideals that are the bedrock of American law. She also slammed Trump's comments referring to Democrats as the "enemy from within."

"The fact that someone disagrees with us does not make them the enemy within," Harris said. "They are family, neighbors, classmates, coworkers, they are fellow Americans, and as Americans, we rise and fall together."

Time to 'turn the page'

Harris said the country must move beyond the ever-widening polarization that she described as a distinct feature of Trump's grip on American politics.

"Donald Trump has spent a decade trying to keep the American people divided and afraid of each other," Harris said. "That's who he is."

In her pitch to undecided voters, Harris offered an opportunity to leave the Trump era behind.

"It is time to turn the page on the drama and the conflict, the fear and division," she said. "It is time for a new generation of leadership in America and I am ready to offer that leadership as the next president of the United States."

That leadership, she said, would seek to build on bipartisan work.

"I pledge to seek common ground and common sense solutions to make your life better. I am not looking to score political points. I am looking to make progress," she said. "I pledge to listen to experts, to

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those who will be impacted by the decisions I make and to people who disagree with me. Unlike Donald Trump, I don't believe people who disagree with me are the enemy."

During her speech, protesters advocated for an arms embargo on U.S. military weapons sent to Israel amid the war with Hamas. Several senators have also called for an arms embargo.

"Stop arming Israel. Arms embargo now," one protester said before being escorted out.

The death toll of more than 43,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, according to health authorities there, has fractured Muslims, Arab Americans and anti-war Democrats within the party. It spurred the Uncommitted National Movement that sent 30 delegates to the Democratic National Convention this summer.

After Harris' speech, nearly 100 pro-Palestinian protesters surrounded an exit of the campaign rally.

Harris supporters gather

The campaign's finale in Washington, D.C., was expected to draw more than 50,000 supporters, according to the local NBC affiliate. The Harris campaign estimated 75,000 spectators showed up.

It featured speeches from supporters such as a mother who was able to access affordable insulin for her son because of the Affordable Care Act; a farming couple from Pennsylvania who were previously Trump voters; and Craig Sicknick, the brother of U.S. Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick, who died following the insurrection on the U.S. Capitol.

"(Trump) incited the crowd to riot while my brother and his fellow officers put their lives at risk," Craig Sicknick said. "Now, Mr. Trump is promising to pardon the convicted criminals who attacked our Capitol, killing my brother and injuring over 140 other officers. This is simply wrong."

The Justice Department has charged more than 1,500 defendants in the Jan. 6 attack.

Craig Sicknick endorsed Harris, who he called a "real leader."

The family farmers, Bob and Kristina Lange from Malvern, Pennsylvania, said they are lifelong Republicans, but will be voting for Harris this election.

"It's very clear that Donald Trump doesn't care about helping hard-working people like us," Bob Lange said. "He's too focused on seeking revenge and retribution to care about what we need. We deserve better."

The couple have been featured in multiple digital ads targeting rural voters in Pennsylvania.

History and excitement

Attendees from as far as Illinois to local residents made the trek to the Ellipse for the speech.

Tiffany Norwood, 56, of Washington, D.C., said she attended the rally with her 87-year-old mother, Mary Ann Norwood, for "the history of it, the excitement."

"I feel we need something different in the United States, and she is it," said Tiffany Norwood, who identified herself as an entrepreneur. "Her plan for the economy, for the future, for women, for everyone. I love the fact that it's a big umbrella that includes the melting pot of the United States."

Some attendees weren't old enough to vote, such as 13-year-old Grace Ledford of Champaign, Illinois.

The teenager said her first political rally felt "like a big party."

"Kamala would be a great president because she is, for one, a woman, and she is African American," she said. "A lot of men presidents don't know how hard it is to be a woman, especially Trump."

Daniel Nyquist, 79, of Rockville, Maryland, stood in the crowd wearing a hat with the words "Make America Less Hateful."

"It's the alternative of Trump's theme," Nyquist said, pointing to his hat. "He's a big promoter of hate, and this is to counter that."

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

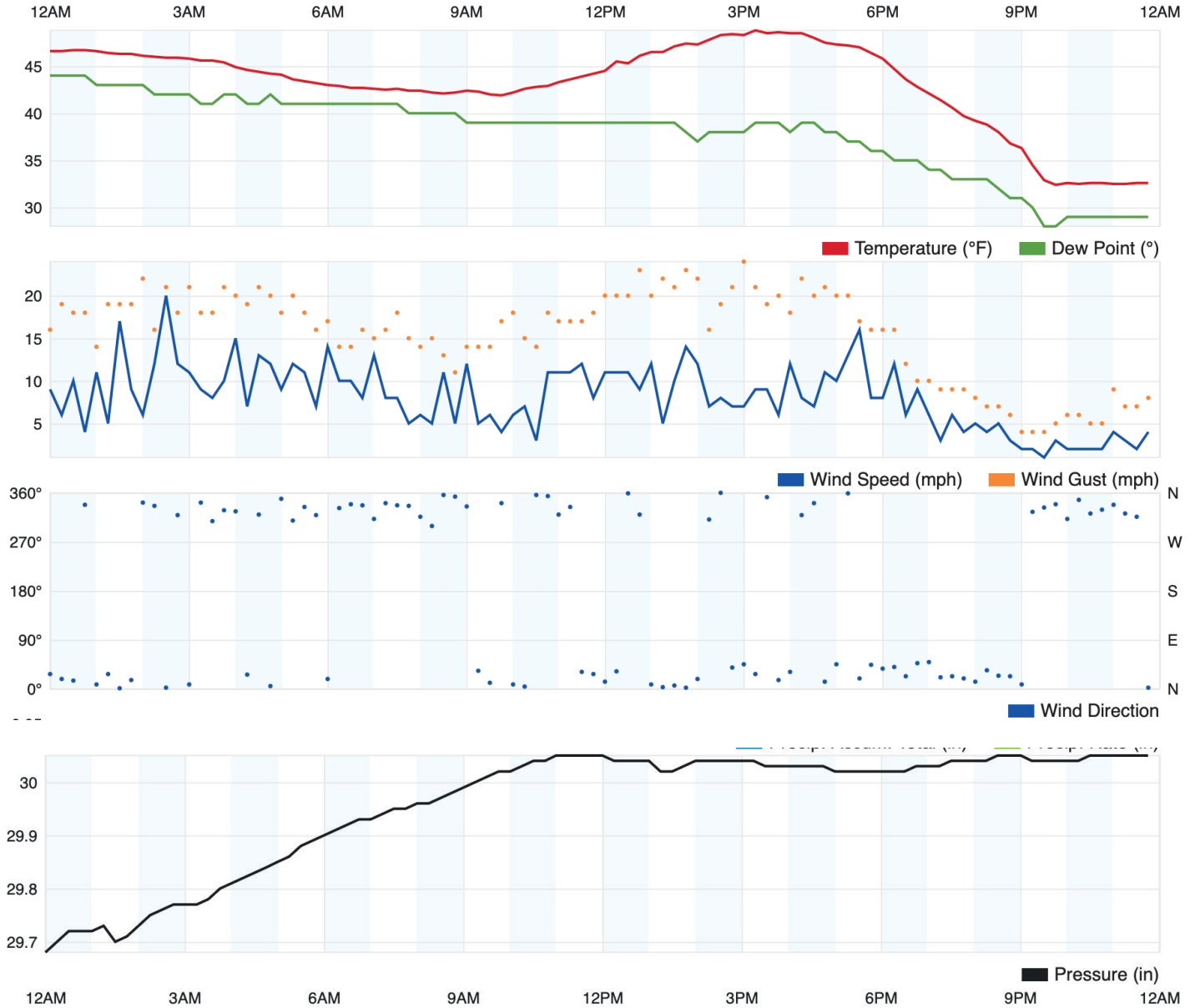
Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 48 °F

Decreasing
Clouds

Tonight



Low: 25 °F

Partly Cloudy

Friday



High: 53 °F

Chance Rain

Friday Night



Low: 25 °F

Slight Chance
Rain then
Partly Cloudy

Saturday



High: 55 °F

Mostly Sunny



HALLOWEEN FORECAST

October 31, 2024
4:10 AM

This Afternoon

2-5 pm



Mid 40s - Low 50s
Light Winds

This Evening

6-9 pm



Starting In The
Upper 30s - Low 40s

Falling Into The Upper
20s - Low 30s

Overnight

10 pm thru Friday am



Temps Stall In The
Mid 20s - Low 30s

Increasing Clouds

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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

While temperatures will be dropping, winds will be light and the rain should hold off until tomorrow. After today, we get into a bit more inclement pattern with off and on chances for moisture.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 49 °F at 3:14 PM

Low Temp: 32 °F at 9:41 PM

Wind: 24 mph at 2:56 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 10 hours, 12 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 78 in 1933

Record Low: 8 in 2006

Average High: 51

Average Low: 26

Average Precip in Oct.: 2.14

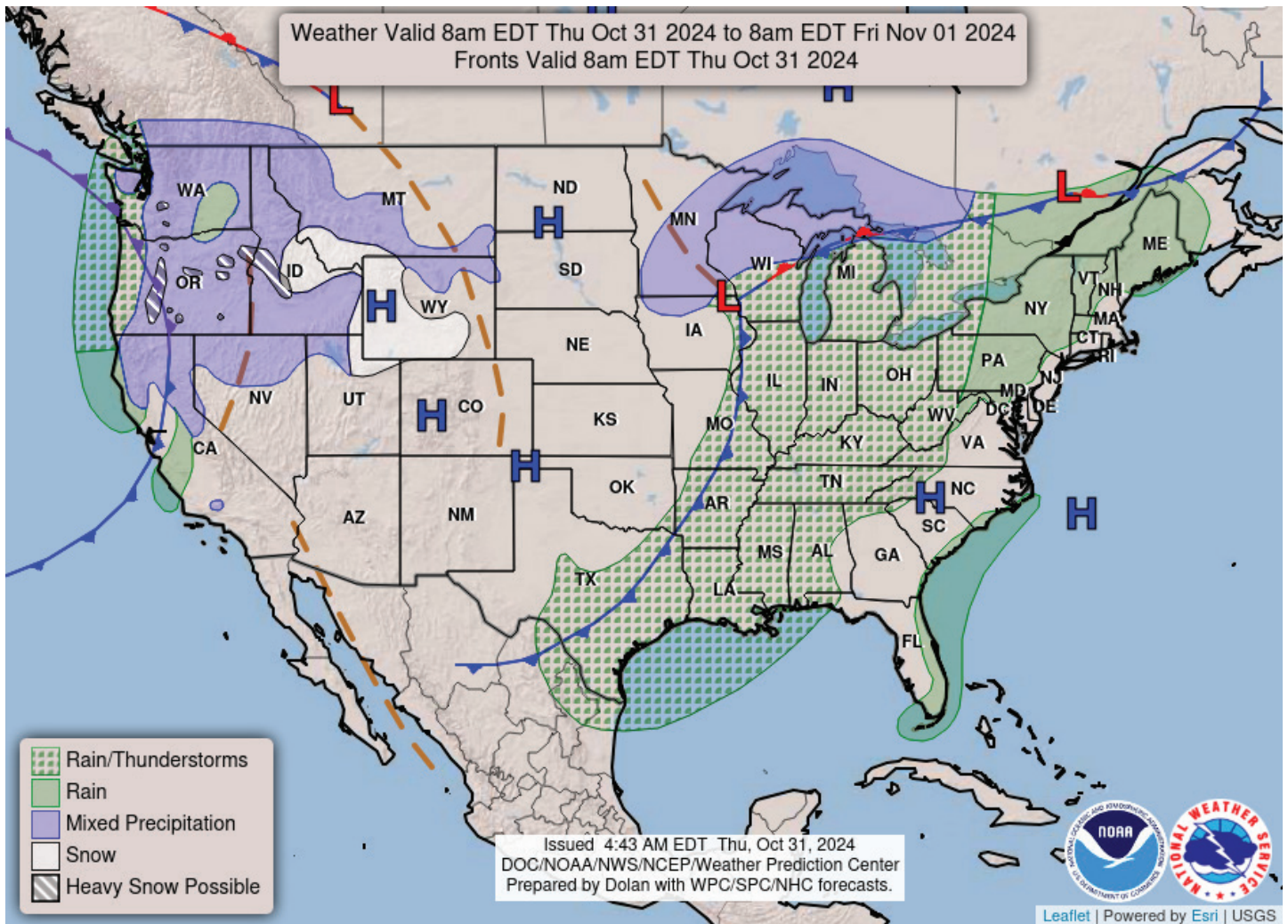
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.13

Average Precip to date: 20.47

Precip Year to Date: 19.88

Sunset Tonight: 6:22:00 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:11:20 am



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Today in Weather History

October 31, 1979: A narrow band of heavy wet snow developed around midnight from Winner to Leola and produced from three to six inches of snow before ending in the afternoon of 31st. The wet snow stuck to power poles and combined with 30 to 50 mph winds broke up to 600 poles. Estimated damage was around \$400,000 dollars. The counties affected were Tripp, Lyman, Buffalo, Hyde, Hand, Faulk, and Edmunds Counties.

October 31, 1991: A blizzard swept through southeastern South Dakota, dropping over 16 inches of snow in places. The snow combined with winds gusting to 60 mph at times, thus producing blizzard conditions. Interstates 29 and 90, as well as most other roads east and south of Sioux Falls were closed due to blowing and drifting snow. There were hundreds of traffic accidents in the Sioux Falls area alone. The hospital emergency rooms were swamped with victims of automobile accidents and injuries sustained while shoveling heavy snow. Two men died from heart problems while shoveling the snow.

1846 - Eighty-seven pioneers were trapped by early snows in the Sierra Nevada Mountains that piled five feet deep, with 30 to 40 foot drifts. Just 47 persons survived the "Donner Pass Tragedy". (The Weather Channel)

1876: The Great Backerganj, also known as the Bengal cyclone of 1876 struck Bangladesh, then part of the province of Bengal in British India on this day. A maximum wind speed of 137 mph along with a storm surge of 10 to 45 feet inundated the coastal region. This storm likely caused 200,000 casualties along with displacing thousands of other individuals.

1950 - Unseasonably warm weather prevailed in the central U.S. for Halloween. The temperature soared to 83 degrees at Minneapolis MN, their warmest reading of record for so late in the season. (The Weather Channel)

1965 - Fort Lauderdale, FL, was deluged with 13.81 inches of rain, which brought their rainfall total for the month of October to an all-time record of 42.43 inches. (30th-31st) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Halloween was a wet one in the southwestern U.S. Heavy rain in southern California resulted in numerous mudslides. Weather-related auto accidents resulted in three deaths and twenty-five injuries. Mount Wilson CA received 3.14 inches of rain in 24 hours. Yakima WA reported measurable rainfall for the first time since the 18th of July. The 103 day long dry spell was their longest of record. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Twenty-two cities in the northeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. The low of 19 degrees at Cleveland OH was a record for October, and morning lows of 21 degrees at Allentown PA and Bridgeport CT tied October records. Nine cities in the southwestern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Phoenix AZ with a reading of 96 degrees. Showers made Halloween a soggy one in the southeastern U.S. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Halloween night was a soggy one in New England. Showers in the northeastern U.S. produced more than an inch and a half of rain in six hours at some locations. An invasion of cold arctic air brought an abrupt end to a week of "Indian Summer" type weather in the Great Lakes Region, and brought snow and subzero wind chill readings to the Northern Plains. In Colorado, Alamosa was the cold spot in the nation with a record low of two degrees above zero, and a Halloween night storm brought 3 to 6 inches of snow to the Front Range, and 5 to 10 inches to the nearby foothills. Icy streets around Denver the next morning made for a rather spooky commute. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1991: A severe winter storm, dubbed the Great Halloween Mega Storm, struck the upper Midwest. Minnesota bore the brunt of this storm. Blizzard conditions occurred with winds gusting frequently to 40 and 50 mph. By the time it was all over on November 2nd, Duluth recorded 37 inches, Minneapolis 28 inches, International Falls 18 inches and 11.2 inches in 24-hours at Sioux Falls, SD, their earliest heavy snowfall of 6 inches or more and snowiest October on record. For Duluth and Minneapolis, the snow amounts set new all-time records for the greatest amount of snow in a single storm. The storm gave these two cities nearly half of their average seasonal snowfall.



THE WILL TO WIN!

It was the first practice of the football season. The captain of the team was trying to impress his fellow teammates with his leadership skills. Pacing back and forth in front of the team, he was doing his best to get them excited. Finally, as his voice reached a level of great intensity, he shouted, "We'll win because we have the will to win!"

The coach, looking rather amused said, "Don't fool yourself, son. The will to win is important. But more important than the will to win is the importance to surrender to hard work, sore muscles, aching joints, sweat running into your eyes and long hours of studying our plays." In other words, it requires hard work.

What is required of athletes who want to be victorious on a football field is true of the Christian who is called to live a victorious life for Christ. Paul said, "Spend your time and energy in training yourself for spiritual fitness. Physical exercise has some value but spiritual exercise is much more important for it promises a reward in this life and the life to come."

Spiritual exercise – studying God's Word, praying and serving Him – and the discipline required to achieve success for the Christian does not come easy. It requires a life of discipline and surrender to the will of God. Paul reminds us, however, that we will be rewarded in this life and the life to come if we endure.

Prayer: Lord, You never promised us a life of ease. But for Your sake we ask for Your strength and power to live a life that is worthy of You and victorious over sin. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come. 1 Timothy 4:7-8

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.29.24

16 22 26 36 56 1

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$281,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 6
DRAW: Mins 12 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.30.24

27 30 37 41 50 7

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$13,320,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 21
DRAW: Mins 12 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.30.24

14 17 27 28 43 13

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 36 Mins
DRAW: 12 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.30.24

14 15 21 25 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$81,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 36
DRAW: Mins 12 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.30.24

18 36 39 49 62 12

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 5
DRAW: Mins 11 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.30.24

13 22 29 43 58 22

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$54,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 5
DRAW: Mins 11 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
12/14/2024 Santa Day at Professional Management Services, downtown Groton
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

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Abortion-rights groups outspend opponents by more than 6 to 1 in ballot measure campaigns

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

The groups promoting ballot measures to add amendments to the constitutions in nine states that would enshrine a right to abortion have raised more than \$160 million.

That's nearly six times what their opponents have brought in, The Associated Press found in an analysis of campaign finance data compiled by the watchdog group Open Secrets and state governments.

The campaign spending reports are a snapshot in time, especially this late in the campaigns, when contributions are rolling in for many.

The cash advantage is showing up in ad spending, where data from the media tracking firm AdImpact shows campaigns have spent more than three times as much as opponents in ads on TV, streaming services, radio and websites.

Abortion-rights supporters have prevailed on all seven ballot measures that have gone before voters since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in 2022, which ended a nationwide right to abortion and opened the door for the bans and restrictions that are now being enforced in most Republican-controlled states.

Most of the money is going to Florida

Florida is the behemoth in this year's abortion ballot-measure campaigns.

Proponents of the measure have raised more than \$75 million and opponents \$10 million. Combined, that's nearly half the national total.

The state Republican Party is using additional funds, including from corporations across the country, to urge voters to reject the measure. Including that, supporters still lead in ad-buying: \$60 million to \$27 million.

The total spent as of Tuesday is about the same amount spent on the state's U.S. Senate race.

The amendment would overturn a ban on most abortions after the first six weeks of pregnancy — when women often don't know they're pregnant — that was signed by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis and took effect in May. DeSantis' administration has taken steps to thwart the campaign for the amendment.

Florida's ballot measure rules give opponents a boost: Passage requires approval from 60% of voters instead of a simple majority.

An influx of funding arrives in South Dakota

South Dakota is an outlier, with a significant funding advantage for anti-abortion groups.

According to an Associated Press analysis of state campaign disclosures, they've raised about \$2 million compared with abortion-rights supporters' \$1 million.

There was a big change last week when the abortion-rights group Dakotans for Health reported that it had received \$540,000 from Think Big America, a fund launched by Illinois Gov. Jay Pritzker, a Democrat. The fund's director, Mike Ollen, said that's helping ads get seen more widely in what could be a close race.

Before that, national abortion-rights groups, including the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, had mostly ignored South Dakota because, they said, the ballot measure doesn't go far enough. It would allow regulations of abortions after the first 12 weeks of pregnancy if they relate to the health of the woman.

"We find ourselves being caught between being way too extreme on the right end of the spectrum and not extreme enough on the left end of the spectrum," said Rick Weiland, co-founder of Dakotans for Health. "We think we're right in the middle."

The anti-abortion campaign in South Dakota, like those elsewhere, is focused largely on portraying the amendment as too extreme. The Think Big money provided a new chance to do that.

"South Dakotans don't want extreme Chicago, San Francisco, and New York views tainting our great state," Life Defense Fund spokesperson Caroline Woods said in a statement.

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One anti-abortion group reported a \$25,000 contribution last week from South Dakota Republican Gov. Kristi Noem's political action committee.

Funding is close to even in a state with competing ballot measures

Nebraska has competing ballot measures.

One would allow abortion until viability, considered to be somewhere after 20 weeks. The other would bar abortion in most cases after the first 12 weeks — echoing current state law, but also allowing for a stricter one.

The side pushing to keep restrictions is leading the fundraising race, with at least \$9.8 million. One prominent family has supplied more than half of that. Republican U.S. Sen. Pete Ricketts has contributed more than \$1 million, and his mother, Marlene Ricketts, has chipped in \$4 million.

The campaign for more access has raised at least \$6.4 million.

In some states, the opposition has been quiet

In most places, abortion-rights supporters have a big fundraising lead.

In Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, Montana and Nevada, the opponents had each reported raising less than \$2 million before Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the groups promoting the questions in those states have all collected at least \$5 million.

The ballot questions have different circumstances.

Missouri's amendment would open the door to blocking the state's current ban on abortion at all stages of pregnancy, with some exceptions. Proponents of the measure have raised more than \$30 million to opponents' \$1.5 million.

In Arizona, passing the abortion amendment would roll back a ban after the first 15 weeks of pregnancy and instead allow it until fetal viability, and later in some cases. The state's Supreme Court ruled this year that an 1864 ban on abortion at all stages of pregnancy could be enforced, but the Legislature promptly repealed it.

Colorado is one of the few states that already has no gestational limits on when during pregnancy abortion can be obtained. Montana allows abortion until viability.

Opponents of Nevada's measure have not reported any spending. To take effect, the amendment needs to pass this year and again in 2026.

Fundraising has been low on both sides in Maryland, though Pritzker's fund says it's sending money there, and New York, where a ballot measure doesn't mention abortion specifically but would bar discrimination based on "pregnancy outcomes and reproductive healthcare and autonomy."

Big contributions from national groups are one-sided

Liberal groups, including those that aren't required to report who their donors are, are far more active in the campaigns than their anti-abortion counterparts.

The Fairness Project, which promotes progressive ballot measures, has pledged \$30 million for this year's abortion amendments. So far, \$10 million in its contributions have shown up in campaign finance reports.

Several other abortion-rights groups have contributed \$5 million or more. No single entity on the anti-abortion side has reported giving that much.

Groups that funded the majority of last year's campaign against an Ohio abortion-rights amendment that voters approved are absent from this year's list of big contributors.

The Concord Fund, part of a network of political groups centered around conservative legal activist Leonard Leo, didn't show up in campaign finance reports until Wednesday, when a Missouri filing showed the group gave \$1 million the day before to a group opposing the ballot measure there. Leo was a driving force in securing nominations of Supreme Court justices who voted to overturn Roe.

Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America has not been active on abortion ballot measures this year, but it is pumping money into the presidential race in support of Republican Donald Trump.

"This is the most consequential fight for life before us," SBA spokesperson Kelsey Pritchard said in a statement, noting that the group is aiming to spend \$92 million in eight states in the presidential race.

Spain searches for bodies after flood of the century claims at least 95 lives

By ALBERTO SAIZ and JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

BARRIO DE LA TORRE, Spain (AP) — Survivors of the worst natural disaster to hit Spain this century awoke to scenes of devastation on Thursday after villages were wiped out by monstrous flash floods that claimed at least 95 lives. The death toll could rise as search efforts continue with an unknown number of people still missing.

The aftermath looked eerily similar to the damage left by a strong hurricane or tsunami.

Wrecked vehicles, tree branches, downed power lines and household items all mired in a layer of mud covered the streets of Barrio de la Torre, a suburb of Valencia, just one of dozens of damaged localities in the hard-hit region of Valencia, where 92 people died between late Tuesday and Wednesday morning. Walls of rushing water turned narrow streets into death traps and spawned rivers that ripped into the ground floors of homes and swept away cars, people and anything else in its path.

“The neighborhood is destroyed, all the cars are on top of each other, it’s literally smashed up,” said Christian Viena, a bar owner in Barrio de la Torre.

Regional authorities said late Wednesday it appeared there was no one left stranded on rooftops or in cars in need of rescue after helicopters had saved some 70 people. But ground crews and citizens continued to inspect vehicles and homes that were damaged by the onslaught of water.

Over a thousand soldiers from Spain’s emergency rescue units joined regional and local emergency workers in the search for bodies and survivors. The defense minister said that soldiers alone had recovered 22 bodies and rescued 110 people by Wednesday night.

“We are searching house by house,” Ángel Martínez, official of a military emergency unit, told Spain’s national radio broadcaster RNE on Thursday from the town of Utiel, where at least six people died.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez is heading to the region to witness the destruction firsthand as the nation starts a three-day period of official mourning.

Thousands of people were left without water and electricity and hundreds were stranded after their cars were wrecked or roads were blocked. The region remained partly isolated with several roads cut off and train lines interrupted, including the high-speed service to Madrid, which officials say won’t be repaired for several days.

While Valencia took the brunt of the storm, another two casualties were reported in the neighboring Castilla La Mancha region. Southern Andalusia reported one death.

The relative calm of the day after has also given time to reflect and question if authorities could have done more to save lives. The regional government is being criticized for not sending out flood warnings to people’s mobile phones until 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, when the flooding had already started in some parts.

Spain’s Mediterranean coast is used to autumn storms that can cause flooding. But this was the most powerful flash flood event in recent memory. Scientists link it to climate change, which is also behind increasingly high temperatures and droughts in Spain and the heating up of the Mediterranean Sea.

Locked in Mideast wars and battered by sanctions, Iran is wary over US presidential election

By NASSER KARIMI and MEHDI FATTAHI Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — America’s presidential election next week comes just after Iran marks the 45th anniversary of the 1979 U.S. Embassy hostage crisis — and for many, tensions between Tehran and Washington feel just as high as they did then.

Iran remains locked in the Mideast wars roiling the region, with its allies — militant groups and fighters of its self-described “Axis of Resistance” — battered as Israel presses its war in the Gaza Strip targeting Hamas and its invasion of Lebanon amid devastating attacks against Hezbollah. At the same time, Iran still appears to be assessing damage from Israel’s strikes on the Islamic Republic last Saturday in response to

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two Iranian ballistic missile attacks.

Iran's currency, the rial, hovers near record lows against the dollar, battered by international sanctions over Tehran's nuclear program of enriching uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels.

In public spaces, women still openly defy Iran's mandatory law on the headscarf, or hijab, a result of the mass demonstrations over the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini that still haunts the country.

That has left a feel of fatalism among some on the streets of the capital, Tehran, as Americans cast ballots for either Vice President Kamala Harris or former President Donald Trump. Many are split on which candidate would be better for their country — if at all.

"All U.S. presidents elected after the (1979) revolution had the same views about Iran and I think that's unlikely to change," said Sadegh Rabbani, 65.

Harris and Trump have offered hard-line views on Iran, making Iranians wary

Both candidates have either undertaken or expressed tough stances on Iran.

In 2018, Trump unilaterally pulled America out of Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers, setting off years of attacks across the Middle East even before Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel. Trump has been briefed on Iranian plots to retaliate against him, as well over his decision to launch a 2020 drone strike that killed Iran's top general, Qassem Soleimani, in Baghdad.

Harris, meanwhile, vowed at the September presidential debate that she would always "give Israel the ability to defend itself, in particular as it relates to Iran and any threat that Iran and its proxies pose to Israel."

For its part, the Biden administration did try indirect negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program that produced no tangible results, though it did reach one prisoner swap deal that saw five Americans detained for years in Iran walk free in September 2023.

In an outdoor coffeeshop in downtown Tehran, popular among the youth, 22-year-old Zahra Rezaei said she preferred a Harris win.

"We saw Trump in the past and he just ran an anti-Iran policy," Rezaei told The Associated Press. "It is time for a woman ... I think she (Harris) will better since she is not after war."

Ebrahim Shiri, a 28-year-old postgraduate political sciences student, agreed.

"I think Harris knows the world better," he said. "She and (Joe) Biden convinced Israel not to attack Iran's nuclear facilities. This mean moving toward peace."

Others believe Trump, with his promises of dealmaking, might be a better fit.

"I do not know what the American people think, but Trump is able to get a quick deal with Iran," said Mohammad Ali Raoufi, 43, who runs a double-glazed window workshop. "The Biden administration including Harris failed to reach any (deal) with Iran over the past years when they were in power."

Reza Ghaemi, a 31-year-old taxi driver, also suggested Trump may lessen tensions in the region since he pushed to withdraw U.S. troops from the Mideast during his term in office.

Iran's government wants sanctions gone and hopes for another nuclear deal

Many declined to speak to the AP on camera — Iran has only state-run television and radio stations, so people are suspicious of reporters with video cameras working openly on the street.

A woman walking by immediately tightened her previously loose headscarf after seeing the camera. However, one woman spoke on camera as her hijab fell off and another didn't wear it all — a sign of how much Iran has changed since Amini's death.

Those who did speak to the AP mostly expressed worries about a direct United States-Iran war — especially if Trump wins.

While saying he wants Trump to win "for my own reasons," 53-year-old Ahmad Moradi claimed that would make a U.S.-Iran war "100%" sure to happen.

A woman who only gave her name as Mahnaz, fearing repercussions for speaking openly, suggested that Harris, as a woman, couldn't reach any deals with Iran because "men can talk to men."

"I think if Trump is elected, it will be much harder for our kids. Of course it doesn't matter which one is elected, it's already tough for us," said Fariba Oodi.

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"We the Iranian people are trapped in some political game. And our kids are paying a price for that," she added. "But I still think if it's Trump, it will be more difficult, especially for my son who is a student and plans to apply" to study in America.

Iran's reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian, elected after a helicopter crash killed hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi in May, came to power on a promise to reach a deal to ease Western sanctions.

Iranian officials maintain that separating nuclear negotiations from Mideast wars is possible, even as the U.S. has accused Iran of meddling in the November election, which Tehran denies.

Fatemeh Mohajerani, a spokeswoman for Pezeshkian's administration, said Tehran wants to see a change in U.S. policies and a respect for the "national sovereignty of other countries." It also wants Washington to "avoid tension-making activities as we witnessed in recent years," she said.

Analysts, however, see a difficult road ahead for any possible U.S.-Iran talks, no matter who wins next Tuesday.

"The talks will be a war of attrition," Ali Soufi told the pro-reform Shargh newspaper. Saeed Nourmohamadi, another analyst, suggested such talks "are unlikely to be fruitful."

But ultimately, any decision rests with Iran's 85-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"You know, Khamenei has seen eight U.S. presidents" come and go, said Abbas Ghasemi, a 67-year-old retired teacher "He knows how to deal with the next one."

North Korea's long-range missile test signals its improved, potential capability to attack US

By HYUNG-JIN KIM, KIM TONG-HYUNG and MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea test-fired an intercontinental ballistic missile for the first time in almost a year Thursday, demonstrating a potential advancement in its ability to launch long-range nuclear attacks on the mainland U.S.

The launch was likely meant to grab American attention days ahead of the U.S. election and respond to condemnation over the North's reported troop dispatch to Russia to support its war against Ukraine. Some experts speculated Russia might have provided technological assistance to North Korea over the launch.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un observed the launch, calling it "an appropriate military action" to show North Korea's resolve to respond to its enemies' moves that have threatened the North's safety, according to the North's state media.

Kim said the enemies' "various adventurist military maneuvers" highlighted the importance of North Korea's nuclear capability. He reaffirmed that North Korea will never abandon its policy of bolstering its nuclear forces.

North Korea has steadfastly argued that advancing its nuclear capabilities is its only option to cope with the expansion of U.S.-South Korean military training, though Washington and Seoul have repeatedly said they have no intention of attacking North Korea. Experts say North Korea uses its rivals' drills as a pretext to enlarge its nuclear arsenal to wrest concessions when diplomacy resumes.

The North Korean statement came hours after its neighbors said they had detected the North's first ICBM test since December 2023 and condemned it as a provocation that undermines international peace.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said North Korea could have tested a new, solid-fueled long-range ballistic missile on a steep angle, an attempt to avoid neighboring countries. Missiles with built-in solid propellants are easier to move and hide and can be launched quicker than liquid-propellant weapons.

Japanese Defense Minister Gen Nakatani told reporters the missile's flight duration of 86 minutes and its maximum altitude of more than 7,000 kilometers (4,350 miles) exceeded corresponding data from previous North Korean missile tests.

Having a missile fly higher and for a longer duration than before means its engine thrust has improved. Given that previous ICBM tests by North Korea have already proved they can theoretically reach the U.S.

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mainland, the latest launch was likely related to an effort to examine whether a missile can carry a bigger warhead, experts say.

Jung Chang Wook, head of the Korea Defense Study Forum think tank in Seoul, said that it's fair to say the missile involved in Thursday's launch could carry North Korea's biggest and most destructive warhead. He said the launch was also likely designed to test other technological aspects that North Korea needs to master to further advance its ICBM program.

North Korea has made strides in its missile technologies in recent years, but many foreign experts believe the country has yet to acquire a functioning nuclear-armed missile that can strike the U.S. mainland. They say North Korea likely possesses short-range missiles that can deliver nuclear strikes across all of South Korea.

There have been concerns that North Korea might seek Russian help to perfect its nuclear-capable missiles in return for its alleged dispatch of thousands of troops to support Russia's war against Ukraine. U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said Wednesday that North Korean troops wearing Russian uniforms and carrying Russian equipment are moving toward Ukraine, in what he called a dangerous and destabilizing development.

Lee Choon Geun, an honorary research fellow at South Korea's Science and Technology Policy Institute, said the early results of Thursday's launch suggested Russia might have given a key propellant component that can boost a missile's engine thrust. He said that a higher thrust allows a missile to carry a bigger payload, fly with more stability and hit a target more accurately.

Jung said he speculates Russian experts might have given technological advices on missile launches since Russian President Vladimir Putin visited North Korea for a meeting with Kim in June.

Kwon Yong Soo, an honorary professor at South Korea's National Defense University, said that North Korea likely tested a multiple-warhead system for an existing ICBM. "There's no reason for North Korea to develop another new ICBM when it already has several systems with ranges of up to 10,000 to 15,000 kilometers (6,200 to 9,300 miles) that could reach any location on Earth," Kwon said.

The North Korean confirmation of an ICBM test was unusually quick since North Korea usually describes its weapons tests a day after they occur.

"North Korea could have probably thought that its rivals could look down at it after it gave away so much in military resources to Russia," Yang Uk, an expert at South Korea's Asan Institute for Policy Studies. "The launch may have been intended as a demonstration to show what it's capable of, regardless of troop dispatches or other movements."

U.S. National Security Council spokesperson Sean Savett called the launch "a flagrant violation" of multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions that "needlessly raises tensions and risks destabilizing the security situation in the region." Savett said the U.S. will take all necessary measures to ensure the security of the American homeland and its South Korean and Japanese allies.

South Korean military spokesperson Lee Sung Joon said the North Korean missile may have been fired from a 12-axle launch vehicle, the North's largest mobile launch platform. The disclosure of the new launch vehicle in September had prompted speculation North Korea could be developing an ICBM that is bigger than its existing ones.

South Korea's military intelligence agency told lawmakers Wednesday that North Korea has likely completed preparations for its seventh nuclear test as well. It said North Korea had been close to testing an ICBM.

In the past two years, Kim has used Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a window to ramp up weapons tests and threats while also expanding military cooperation with Moscow. South Korea, the U.S. and others say North Korea has already shipped artillery, missiles and other conventional arms to replenish Russia's dwindling weapons stockpiles.

North Korea's possible participation in the Ukraine war would mark a serious escalation. Besides Russian nuclear and missile technologies, experts say Kim Jong Un also likely hopes for Russian help to build a reliable space-based surveillance system and modernize his country's conventional weapons. They say Kim will likely get hundreds of millions of dollars from Russia for his soldiers' wages if they are stationed

in Russia for one year.

Dodgers win World Series in 5 games, overcome 5-run deficit with help of errors to beat Yankees 7-6

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — You gotta hand it to Freddie Freeman, Shohei Ohtani and the Los Angeles Dodgers. And not just because the Yankees certainly did.

When New York let LA back into World Series Game 5, the Dodgers did what they've done all year — kept on going.

After taking advantage of three miscues to erase a five-run, fifth-inning deficit during one of the most memorable midgame meltdowns in baseball history, the Dodgers used eighth-inning sacrifice flies from Gavin Lux and Mookie Betts to beat New York 7-6 on Wednesday night.

"In spring training this is what we said we were going to do and we did it," Betts proclaimed, champagne stinging his eyes.

Aaron Judge and Jazz Chisholm Jr. hit back-to-back home runs in the first inning for New York. Alex Verdugo's RBI single chased Jack Flaherty in the second, and Giancarlo Stanton's third-inning homer against Ryan Brasier built a 5-0 Yankees lead.

In the dugout, the Dodgers remained focused.

"We were like just get one, chip away, chip away," Freeman said.

Errors by Judge in center and Anthony Volpe at shortstop, combined with pitcher Gerrit Cole failing to cover first on Betts' grounder, helped Los Angeles score five unearned runs in the fifth.

Of the 234 teams to trail by five or more runs in a Series game, the Dodgers became just the seventh to win.

"This is going to sting forever," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. "I'm heartbroken."

After Stanton's sixth-inning sacrifice fly put the Yankees back ahead 6-5, the Dodgers loaded the bases against loser Tommy Kahnle in the eighth before the sacrifice flies off Luke Weaver.

Judge doubled off winner Blake Treinen with one out in the bottom half and Chisholm walked. Manager Dave Roberts walked to the mound with Treinen at 37 pitches.

"I looked in his eyes. I said how you feeling? How much more you got?" Roberts recalled. "He said: 'I want it.' I trust him."

Treinen retired Stanton on a flyout and struck out Anthony Rizzo.

Walker Buehler, making his first relief appearance since his rookie season in 2018, pitched a perfect ninth for his first major league save.

When Buehler struck out Verdugo to end the game, the Dodgers poured onto the field to celebrate between the mound and first base, capping a season in which they led the big leagues with 98 wins.

With several thousand Dodgers fans remaining in a mostly empty stadium, baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred presented the trophy on a platform quickly erected over second base.

Ohtani, the Dodgers' record-setting \$700 million signing and baseball's first 50-homer, 50-steal player, went 2 for 19 with no RBIs and had one single after separating his left shoulder during a stolen base attempt in Game 2. Ohtani went through the clubhouse pouring champagne on teammates and having it sprayed on him

"We were able to get through the regular season, I think, because of the strength of this team, this organization," he said through a translator. "The success of the postseason is very similar."

Freeman hit a two-run single to tie the Series record of 12 RBIs, set by Bobby Richardson over seven games in 1960, and was voted Series MVP. With the Dodgers one out from losing Friday's opener, Freeman hit a game-ending grand slam reminiscent of Kirk Gibson's homer off Oakland's Dennis Eckersley in 1988's Game 1 that sparked Los Angeles to the title.

The Dodgers earned their eighth championship and seventh since leaving Brooklyn for Los Angeles — their first in a non-shortened season since 1988. They won a neutral-site World Series against Tampa Bay

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in 2020 after a 60-game regular season and couldn't have a parade because of the coronavirus pandemic.

These Dodgers of Ohtani, Freeman and Betts joined the 1955 Duke Snider and Roy Campanella Boys of Summer, the Sandy Koufax and Don Drysdale era that spanned the three titles from 1959-65, the Tommy Lasorda-led groups 1981 and '88, and the Betts and Clayton Kershaw champions of 2020.

Ending a season that started with a gambling scandal involving Ohtani's interpreter during the opening series in South Korea, Roberts won his second championship in nine years as Dodgers manager, matching Lasorda and trailing the four of Walter Alston. The Dodgers won for the fourth time in 12 Series meetings with the Yankees.

New York remained without a title since its record 27th in 2009. The Yankees acquired Juan Soto from San Diego in December knowing he would be eligible for free agency after the 2024 Series. The 26-year-old star went 5 for 16 with one RBI in the Series heading into what will be intensely followed bidding on the open market.

"I'll be open to listen to every single team," Soto said. "I don't have any doors closed or anything like that, so I'm going to be available to all 30 teams."

Judge finished 4 for 18 with three RBIs.

"You can't give a good team like that extra outs," Judge said. "It starts with me there in the line drive coming in, misplay that. So that doesn't happen then I think we got a different story tonight."

Cole didn't allow a hit until Kiké Hernández singled leading off the fifth. Judge, who an inning earlier made a leaping catch at the left-center wall to deny Freeman an extra-base hit, dropped Tommy Edman's fly to center. Volpe then bounced a throw to third on Will Smith's grounder, allowing the Dodgers to load the bases with no outs.

Cole struck out Lux and Ohtani, and Betts hit a grounder to Rizzo — a slow grounder by a Mookie turned the 1986 World Series, by the Mets' Mookie Wilson against Boston.

Cole didn't cover first, pointing at Rizzo, who didn't charge because he was afraid the spinning ball might get past him. Betts outraced Rizzo to the bag.

"I took a bad angle to the ball," Cole said. "I wasn't sure really off the bat how hard he hit it. ... By the time the ball got by me, I was not in a position to cover first."

Freeman followed with a two-run single and Teoscar Hernández hit a tying two-run double.

"When you're given extra outs and you capitalize in that kind of game, that's huge," Freeman said. "For us to get it back to even, you could just feel the momentum just coming along."

Stanton's sixth-inning sacrifice fly off Brusdar Graterol put the Yankees ahead 6-5, but the Dodgers rallied one last time in the eighth after Kiké Hernández singled off Kahnle leading off, Edman followed with an infield hit, and Smith walked on four pitches.

"We faced every adversity possible and we overcame every single one," Freeman said, who won his second title after 2021 with Atlanta, and rebounded from a sprained ankle to homer in each of the first four Series games.

Purchased by Guggenheim Baseball Management in 2012, the Dodgers hired Andrew Friedman from Tampa Bay to head their baseball operations two years later. He boosted the front office with a multitude of analytics and performance science staff, and ownership supplied the cash.

Los Angeles went on an unprecedented \$1.25 billion spending spree last offseason on deals with Ohtani, pitchers Yoshinobu Yamamoto, Tyler Glasnow and James Paxton, and outfielder Teoscar Hernández. Much of the money was future obligations that raised the Dodgers' deferred compensation to \$915.5 million owed from 2028-44.

Faced with injuries, the Dodgers acquired Flaherty, Edman and reliever Michael Kopech ahead of the trade deadline, and all became important cogs in the title run. The additions boosted payroll to \$266 million, third behind the Mets and the Yankees, plus a projected \$43 million luxury tax.

Los Angeles will celebrate with a parade Friday on what would have been the 64th birthday for Dodgers great Fernando Valenzuela, who died three days before the Series opener.

"It's going to be emotional for all of us," Roberts said.

UP NEXT

Los Angeles opens its spring schedule on Feb. 20 against the Chicago Cubs at Camelback Ranch, and the Yankees start the next day against Tampa Bay in Tampa, Florida.

Ukrainian front-line school system goes underground to protect against bombs and radiation

By LORI HINNANT Associated Press

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine (AP) — To be a parent in the Ukrainian front-line city of Zaporizhzhia means weighing your child's life against the Russian weapons within striking distance.

Most rain death in an instant: the drones, the ballistic missiles, the glide bombs, the artillery shells. But Russian soldiers control another weapon they have never deployed, with the potential to be just as deadly: The nearby Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.

The NPP, as it's known, once produced more electricity than any other nuclear power plant in Europe. It fell to Russian forces in the first weeks of the full-scale invasion, and Russia has held its six reactors ever since. The plant has come under repeated attacks that both sides blame on the other.

These twin dangers — bombs and radiation — shadow families in Zaporizhzhia. Most of the youngest residents of the city have never seen the inside of a classroom. Schools that had suspended in-person classes during the COVID-19 pandemic more than four years ago continued online classes after the war started in February 2022.

So with missiles and bombs still striking daily, Zaporizhzhia is going on a building binge for its future, creating an underground school system.

Construction has begun on a dozen subterranean schools designed to be radiation- and bomb-proof and capable of educating 12,000 students. Then, officials say, they will start on the hospital system.

The daily bombs are a more tangible fear than radiation, said Kateryna Ryzhko, a mother whose children are the third generation in her family to attend School No. 88. The main building, dating to the Soviet era of the children's grandmother, is immaculate but the classrooms are empty. The underground version is nearly complete, and Ryzhko said she wouldn't hesitate to send her kids to class there. Nearly four years of online learning have taken their toll on kids and parents alike.

"Even classmates don't recognize each other," she said. "It's the only safe way to have an education and not be on screens."

Nuclear shadow

Within days of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, Zaporizhzhia's 300,000 residents found themselves on the front lines. Unlike larger Ukrainian cities, like Kyiv or Kharkiv, there is no subway system that could do double-duty as a bomb shelter and few schools had basements where students could more safely attend classes.

Many residents left — though some have returned. But the single-family homes and Soviet-style apartment blocks of Zaporizhzhia, the capital of the region that shares its name, filled nearly as quickly with Ukrainians fleeing areas seized by Russian forces, like the cities of Mariupol, Melitopol and Berdyansk.

By the start of the school year in September 2022, which was supposed to mark the post-pandemic return to classrooms, schools were empty. Windows were boarded up to protect against bomb shockwaves, the lawns left unkempt. Fifty kilometers (31 miles) away, the nuclear reactor went into cold shutdown after intense negotiations between the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Russian government.

The IAEA has rotated a handful of staff on site ever since. There are risks even in cold shutdown, when the reactor is operating but not generating power. The main danger is that its external electrical supply, which comes from Ukrainian-controlled territory under constant Russian bombardment, will be cut off for a longer period than generators can handle.

The nuclear plant needs electricity to keep crucial backups functioning, including water pumps that prevent meltdowns, radiation monitors and other essential safety systems.

During a recent Associated Press trip to the Ukrainian-controlled zone closest to the nuclear plant, two

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airborne bombs struck electrical infrastructure in a matter of minutes as night fell. Russia has repeatedly struck at Ukraine's grid, attacks that have intensified this year. Highlighting the constant danger, electricity to the NPP was cut yet again for three days as emergency workers struggled to put out the fire. It was at least the seventh time this year that the plant was down to either a single electrical line or generator power, according to the global Nuclear Energy Agency.

"Nuclear power plants are not meant to be disconnected from the grid. It's not designed for that. It's also not designed to be operating in cold shutdown for that long," said Darya Dolzikova, a researcher on nuclear policy at the Royal United Services Institute in London.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accuses Russia of targeting nuclear plants deliberately. The 1986 meltdown in Ukraine's Chernobyl, on the northern border nearly 900 kilometers (550 miles) from Zaporizhzhia, increased the country's rates of thyroid disease among Ukrainian children far from the accident site and radiation contaminated the immediate surroundings before drifting over much of the Northern Hemisphere. To this day, the area around the plant, known in Russian as Chernobyl, is an "exclusion zone" off-limits except to the technical staff needed to keep the decommissioned site safe.

Russian forces seized control of Chernobyl in the first days of the invasion, only to be driven back by Ukrainian forces.

The Zaporizhzhia plant has a safer, more modern design than Chernobyl and there's not the same danger of a large-scale meltdown, experts say. But that doesn't reduce the risk to zero, and Russia will remain a threatening neighbor even after the war ends.

An investment that might seem extreme elsewhere is more understandable in Ukraine, said Sam Lair, a researcher at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies.

"They are there under a conventional air and missile attack from the Russians, and they have experience with the fact that those attacks aren't being targeted only at military targets," Lair said. "If I were in their position, I would be building them too."

In addition, the Zaporizhzhia region received a European Union donation of 5.5 million iodine pills, which help block the thyroid's absorption of some radiation.

Since the start of the war, Russia has repeatedly alluded to its nuclear weapons stockpile without leveling direct threats. In September, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Russia would consider any attack by a country supported by a nuclear-armed nation to be a joint attack and stressed that Russia could respond with nuclear weapons to any attack that posed a "critical threat to our sovereignty."

Ukrainian officials fear that the Russian attacks on Chernobyl and the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plants may be just a start. During his speech in late September to the U.N. General Assembly, Zelenskyy warned that Russia was preparing strikes on more nuclear plants, which generate a large portion of Ukraine's electricity.

"If, God forbid, Russia causes a nuclear disaster at one of our nuclear power plants, radiation won't respect state borders," Zelenskyy said.

Underground for the future

The cost to build a subterranean school system is enormous — the budget for the underground version of Gymnasium No. 71 alone stands at more than 112 million hryvnias (\$2.7 million). International donors are covering most of it, and the national and local governments have made it a priority on par with funding the army.

"Everybody understands that fortification and aid for the army, it's priority No. 1," said Ivan Fedorov, head of the Zaporizhzhia region. "But if we lose the new generation of our Ukrainians, for whom (do) we fight?"

Daria Oncheva, a 15-year-old student at Gymnasium 71, looks forward to the underground classes, and not just because she'll finally be in the same place as her schoolmates.

"It's safer than sitting at home remotely," she said.

School No. 88, across town, is further along, with rooms carved out and fully lined with concrete thick enough to block an initial onslaught of radiation. The contractor leading the project is also digging trenches for Ukraine's military. When done, it will also be the primary bomb shelter for the neighborhood, whose single-family homes tend to have small orchards and trellised gardens — but no basements.

An optimistic timeline has the school ready for children by December. It has three layers of rebar totaling

400 tons of metal, plus 3,100 cubic meters of reinforced concrete. The building will be topped by nearly a meter (yard) of earth, concealed by a soccer field and playground.

The school will have an air filtration system, two distinct electrical lines and the ability to operate autonomously for three days, including with extra food and water supplies.

Michael Dillon, a scientist at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory who studies how people can survive nuclear fallout, said being underground improves survival by a factor of 10.

But Alicia Sanders-Zakre at the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons said ultimately people can do more — “which is eliminating these weapons instead of ... building, really not even a Band-Aid, for the actual problem.”

Lyudmila Zlatova, who has been the principal at School No. 88 for 30 years, hopes it will be a structure designed for the dangers Zaporizhzhia will face in the future. But she and the parents who gathered on a recent day were most concerned with the present, speaking at the edge of the construction pit as air raid sirens sounded.

It takes 10 seconds for a bomb to reach the neighborhood from the front line, far too short a time to evacuate, and they land with unnerving frequency. The subterranean school's sunless rooms and concrete corridors will only make children more comfortable, given what they're already enduring, she said.

“They will feel better studying without windows,” Zlatova said, peering across at the construction site.

Zlatova believes it will bring back at least some of the families who've left Zaporizhzhia for other cities in Ukraine or elsewhere in Europe. The city remains fully functional, with public transit operating and grocery stores, markets and restaurants operating, and repairs ongoing for structures damaged by shelling — albeit in limited fashion. Around 150 of the school's 650 prewar students have left the city, but she said she's in touch with absent families and many promise to return home once there is a safe place to study.

Gymnasium No. 6, which runs from first grade through high school, already has one. Its main building sits on the city's easternmost edge, closer than any other school to the front 40 kilometers (25 miles) away.

Little wonder that its principal, Kostyantyn Lypskyi, seems a little frayed at the beginning of the academic year. But at least his students can attend because parents chipped in money last year to renovate the basement shelter about 50 meters from the main school building into a series of classrooms.

His underground school, whose concrete walls and relatively thin metal doors are not radiation proof but protect against explosions, hold around 500 people — the same number as the new designs. The school has double that number, so students will alternate weeks. The youngest children study full-time just upstairs from the shelter, and the older ones are in the main building.

“Of course it will work,” he said. “We prepared everything for the start of the new school year.”

In the earliest days of the school year, an air raid alarm meant he could test that confidence. It took five minutes from the moment the sirens sounded until the last children took their seats and spread out their books, awaiting instruction.

It was morning, and they were ready for the day ahead.

A Lebanese family planning for a daughter's wedding is killed in an Israeli strike on their home

By SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — The family WhatsApp group chat buzzed with constant messages. Israel was escalating its airstrikes on villages and towns in southern Lebanon. Everyone was glued to the news.

Reda Gharib woke up uncharacteristically early that day, Sept. 23. Living a continent away in Senegal, he scrolled through videos and pictures shared by his sisters and aunts of explosions around their neighborhood in Tyre, Lebanon's ancient coastal city.

His aunts decided to leave for Beirut. His father, mother and three sisters had no such plans.

Then his father announced to the group that he had received a call from the Israeli military to evacuate or risk their lives. After that, the chat fell silent. Ten minutes later, Gharib called his father. There was no

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answer.

The Gharibs' apartment had been directly hit by an Israeli airstrike. The family had no time to get out. Gharib's father, Ahmed, a retired Lebanese army officer, his mother, Hanan, and his three sisters were all killed.

"The whole apartment was gone. It is back to bare bones. As if there was nothing there," said Gharib, speaking from the Senegalese capital, Dakar, where he has been living since 2020.

The Israeli military said it struck a Hezbollah site hiding rocket launchers and missiles.

Gharib said his family had no connection to Hezbollah. The direct hit gutted their apartment, while those above and below suffered only damage, suggesting a specific part of the building was targeted. Gharib said it was his family's home.

The strike was one of more than 1,600 Israel said it carried out on Sept. 23, the first day of an intensified bombardment of Lebanon it has waged for the past month. More than 500 people were killed that day, a casualty figure not observed in Gaza on a single day until the second week, said Emily Tripp, director of London-based Airwars, a conflict monitoring group.

Israel has vowed to cripple Hezbollah to put an end to more than a year of cross-border fire by the Iranian-backed militant group that began the day after Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack triggered the war in Gaza. It says its strikes are targeting Hezbollah's members and infrastructure. But there are also hundreds of civilians among the more than 2,000 people killed in the bombardment over the past month — often entire families killed in their homes.

Since then, the street where the Gharib family lived — an area of shops, residential buildings and offices of international agencies in Tyre's al-Housh district — has been battered with repeated airstrikes and is now deserted.

Gharib, 27, a pilot and entrepreneur, moved to Senegal in search of a better future but always planned to return to Lebanon to start a family.

He was close to his three sisters, the keeper of their secrets and best friend, he said. Growing up, their father was often away, so he and his mother took charge of family affairs.

The last time he visited his family was in May 2023, when his sister Maya, an engineering student, got engaged. She had planned to marry on Oct. 12. But as tensions with Israel grew in September, Gharib's plans to come home for the wedding were uncertain. She told him she would put it off until he could get there.

After the strike, her fiancé, also an army officer, found her body and those of the rest of her family in a hospital morgue in Tyre.

"She was not destined to have her wedding. We paraded her as a bride to paradise instead," Gharib said. On the day the wedding was to have taken place he posted pictures of his sister, including her wedding dress.

His sister Racha, 24, was about to graduate as a dentist and planned to open her own clinic. "She loved life," he said.

His youngest sister, Nour, 20, was studying to be a dietitian and prepping to be a personal trainer. Gharib called her the "laughter of the house."

There is nothing left of his family now except for a few pictures on his phone and on social media posts.

"I am so hurt. But I know the hurt will be hardest when I come to Lebanon," Gharib said. "Not even a picture of them remains hanging on the walls. Their clothes are not there. Their smell is no longer in the house. The house is totally gone."

"They took my family and the memories of them."

America's European allies face challenging times, whoever wins the presidential election

By GEIR MOULSON and KERSTIN SOPKE Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — The United States' European allies are bracing for an America that's less interested in

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them no matter who wins the presidential election — and for old traumas and new problems if Donald Trump returns to the White House.

The election comes more than 2 1/2 years into Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, in which Washington has made the single biggest contribution to Kyiv's defense. There are question marks over whether that would continue under Trump, and how committed he would be to NATO allies in general.

A win by Vice President Kamala Harris could be expected to bring a continuation of current policy, though with Republican opposition and growing war fatigue among the U.S. public there are concerns in Europe that support would wane.

Trump's appetite for imposing tariffs on U.S. partners also is causing worry in a Europe already struggling with sluggish economic growth. But it's not just the possibility of a second Trump presidency that has the continent anxious about tougher times ahead.

European officials believe U.S. priorities lie elsewhere, no matter who wins. The Middle East is top of President Joe Biden's list right now, but the long-term priority is China.

"The centrality of Europe to U.S. foreign policy is different than it was in Biden's formative years," said Rachel Tausendfreund, a senior research fellow at the German Council on Foreign Relations in Berlin. "And in that way, it is true that Biden is the last trans-Atlantic president."

The U.S. will continue to pivot toward Asia, she said. "That means Europe has to step up. Europe has to become a more capable partner and also become more capable of managing its own security area."

Germany's defense minister, Boris Pistorius, remarked when he signed a new defense pact with NATO ally Britain that the U.S. will focus more on the Indo-Pacific region, "so it is only a question of, will they do much less in Europe because of that or only a little bit less."

Ian Lesser, a distinguished fellow at the German Marshall Fund in Brussels, said that "above all, Europe is looking for predictability from Washington," and that's in short supply in a turbulent world in which any administration will face other demands on its attention. "But the potential for disruption is clearly greater in the case of a potential Trump administration."

"There is an assumption of essential continuity" under Harris that's probably well-founded, he said, with many people who have shaped policy under Biden likely to remain. "It's very much the known world, even if the strategic environment produces uncertainties of its own."

While both the U.S. and Europe have been increasingly focused on competition with Asia, the ongoing war in Europe means "the potential costs of a shift away from European security on the American side are very much higher today than they might have been a few years ago," Lesser said. Europe's ability to deal with that depends on how quickly it happens, he said.

Europe's lagging defense spending irked U.S. administrations of both parties for years, though NATO members including Germany raised their game after the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. NATO forecasts that 23 of the 32 allies will meet its target of spending 2% or more of gross domestic product on defense this year, compared to only three a decade ago.

During his 2017-2021 term, Trump threatened to abandon "delinquent" countries if they weren't paying their "bills." In campaigning this time, he suggested that Russia could do what it wants with them.

His bluster has undermined trust and worried countries nearest to an increasingly unpredictable Russia, like Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.

Europeans see the war in Ukraine as an existential challenge in a way the United States eventually may not, even with some signs of war fatigue emerging in Europe itself.

If Trump wins, "there's every indication that he has no interest in continuing to support Ukraine in this war" and will push quickly for some kind of cease-fire or peace agreement deal that Kyiv may not like and Europe may not be ready for, Tausendfreund said. "And there is also just no way that Europe can fill the military gap left if the U.S. were to withdraw support."

"Even with a Harris administration there is a growing, changing debate — frankly, on both sides of the Atlantic — about what comes next in the war in Ukraine, what is the end game," Lesser said.

Biden emphasized the need to stay the course in Ukraine during a brief recent visit to Berlin when he

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conferred with German, French and British leaders.

"We cannot let up. We must sustain our support," Biden said. "In my view, we must keep going until Ukraine wins a just and durable peace."

The times he has lived through have taught him that "we should never underestimate the power of democracy, never underestimate the value of alliances," the 81-year-old Biden added.

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who bestowed Germany's highest honor on Biden for his service to trans-Atlantic relations, hopes Biden's compatriots are listening.

"In the months to come, I hope that Europeans remember: America is indispensable for us," he said. "And I also hope that Americans remember: Your allies are indispensable for you. We are more than just 'other countries' in the world — we are partners, we are friends."

Whoever wins the White House, the coming years could be bumpy.

"Whatever the outcome next week, half of the country will go away angry," Lesser said, noting there's "every prospect" of divided government in Washington. "Europe is going to face a very chaotic and sometimes dysfunctional America."

New law makes dueling presidential transitions possible

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — There will be 77 days between Election Day and inauguration, a period in which the president-elect may ready his or her administration to take over power from President Joe Biden.

Long built on tradition and bipartisanship, the presidential transition exploded into a point of political contention four years ago, after then-President Donald Trump made baseless claims to dispute his loss and his administration delayed kicking off the transition process for weeks.

This year, a new law is meant to start the transition sooner, no matter who wins. But, if neither major party candidate concedes after Election Day, the updated rules allow both sides to get additional government funding and logistical support to begin working toward transitioning to power. That could lead to both Vice President Kamala Harris and Trump potentially assembling dueling, governments-in-waiting for weeks.

"Rules can only take you so far, and ultimately you need to have the players in the system working to shared objective," said Max Stier, president and CEO of the nonprofit Partnership for Public Service, which has worked with candidates and incumbents on transitions. "Everyone should have the shared objective of making sure that the handoff of power is smooth and effective. And that requires a cooperation that law can't alone enforce."

Here's a look at how changes meant to fix the problems of four years ago may not solve coming issues this time, and where the coming transition stands in the meantime:

What happened in 2020?

Trump lied about widespread voter fraud that didn't occur, delaying the start of the 2020 transition from one administration to the next from Election Day on Nov. 3 to Nov. 23.

The Trump-appointed head of the General Services Administration, Emily Murphy, consulted the transition law dating to 1963 and determined that she had no legal standing to determine a winner — and start funding and cooperating with a transition to a Biden administration — because Trump was still challenging the results in court.

GSA essentially acts as the federal government's landlord, and it wasn't until Trump's efforts to subvert free and fair election results had collapsed across key states that Murphy agreed to formally "ascertain a president-elect" and begin the transition process. Trump also eventually posted on social media that his administration would cooperate.

What's different this time?

Enacted in December 2022, the Presidential Transition Improvement Act now mandates that the transition process begin five days after the election, even if more than one candidate hasn't conceded.

That avoids long delays and means "an 'affirmative ascertainment' by the GSA is no longer a prerequisite for gaining transition support services," according to agency guidelines on the new rules.

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But the new law also effectively mandates federal support and cooperation for both candidates to begin a transition. It states that such support should continue until "significant legal challenges" that could alter electoral outcomes have been "substantially resolved," or when electors from each state meet in December to formally choose an Electoral College winner.

That means the government potentially bestowing enough backing that both sides can prepare an administration until mid-December — only about a month before Inauguration Day on Jan. 20.

Derek Muller, a University of Notre Dame law professor and presidential transition expert who testified in favor of the legislation, said it ensures that potentially two candidates get backing for transitions, with one eventually falling away. He said that's preferable to having a situation where no transition support is released to either side — which can spark delays leading to national security lapses.

"In the past, it was neither candidate gets the funding. Now it's both," Muller said.

He pointed to the contested 2000 election, when GSA didn't determine the winner until the Florida recount fight was settled on Dec. 13 — raising questions about national security gaps that may have contributed to the U.S. being underprepared for the Sept. 11 attacks the following year.

"It can last into mid-December. There's no question that's a risk," Muller said of potential dueling transition efforts after this year's election. "But I think it's a risk that they want to take. And even mid-December is still a month away from inauguration, so at least you have some certainty."

Even today, though, Trump continues to falsely claim he won in 2020 and only says he'll accept this November's results if they are fair, making it easy to imagine him doing so only if he wins — and potentially putting the new law to the test.

How are both sides preparing?

The sprawling transition process starts around 4,000 government positions being filled with political appointees — people who are specifically tapped for their jobs by the president-elect's team. That often begins with key Cabinet departments.

Harris' team already has reached an agreement with the Biden administration to use government office space in Washington and other resources, and to begin vetting potential key national security hires.

Trump's team has signed no transition agreements, missing deadlines to agree with GSA on logistical matters like office space and tech support and with the White House on access to agencies, including documents, employees and facilities.

Stier, of the Partnership for Public Service, said the Trump administration's disregard for the transition process dates to 2016, when the then-president-elect fired his transition coordinator, former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, and then spent months of his early administration trying to catch up on basic staffing issues.

Stier said the agreements to prepare transition are merely "the starter's pistol — it isn't actually the race." The full process, he said, "requires a deep understanding of our government and a willingness to appreciate the importance of process."

What will transition look like?

Neither side will be starting totally from scratch. While Harris will build her own government, she might tap some holdovers from the Biden administration, where she was vice president. Trump will bring in a new team, but he built an entirely new administration in 2017 and can do it again.

Harris could also opt to keep Senate-confirmed Biden appointees as acting Cabinet secretaries, just in case it is hard to get her nominations through a post-election, GOP-controlled Congress. She's promised to appoint a Republican to her Cabinet, with an early favorite being former Wyoming Rep. Liz Cheney — once the third-ranking member of the House GOP and the daughter of a Republican vice president — who has campaigned with Harris.

Trump said he may tap former independent presidential hopeful and anti-vaccination activist Robert Kennedy Jr. on health issues and make South African-born Elon Musk a secretary of federal "cost-cutting."

Either way, John Kirby, Biden's national security spokesman, said the current administration is set for a proper transition, "no matter how things play out in the election."

What is Diwali, the Festival of Lights? How is it celebrated in India and the diaspora?

By DEEPA BHARATH Associated Press

Diwali is the most important festival of the year in India — and for Hindus in particular.

It is celebrated across faiths by more than a billion people in the world's most populous nation and the diaspora. Over five days, people take part in festive gatherings, fireworks displays, feasts and prayer.

Diwali is derived from the word "Deepavali," which means "a row of lights." Celebrants light rows of traditional clay oil lamps outside their homes to symbolize the victory of light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance.

When is Diwali?

The dates of the festival are based on the Hindu lunar calendar, typically falling in late October or early November.

This year, the holiday is being celebrated on Oct. 31 and Nov. 1. In the U.S., Diwali falls on Halloween this year, which has triggered quite a few #Diwaloween memes on social media where some celebrants can be seen lighting diyas in their scary costumes or handing out laddoos to trick-or-treaters.

What are some Hindu stories of Diwali?

While Diwali is a major religious festival for Hindus, it is also observed by Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists. The origin story of Diwali varies depending on the region. All these stories have one underlying theme — the victory of good over evil.

In southern India, Diwali celebrates the victory of Lord Krishna's destruction of the demon Naraka who is said to have imprisoned women and tormented his subjects. In northern India, Diwali honors the triumphant return of Lord Rama, his wife Sita, and brother Lakshmana, from a 14-year exile in the forest.

How is Diwali celebrated?

The festival brings with it a number of unique traditions, which also vary by the region. What all celebrations have in common are the lights, fireworks, feasting, new clothes and praying.

—In southern India, many have an early morning warm oil bath to symbolize bathing in the holy River Ganges as a form of physical and spiritual purification.

—In the north, worshipping the Goddess Lakshmi, who symbolizes wealth and prosperity, is the norm.

Gambling is a popular tradition because of the belief whoever gambled on Diwali night would prosper throughout the year. Many people buy gold on the first day of Diwali, known as Dhanteras — an act they believe will bring them good luck.

Setting off firecrackers is a cherished tradition, as is exchanging sweets and gifts among friends and family. Diwali celebrations typically feature rangoli, which are geometric, floral patterns drawn on the floor using colorful powders. This year, several northern Indian states, including the capital New Delhi, are instituting partial or total fireworks bans to combat rising pollution levels during Diwali.

What are the Diwali stories from other faiths?

Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs have their own Diwali stories:

—Jains observe Diwali as the day the Lord Mahavira, the last of the great teachers, attained nirvana, which is liberation from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

—Sikhs celebrate Bandi Chhor Divas — a day that overlaps with Diwali — to commemorate the release of Guru Hargobind, a revered figure in the faith, who had been imprisoned for 12 years by the Mughal emperor Jahangir.

—Buddhists observe the day as one when the Hindu Emperor Ashoka, who ruled in the third century B.C., converted to Buddhism.

New in 2024: Diwali Barbie

This year, Mattel has released its "Barbie Signature Diwali Doll" by designer Anita Dongre who wrote on Instagram that her Barbie represents "the fashion-forward modern women who wears India on her sleeve with pride."

In contrast to her earliest iteration in 1996 who was clad in a bright pink sari or the 2012 avatar who

was packaged with a “monkey friend,” Diwali Barbie is fashionably dressed in a lehnga, an ankle length embroidered skirt with motifs from Dongre’s home state of Rajasthan, a cropped blouse and vest.

This doll, priced at \$40, sold out on day one on Mattel’s website.

Takeaways from AP story on Ukrainian schools built underground to guard against bombs and radiation

By LORI HINNANT Associated Press

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine (AP) — Most of the Russian weapons that hit the Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia kill in an instant: the drones, the ballistic missiles, the glide bombs, the artillery shells. But Russian soldiers control another weapon they have never deployed, with the potential to be just as deadly: The nearby Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.

The NPP, as it’s known, once produced more electricity than any other nuclear power plant in Europe. It fell to Russian forces in the first weeks of the full-scale invasion, and Russia has held its six reactors ever since. The plant has come under repeated attacks that both sides blame on the other.

These twin dangers – bombs and radiation – shadow families in Zaporizhzhia. An Associated Press team spent nearly a week in the city to learn about its building binge for its future: an underground school system.

Here’s what AP found:

Cold shutdown

About 50 kilometers (31 miles) away, the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant has been in in cold shutdown for two years after intense negotiations between the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Russian government. The IAEA has rotated a handful of staff on site ever since.

There are risks even in cold shutdown, when the reactor is operating but not generating power. The main danger is that its external electrical supply, which comes from Ukrainian-controlled territory under constant Russian bombardment, will be cut off for a longer period than generators can handle.

The nuclear plant needs electricity to keep crucial backups functioning, including water pumps that prevent meltdowns, radiation monitors and other essential safety systems. Russia has repeatedly struck at Ukraine’s grid, attacks that have intensified this year. Highlighting the constant danger, electricity to the NPP was cut yet again for three days as emergency workers struggled to put out the fire.

The Zaporizhzhia plant has a safer, more modern design than Chernobyl, known in Russian as Chernobyl, and there’s not the same danger of a large-scale meltdown, experts say. But that doesn’t reduce the risk to zero.

Nearly 4 years out of school

Most of the youngest residents of the city have never seen the inside of a classroom. Schools that had suspended in-person classes during the COVID-19 pandemic nearly four years ago continued online classes after the war started in February 2022.

Construction has begun on a dozen subterranean schools designed to be radiation- and bomb-proof and capable of educating 12,000 students.

The cost to build a subterranean school system is enormous — the budget for the underground version of Gymnasium No. 71 alone stands at more than 112 million hryvnias (\$2.7 million). International donors are covering most of it, and the national and local governments have made it a priority on par with funding the army.

But most parents say bombs, which strike the city daily, are a far more tangible fear than radiation.

Russian nuclear threats

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accuses Russia of targeting nuclear plants deliberately. Russian forces seized control of the Chernobyl area in the first days of the invasion, only to be driven back by Ukrainian forces.

Since the start of the war, Russia has repeatedly alluded to its nuclear weapons stockpile without leveling direct threats. In September, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Russia would consider any attack by a country supported by a nuclear-armed nation to be a joint attack and stressed that Russia could

respond with nuclear weapons to any attack that posed a "critical threat to our sovereignty."

Ukrainian officials fear that the Russian attacks on Chernobyl and the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plants may be just a start. During his speech in late September to the U.N. General Assembly, Zelenskyy warned that Russia was preparing strikes on more nuclear plants, which generate a large portion of Ukraine's electricity.

A knock at the door, a chat with a neighbor, a text: Campaigns make final swing-state push

By SCOTT BAUER, CHARLOTTE KRAMON, GARY D. ROBERTSON and LISA MASCARO Associated Press
CROSS PLAINS, Wis. (AP) — At this stage of the election, the arguments have been made, the airwaves flooded with ads, the inboxes and doorsteps stuffed with flyers. What's left is to get out the vote.

It's a crucial step that can make or break campaigns, turning Americans into voters by nudging them to the polls — or the mailbox or ballot drop-box — with their choices.

Democrats this year are relying on a traditional strategy of targeted phone calls, text messages and door-knocking, from the party and its allies, to encourage turnout for Vice President Kamala Harris. Former President Donald Trump has outsourced much of the Republican operation to groups such as America PAC, the organization supported by billionaire Elon Musk, which has taken the unorthodox and possibly illegal step of giving away \$1 million a day in prize money.

Now the two sides are going head-to-head to get their voters out in battleground states:

WISCONSIN

Kathy Moran never thought she'd be standing on the street at sunset, political flyers in a bag slung over her shoulder, trudging door to door trying to persuade people to vote.

But Moran, a 64-year-old retired employment attorney, said on a crisp late October night that she couldn't sit on the sidelines any longer.

"With the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, which I couldn't imagine, I just had to get involved," she said while canvassing the streets of Cross Plains, a village of about 4,000 people on the outskirts of Wisconsin's liberal capital city of Madison.

It's volunteers like Moran who Democrats hope will make the difference in swing states like Wisconsin, where four of the past six presidential elections have been decided by 21,000 votes or less.

The Democrats' approach to getting out the vote is clear: they are tapping a vast network of activists, volunteers, Democratic Party faithful and others to spread out across the country to ensure their voters go to the polls.

What America PAC is doing for Trump is less clear.

America PAC is targeting infrequent voters in Wisconsin by canvassing neighborhoods and sending mailings and digital and text ads, said the organization's spokesperson, Andrew Romeo.

However, America PAC refused a request from The Associated Press to observe the work in person.

Republicans have privately expressed concerns about whether America PAC is doing enough to get out the vote for Trump in crucial battleground states. Whatever their methods, more Republicans are voting early than in past elections, another sign of high enthusiasm.

"A get-out-the-vote operation can't turn a jump ball into a landslide," said Wisconsin Democratic Party Chairman Ben Wikler. "But it can absolutely turn a 50-50 race into a 49.5-50.5 race."

Moran said she logs between 8,000 and 14,000 steps on a typical night of canvassing and encounters mostly Harris voters as she knocks on the doors of houses decorated with skeletons, grave markers and a few political signs.

One woman refuses to engage with Moran, saying through the closed glass screen door it's "none of her business." Another man says he's already voted but wouldn't say for whom.

Another spots her "Harris/Walz" and "I, la" buttons, smiles and says, "I see you're with Harris." He assures her that everyone in his house is voting for her.

Moran enters notes on an app so voters committed to Harris aren't bothered again.

GEORGIA

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The Harris campaign has more than 40,000 volunteers plus a staff of 220 working out of 32 field offices across the state. The campaign says its volunteers and staff have knocked on more than a million doors, including more than 100,000 last weekend alone, and has made two million phone calls.

"The ground game is very, very busy," said state Sen. Freddie Powell Sims, a Dawson Democrat. "We are knocking on doors everyday, but the communities are huge. There's a lot of ground to cover, but we have extremely diligent volunteers going out and putting their all into this race."

Sims said she's unsure who will win Georgia because she's seen similar on-the-ground enthusiasm from Republicans.

The Trump campaign says it has nearly 25,000 volunteers working in Georgia, and has hosted more than 2,000 events there over the last three months.

At one event, eight women in matching pink Trump jackets with '47' emblazoned on the sleeves and personalized etchings of their names marched into a spacious ranch south of Atlanta as part of Team Trump's Women's Tour.

The audience in South Fulton was small, but RNC co-chair Lara Trump and former U.S. Sen. Kelly Loeffler urged supporters to rally their friends to vote for Trump.

Kim Burnette signed up to phone bank with the Trump campaign this year, calling infrequent voters who are registered Republicans.

"A lot of people are saying they're going to vote," Burnette said. "It's looking good."

Candace Duvall drove about 30 miles to the event and showed up decked out in gold Trump merch -- she patched sparkly letters spelling out his name onto her t-shirt and wore earrings that displayed his mug shot. She rushed to the polls on the first day of early voting to vote for Trump, but she's still receiving a flurry of texts, calls, and paper flyers from his campaign.

"He's our only chance," Duvall said. "I really think he was chosen by God, and I think this is good vs. evil."

Camilla Moore and Lisa Babbage, chair and vice chair of the Georgia Black Republican Council, also showed up to support the women for Trump.

The pair has been mobilizing Black voters in South Fulton through events over the last few months.

"It has been easier this time than ever before," Moore said.

People are less shy about supporting Trump now than they were in 2020, Moore said. They're more open to conversation as they make the case for the former president.

NORTH CAROLINA

Charles Benson, 68, of Kinston, North Carolina, said he's getting contacted several times a week, mostly by text, about the election and voting.

Benson, who is retired, attended Trump's rally in nearby Greenville in late October, two days after he voted early in person. Still, candidate mailers keep filling his mailbox.

"I'm ready for it to be over," Benson said. "I'm tired of taking that stuff out of the mail every day."

Emma Macomber, 76, of New Bern, another Trump supporter at the Greenville rally, said she's been contacted regularly, largely through text, being asked for political donations and to make sure that she votes.

Macomber said she's already cast her ballot and has made some contributions.

"I want it to be over, but I'm scared for it to be over," she said. "Because I don't know what's in the future, and I think everyone's afraid of the unknown."

US voters hear a stark message in the presidential race: The country's fate is on the line

By ALI SWENSON and GARY FIELDS Associated Press

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. (AP) — Few elections in the nation's history have provided such a divide as this year's, with the two major candidates and so many of their supporters saying the outcome will determine the fate of the country and whether it can hold to its democratic moorings.

As they cast their ballots, voters have opinions on the divide as diverse and complex as the nation itself. Perhaps no place captures this range of perspective more clearly than Charlottesville, Virginia.

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It was the site of the "Unite the Right" rally in 2017, the first year of Donald Trump's presidency, when hundreds of white nationalists and neo-Nazis felt emboldened enough to unleash racist and antisemitic violence on the community for its decision to remove a Confederate statue.

One rallygoer plowed his car into a crowd of counter-protesters, killing a woman and injuring dozens more. President Joe Biden has said the open display of racism and antisemitism prompted him to enter the race for the White House in 2020.

Associated Press journalists spent three days in and around Charlottesville during early October, interviewing voters about the election that is now days away. These voters have experienced one of the most visible recent examples of the vitriol and division that has long been brewing beneath the country's surface, a reminder of what can happen when hate erupts and extreme ideas are allowed to fester unchecked.

Here is what some of them had to say about the presidential election and its consequences.

Extremism is not going away

As a racial justice activist in the summer of 2017, Jalane Schmidt tried to sound the alarm early.

The religious studies professor at the University of Virginia said as she was helping Charlottesville residents prepare for "Unite the Right" and the other racist demonstrations that preceded it, she was too often told to "just have a dialogue and not be so polarizing or dismissive."

"I was like, how am I supposed to have a dialogue with someone who desires my annihilation?" said Schmidt, who is Black.

Looking back on that summer, Schmidt says she and other activists saw then what others have started to see since — that extremists pose a real danger that is not going away.

Schmidt said Trump's return to the White House poses a threat to democracy, one the Founding Fathers warned about.

"I think we have things to learn from some of the warnings that have been given to us about demagogues," she said. "It is not an overstatement to say that democracy is on the line with this election."

Political differences should not create enemies

Senior Pastor Rob Pochek gathered a small group of men in a meeting room at First Baptist Church on Park Street, a Charlottesville institution approaching its 200th anniversary.

Universally, they denounced the "Unite the Right" rally as hateful and against their values. Pochek said the marchers' antisemitic comments came "straight from the pits of hell." Christians worship Jesus, who was a Jew, he said.

While the group had nuanced views about Trump, they all agreed they cannot support Vice President Kamala Harris because of her stance on abortion. Pochek said Trump's lies, specifically about the 2020 election, and other rhetoric make it a tough decision.

He also tries to build bridges, emphasizing to his congregants that people with different points of view should not be seen as their enemies.

Referring to the symbols of both major parties, Pochek tells them their allegiance is not to a donkey or an elephant: "We worship the Lamb," he said.

'The blinders are off'

Susan Bro lives in a single-wide trailer in Ruckersville, about a half-hour's drive outside Charlottesville, a town so small it sometimes doesn't appear on maps.

The car that struck the "Unite the Right" counter-protesters killed her daughter, 32-year-old Heather Heyer. Bro said she's terrified of what will happen to the country if Trump wins. She's concerned about his lies, his promises of retribution and the Republican Party's failure to stand up to him. She's not sure whether democracy can survive.

But she also realized that events like what happened in Charlottesville seven years ago can delude people into thinking that hate is exclusive to extremists.

"We all have to watch ourselves with these virulent rhetoric paths that we go down, because once you start on that, it's really easy to just keep mouthing these phrases, holding on to these ideas," Bro said. "We have more in common than we think we do."

Students from immigrant families see a personal threat, but differently
Nineteen-year-old Kushaan Soodan's parents are Indian immigrants. Eighteen-year-old Arturo Romero is from Mexico and legally immigrated to California in high school with his parents and younger sisters.

The two are now college students and acquaintances at the University of Virginia. But they see the election completely differently, in part because of their experiences hailing from immigrant families.

As Soodan registered UVA students to vote on a recent Friday, he said the election is crucial to preserving democracy.

"That sort of hatred — we've already seen what that can cause," he said. "And I think that this election is one of the ways we can do that to where we can say, no, we don't want this, we don't like this."

Romero defended Trump and said his words were often misunderstood, including when he suggested that migrants who are in the U.S. and have committed murder did so because "it's in their genes."

He said he had seen how Mexico changed for the worse when more migrants began traveling through to get to the U.S. He said crime increased, and he doesn't want the same thing to happen to America.

Romero praised Trump's overall impact on the economy, border and the nation's international stability, and he felt Biden's policies had fallen short: "If we get four more years, then this is not going to be reversible."

US voters hear a stark message in the presidential race: The country's fate is on the line

By ALI SWENSON and GARY FIELDS Associated Press

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As they cast their ballots, voters have opinions on the divide as diverse and complex as the nation itself. Perhaps no place captures this range of perspective more clearly than Charlottesville, Virginia.

It was once a meeting place for Founding Fathers who cautioned about the dangers of political demagoguery. It also was the site of the "Unite the Right" rally in 2017, the first year of Donald Trump's presidency, when hundreds of white nationalists and neo-Nazis felt emboldened enough to unleash racist and antisemitic violence on the community for its decision to remove a Confederate statue. They chanted "Jews will not replace us" as they marched through the streets carrying tiki torches and Confederate flags.

One rallygoer plowed his car into a crowd of counter-protesters, killing a woman and injuring dozens more. President Joe Biden has said the open display of racism and antisemitism prompted him to enter the race for the White House in 2020.

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While the group had nuanced views about Trump, they all agreed they cannot support Vice President Kamala Harris because of her stance on abortion. Pochek said Trump's lies, specifically about the 2020 election, and other rhetoric make it a tough decision.

"I think the fact that we have former President Trump and Vice President Harris as the two candidates for president of the United States is in itself a judgment on America, that this is the best we have out of nearly 400 million Americans," he said.

He also tries to build bridges, emphasizing to his congregants that people with different points of view should not be seen as their enemies.

Referring to the symbols of both major parties, Pochek tells them their allegiance is not to a donkey or an elephant: "We worship the Lamb," he said.

'The blinders are off'

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The car that struck the "Unite the Right" counter-protesters killed her daughter, 32-year-old Heather Heyer. Bro said that summer awakened her and other white residents to the hatred people of color had long known.

"I think the blinders are off," she said. "This existed. We just pretended it didn't."

She said she's terrified of what will happen to the country if Trump wins. She's concerned about his lies, his promises of retribution and the Republican Party's failure to stand up to him. She's not sure whether democracy can survive.

But she also realized that events like what happened in Charlottesville seven years ago can delude people into thinking that hate is exclusive to extremists.

"We all have to watch ourselves with these virulent rhetoric paths that we go down, because once you start on that, it's really easy to just keep mouthing these phrases, holding on to these ideas," Bro said. "We have more in common than we think we do."

'Trump was right' about the marchers

At an early voting office in Charlottesville, Dan and Ruth Suggs said they had cast their ballots for Trump. The couple, married for 53 years, did not see Trump or Harris as an existential threat to the nation's future.

"It's not the end of the world. No matter who wins, it is still pretty much going to be the same thing," said Dan Suggs. "The biggest difference is going to be the economy."

They both disagreed with how the city handled the removal of the statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee from a downtown park, a decision that sparked the 2017 rally. They said the city should have held a referendum on the issue and that it mismanaged the protest.

"I believe in free speech. I don't think anybody has the right to try to shut it down, and that's basically what they were trying to do to the alt-right," Dan Suggs said.

Ruth Suggs said not everyone present was there to cause trouble.

"There were people who just wanted to hear what they had to say," she said. "Trump was right when he said there were good people on both sides."

Students from immigrant families see a personal threat, but differently

Nineteen-year-old Kushaan Soodan's parents are Indian immigrants. Eighteen-year-old Arturo Romero is from Mexico and legally immigrated to California in high school with his parents and younger sisters.

The two are now college students and acquaintances at the University of Virginia. But they see the elec-

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tion completely differently, in part because of their experiences hailing from immigrant families.

As Soodan registered UVA students to vote on a recent Friday, he said the election is crucial to preserving democracy and making a statement that hate should not have a home in America.

"That sort of hatred — we've already seen what that can cause," said Soodan, standing near the campus walkway used seven years ago by the "Unite the Right" marchers. "And I think that this election is one of the ways we can do that to where we can say, no, we don't want this, we don't like this."

Romero said he feared a Harris victory would push the country to the point of no return. He defended Trump and said his words were often misunderstood, including when he suggested that migrants who are in the U.S. and have committed murder did so because "it's in their genes."

Romero said Trump was not speaking about all immigrants. He said he had seen how Mexico changed for the worse when more migrants began traveling through to get to the U.S. He said crime increased, and he doesn't want the same thing to happen to America.

Romero praised Trump's overall impact on the economy, border and the nation's international stability, and he felt Biden's policies had fallen short: "If we get four more years, then this is not going to be reversible."

'The pot's still on the stove'

Leslie Scott-Jones was born and raised in Charlottesville and has lived her life aware of the worst consequences of racism. So she was perplexed after the "Unite the Right" rally to see the news media present it as shocking.

"How did you come to believe that we were living in a post-racial society?" said Scott-Jones, who is Black. "Because the rest of us have been living a very different experience."

The violent rally was a "bubble bursting," she said, but "the pot's still on the stove."

Still, it was a deeply painful moment for Scott-Jones, who was holding an event for artists when she heard crashing sounds that turned out to be the vehicle assault on the counter-protesters. She stopped what she was doing and rushed to help.

Scott-Jones, who is curator of learning and engagement at a local African American heritage center, said she has heard the pleas to save democracy with her vote, but they don't seem compelling. She thinks the system needs to be reimaged.

"This country has not worked for Black people since we got here," she said. "Why would I want to save something that literally treated my people as property for hundreds of years?"

She said she is voting for third-party candidate Cornel West and hopes America can someday live up to the ideals it espouses.

Might the country descend into political violence and sink into deeper division after November's election?

"That is a worry," Scott-Jones said. "But I honestly don't think that that depends on who sits in that chair."

Americans are anxious and frustrated about the presidential campaign, an AP-NORC poll finds

By LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Most Americans are feeling a lot of emotions heading into Election Day, but excitement is not one of them.

A new poll from The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that about 7 in 10 Americans report feeling anxious or frustrated about the 2024 presidential campaign, and a similar share say they're interested.

Only about one-third say they feel excited.

There's a broad feeling of uncertainty hanging over the 2024 presidential contest during the last week of the campaign. The race is competitive nationally and in key swing states, according to recent polls, with neither Democrat Kamala Harris nor Republican Donald Trump showing a measurable advantage. At the same time, the candidates have offered closing arguments that are in stark contrast with each other, with Harris arguing that Trump is obsessed with revenge and his own personal needs, while Trump referred to Harris at a rally on Sunday night as "a trainwreck who has destroyed everything in her path."

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Some groups are even more anxious than they were four years ago, even though that election took place in the midst of a deadly pandemic. In 2020, an AP-NORC poll found that about two-thirds of Americans were anxious about the election, which is not statistically significant from the new result. But for partisans, anxiety is dialed a little higher. About 8 in 10 Democrats say anxious describes how they are feeling now, up slightly from around three-quarters in the last election. About two-thirds of Republicans are anxious, a moderate uptick from around 6 in 10 in 2020.

Independents, by contrast, haven't shifted meaningfully, and they're also feeling less worried than Democrats or Republicans. About half say they are anxious, similar to the finding in 2020.

Other emotions have gotten more intense compared to past election cycles, including excitement. About one-third of Americans report feeling excited about the 2024 campaign, up from around one-quarter in 2016. But a majority of Americans say they are not excited about this year's race.

One thing has stayed fairly constant, though: Americans' level of frustration with the campaign. Roughly 7 in 10 Americans say frustrated describes their emotional state, similar to 2020.

For those Americans, though, there is light on the horizon — soon, the election will be over.

The poll of 1,233 adults was conducted Oct. 24-29, 2024, using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3.6 percentage points.

Vatican tribunal explains conviction of cardinal and others in 'trial of the century'

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The Vatican tribunal said Wednesday it convicted a cardinal of aggravated fraud and other charges because of his "objectively inexplicable behavior" in paying a self-styled intelligence analyst over a half-million euros in Vatican money that she then spent on luxury items and vacations.

The city-state's tribunal issued 816 pages of written motivations from its Dec. 16 verdicts in the Vatican's "trial of the century." The two-year trial of 10 people was borne out of the Holy See's 350 million euro (\$380 million) investment in a London property but grew to include a host of other financial dealings.

Cardinal Angelo Becciu, a once-powerful cardinal who was the No. 3, or "substitute," in the Vatican's secretariat of state, was the most prominent of the nine people convicted. He faces five and a half years in prison after being convicted of embezzlement, fraud and other charges.

He and the eight other defendants have announced appeals, as has the Vatican prosecutor. With the tribunal's written explanations now filed — nearly a year after the convictions were handed down — both sides can elaborate the basis of their appeals.

The trial focused on the Vatican secretariat of state's participation in a fund to develop a former Harrod's warehouse into luxury apartments. Prosecutors alleged Vatican Monsignors and brokers fleeced the Holy See of tens of millions of euros in fees and commissions and then extorted the Holy See for 15 million euros to cede control of the building.

Becciu was convicted of embezzlement stemming from the original Vatican investment of 200 million euros into the fund that invested in the London property. The tribunal determined that canon law prohibited using church assets in such a speculative investment.

Becciu was also convicted of aggravated fraud for his role in paying a self-proclaimed intelligence expert from his native Sardinia, Cecilia Marogna, 575,000 euros in Holy See money. He had said the payments were authorized by Pope Francis as ransom to free a Colombian nun held hostage by al-Qaida-linked militants in Mali.

The investigation showed, however, that Becciu essentially double-billed the Vatican, with the same amount of money being sent to a British security firm that actually has expertise in liberating hostages. The nun was subsequently freed, but there is no indication Marogna had anything to do with it, the tribunal noted.

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The tribunal, headed by Judge Giuseppe Pignatone, said Becciu never provided a reasonable explanation for why he paid Marogna the same amount of money, or why he never asked her for any updates on her alleged efforts to liberate the nun.

Even when told by Vatican gendarmes that Marogna had instead spent the Vatican's money on luxury vacations and purchases at Prada, Becciu didn't file a complaint with prosecutors or keep his distance from Marogna. Instead, they continued to communicate via a family friend.

"An objectively inexplicable behavior, all the more for someone in a position of the defendant, a cardinal prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and for seven years the substitute in the secretariat of state, who for a long period enjoyed the full trust of the pope," the tribunal wrote. "A behavior, moreover, that the defendant has never explained in any way."

Marogna, for her part, was tried in absentia and provided contradictory and inconclusive explanations in her written defense, the tribunal said. She too was convicted and sentenced to three years and nine months in prison.

The bulk of the written motivations were devoted to deciphering the complicated transactions at the heart of the London deal. The text also repeated the tribunal's previous rejection of defense arguments that the trial itself was fundamentally unfair.

Trump campaigns with Packers legend Brett Favre at rally in Green Bay, Wisconsin

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON, THOMAS BEAUMONT and EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP) — Donald Trump showered former NFL star Brett Favre with praise on Wednesday at a rally in Green Bay, Wisconsin, where the former Packers quarterback campaigned for the Republican presidential nominee in the final week before Election Day.

"Thank you, Brett. What a great honor. What a great champion," Trump said shortly after taking the stage at the Resch Center. Describing Favre's fingers as "like sausages," he said, "No wonder he could throw the ball."

"I'm a little upset because I think he got bigger applause than me, and I'm not happy," the former president went on, joking about the ovation Favre received in a county that Trump narrowly won in 2020.

Trump appeared onstage in a orange safety vest after riding in a garbage truck to draw attention to an offensive comment by President Joe Biden. But he reignited a different controversy by revisiting his promise to "protect the women of our country."

After complaining about his own staffers tell him it was "inappropriate," Trump insisted, "I'm gonna do it whether the women like it or not."

Trump rallied alongside Favre in the critical battleground state with just six days until the election. In a sign of the importance of the state, Trump's Democratic opponent, Vice President Kamala Harris, was campaigning simultaneously in overwhelmingly Democratic-voting Madison, roughly a 2 1/2-hour drive away.

Favre, who won three NFL Most Valuable Player awards and a Super Bowl for Green Bay in the 1990s, praised Trump before the former president arrived, telling the crowd, "Much like the Packer organization, Donald Trump and his organization was a winner."

"The United States of America won with his leadership," Favre said.

In relying on Favre, Trump is tapping into the state's deep and loyal support for the Packers and the team's onetime star quarterback. But Favre also comes with increased baggage after becoming enmeshed in Mississippi's welfare spending scandal.

Favre, 55, is not facing any criminal charges, but he is among more than three dozen people or groups being sued as the state tries to recover misspent money. Favre has repaid just over \$1 million he received in speaking fees funded by the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. Mississippi Auditor Shad White, a Republican, has said Favre never showed up for the speaking engagements. White also said Favre still owes nearly \$730,000 in interest.

Mississippi has ranked among the poorest states for decades, but only a fraction of its federal welfare

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money has been going to families. Instead, the Mississippi Department of Human Services allowed well-connected people to waste tens of millions of welfare dollars from 2016 to 2019, according to White and state and federal prosecutors.

A nonprofit group called the Mississippi Community Education Center made two payments of welfare money to Favre Enterprises, the athlete's business: \$500,000 in December 2017 and \$600,000 in June 2018. The TANF money was to go toward a volleyball arena at the University of Southern Mississippi. Favre agreed to lead fundraising efforts for the facility at his alma mater, where his daughter started playing on the volleyball team in 2017.

The Mississippi Community Education Center director, Nancy New, pleaded guilty in April 2022 to charges of misspending welfare money, as did her son Zachary New, who helped run the nonprofit. They await sentencing and have agreed to testify against others.

Favre appeared in September before a Republican-led congressional committee that was examining how states are falling short on using welfare to help families in need. U.S. House Republicans have said a Mississippi welfare misspending scandal involving Favre and others points to the need for "serious reform" in the TANF program.

Favre told the congressional committee that he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in January.

It's spooky season. Here are some scary stories from around the world you probably haven't heard

By DONNA EDWARDS Associated Press

Some are well-worn warnings as familiar as the changing of seasons. Others are slow burns that end with a bang. Still others are just plain eerie.

Stories of spiritual entities, paranormal activity and creepy cryptids are passed through generations the world over, becoming local legends that only sometimes reach across borders and cultures.

So if the sordid tales you grew up with no longer make you shiver, it's time to reanimate your roster with global tales of ghosts, hauntings, and petrifying processions.

With Halloween nigh, and the season in many parts of the world ripe for campfires and spooky stories, people gravitate toward fear even in a complex and sometimes scary world. Here are some favorites — lore and fiction, with maybe some truth sprinkled throughout — that The Associated Press gathered from its journalists around the planet:

China: The corpse walkers

If you were out on the road in China in the old days — if you believe the stories, that is — you might have encountered a strange procession.

First, a man carrying a white paper lantern and scattering fake paper money ahead of them, chanting, "Yo ho, yo ho." Then, a towering, hooded black figure wearing a ghastly mask and marching in an awkward, wooden gait. Bringing up the rear, another man guiding the giant by touch, perhaps with a black cat.

They were corpse walkers — and the giant was the corpse.

Bad things happen when someone gets buried far from home: Without descendants to feed their spirit and keep their grave clean, they'll have a hard time settling in. They could even come back as a hungry ghost. So when a traveler died, the family would hire people who knew the strange art of walking a stiff body home.

When interviewer Liao Yiwu asked about memories of corpse walkers in the 2000s, some said they'd use a black cat to imbue the body with static electricity to make it walk. Others said there was a third man hiding under the cloak and giving the corpse a piggyback ride.

People kept their distance, he wrote, but the corpse walkers were always welcome at inns because they paid three times the normal rate and were said to bring good luck.

— By David Cohen in Bangkok

France: The legend of St. Denis

One of France's oldest spooky legends is also one of its most gruesome, because it involves a walking

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headless corpse.

Said to have been Paris' first bishop, Denis — later St. Denis — went on to lend his name to what is now the northern Paris suburb of Saint-Denis, famous for its magnificent basilica, its soccer stadium and the Olympic village that housed athletes during the Paris Games.

The third-century Roman rulers of what was then Gaul were apparently less than thrilled that Denis and companions Rustique and Éleuthère were making converts. Even after tossing them in prison, Denis continued to celebrate Mass. In some accounts, Denis suffered all manner of unspeakable tortures to make him renounce his faith — not just run-of-the-mill flagellation, but also mauling by famished wild beasts and being locked in a scorching oven.

Eventually, the three were sentenced to death and beheaded.

Legend has it that Denis' corpse, lifted by two angels, picked up his severed head and walked from the Mount of Martyrs — the supposed execution site now called Montmartre — for about 6 kilometers (nearly 4 miles) before collapsing in the village of Catulliacum, now the town of Saint-Denis.

In Montmartre today, Suzanne Buisson Square has a statue of St. Denis holding his head, which he is said to have washed in the waters of a fountain there before staggering away with it.

— By John Leicester in Paris

Mongolia: The death worm

Slithering beneath the vast dunes of the Gobi Desert, legend has it, is the monstrous Mongolian Death Worm. It kills prey by squirting lethal venom and can even electrocute from a distance. So goes the folklore that has since inspired depictions of deadly giant worms in movies and fiction. In Mongolia, the creature is known as *olgoi khorkhoi*, which roughly translates as "intestine worm."

The critter became known abroad after American paleontologist and explorer Roy Chapman Andrews wrote about it in his 1926 book, "On the Trail of Ancient Man: A Narrative of the Field Work of the Central Asiatic Expeditions." During a meeting with the Mongolian premier, Andrews was asked to capture a specimen of the giant worm.

"None of those present ever had seen the creature, but they all firmly believed in its existence and described it minutely," he wrote. "It is shaped like a sausage about two feet long, has no head nor legs and is so poisonous that merely to touch it means instant death."

Some believe the lore began with a more common animal — a snake called the Tartar sand boa. Others, undeterred, believe the giant worms exists. Subsequent expeditions have yet to yield any proof.

— By Emily Wang Fujiyama in Beijing

Brazil: Bárbara of the Pleasures

It's the turn of the 19th century, and colonial Rio de Janeiro is bustling. There are merchants, vendors, enslaved people, sailors — and a Portuguese immigrant, about 20 years old, named Bárbara. Legend says she stabbed her sleeping husband to run off with a lover, who then began exploiting her. Bárbara killed him, too, and was on her own.

As the story goes, she turned to sex work inside the Teles Arch. The dank, dark passage led off the plaza where the Portuguese emperor sat, and members of the royal court became faithful clients of the beautiful courtesan known as Bárbara of the Pleasures.

But age and disease caught up to her. One chronicler, Hermeto Lima, wrote in 1921 of a hole in Bárbara's nose, her bulging eyes, scratched eyelids and skeletal hands.

To rejuvenate, Bárbara started washing with animal blood. When that failed, it's said, she used blood from infants abandoned in the Wheel of the Exposed — the revolving compartment for foundlings outside a Catholic institution. Between 1738 and 1848, 20,966 babies were left in the wheel, according to text of an imperial ministry report provided by Esther Arantes, a retired professor in the infancy department of the State University of Rio de Janeiro.

Arantes' archival research yielded no evidence of Bárbara, but Rio's rumor mill claimed otherwise:

Whenever someone brought a baby to the wheel, "the miserable woman, like a toad, came out from her hiding place, and ran to steal the child," Lima wrote, adding Bárbara would make sure to drip its blood

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upon her leprous ulcers.

Bárbara disappeared, but her story lingers. Word is that she still prowls Teles Arch by night, surviving on the blood of babes.

— By David Biller in Rio de Janeiro

Nigeria: Madam Koi Koi

In Nigeria, the “Madam Koi Koi” ghost story from was a nightmare for students in boarding secondary schools.

The “madam” in question often walked around hostels with her red heels, especially at night, the sound of “koi koi” trailing behind her. You dare not come out if anyone raised an alarm that they heard the sound. Sometimes horrified students ran out and hostels were shut until morning, or even for days.

The backstory? No one knows for sure, but one popular theory was that she was fired as a teacher and died days later — vengeful, jobless and sad.

— By Dyepkazah Shibayan in Abuja, Nigeria

Britain: The Talbot Hotel

A sobbing woman. Ghostly, dressed in white — or, sometimes, black. And a storied oak staircase with royal connections.

The spooky stories revolve around a staircase that still stands at The Talbot Hotel in Oundle — a United Kingdom market town about 85 miles (135 kilometers) north of London that’s been around since the 1500s.

Mary, Queen of Scots — rival to England’s Queen Elizabeth I — is said to have descended the very same flight of steps on the way to her execution in 1587. But at the time, the multilevel structure was part of nearby Fotheringhay Castle, the site of Mary’s beheading.

Nearly four decades later, the Talbot was rebuilt using stones and other material salvaged from the abandoned Fotheringhay — including the castle’s storied staircase.

Guests and staff have reported seeing a ghostly woman on the stairs, and some have said they heard sobbing in the wee hours — all thought to be the doomed queen. The Associated Press has visited several times and can confirm quality coffee and cakes, but not the presence of ghosts.

— By Laurie Kellman in London

Indonesia: Ghosts of the Bintaro train tragedy

The Bintaro train tragedy of October 1987 is well known in Indonesia. The head-on collision between two commuter trains in the southern area of Jakarta is considered one of the deadliest train accidents in the country’s history.

The collision killed 139 passengers, giving rise to many mystical stories around the railway.

In the 37 years since the crash, many local residents and railway workers have reported seeing apparitions of people dressed in old, bloodstained clothing, wandering near the tracks where the tragedy took place. As the local urban legend goes, these ghostly figures are believed to be the spirits of those who perished in the accident and remain unable to move on to the afterlife. Some people also say there was a figure wandering around and looking for his body parts.

In 2013, another train accident happened at the same track, only 200 meters (yards) from the 1987 accident. The commuter train hit a petrol truck in the crossing gate, killing seven people, including the train engineer.

— By Edna Tarigan in Jakarta, Indonesia

Japan: Yotsuya Kaidan

One of Japan’s most famous kaidan, or ghost stories, is named after the area in Tokyo where the tragic story takes place. Called Yotsuya Kaidan, it’s an unforgettable tale of that archetypal powerless woman whose only recourse for revenge against the man who betrays her love is to become a ghost.

Oiwa, a beautiful woman and wife of the handsome but heartless samurai Iemon, is weak after giving birth to their baby. Iemon is having an affair, and the other woman, seeking to make sure Iemon dumps Oiwa, tricks her into taking poison, thinking it’s medicine, so her face becomes disfigured.

Written in the 19th century and staged as various Kabuki plays and made into dozens of movies, a particularly scary scene is that moment when Oiwa discovers her horrible transformation, a telling moment

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that speaks volumes about human vanity and frailty. When she combs her hair before a mirror, it falls out in clumps. She sees her twisted, discolored face and cries out: "Is this my face? Is this my face?"

After Oiwa dies, she haunts Iemon, appearing everywhere — perhaps merely his delusion. Iemon is eventually driven to madness.

— By Yuri Kageyama in Tokyo

Kenya: The legend of Ngong Hills

In Kenya, a Maasai folktale about an ogre who used to raid villages for food is told to children. It goes like this:

The ogre lived deep in the forest and would raid neighboring villages to kill cattle — the Maasai community's symbol of wealth — despite many warriors keeping guard.

The ogre fell in love with a beautiful Maasai woman named Sanayian and he transformed into a Maasai warrior to win her heart. He then revealed his real identity to Sanayian — who then told the warriors. The warriors, using Sanayian as a bait, speared the ogre while he was meeting with his love.

Even after he transformed back into an ogre, he could not survive. He fell and died. His five fingers, it is said, formed the five peaks that are the present-day Ngong Hills, in the outskirts of the capital, Nairobi, and a popular hiking destination.

— By Evelyne Musambi in Nairobi, Kenya

The Philippines: The ghost on Balete Drive

Ask anyone in Manila about Balete Drive and many will associate it with the mysterious "white lady" who appears at night.

The street, named after trees that used to line its sidewalks in suburban Quezon city, has been the subject of scary stories that have been told and retold since the 1950s. There are claims that a beautiful woman with long hair dressed in white would sometimes suddenly appear at night — then just disappear without a trace.

It is said that the sightings were reported by taxi drivers working on late-night shifts. Some claim she would appear asking for a ride and then suddenly disappear from the passenger seat as the vehicle moves. Others say her image would appear at the rearview mirror of drivers driving alone and vanish just as quickly.

"I haven't seen her," says 53-year-old Roberto Perez, who works part-time near Balete Drive, "but when I pass there between midnight to about 1:30, I get goosebumps, so I just quickly turn to another street."

The tale's origins are unknown. There are varying accounts why the ghost appears along Balete Drive, but the most common story is that decades ago, a girl died due to a car accident along the street. Horror movies in the Philippines have been produced based on this urban legend.

— By Celine Rosario in Bangkok and Aaron Favila in Manila, Philippines

Hungary: The marble bride

Through the branches of stately trees on a leafy avenue in Hungary's capital, passersby can spot an unusual figure keeping solemn watch from above: the statue of a woman with a mournful expression peering from a stone balcony.

The sculpture, known as the "marble bride," is unlike any of the other frescoes on surrounding buildings in Budapest, and the mystery of its presence has produced legends going back nearly a century.

In one, a young couple shared an apartment in the building when the husband was called to fight in World War I. The wife waited patiently on the balcony each day for his return, and when a letter arrived with news of his death on the front, the woman died of a broken heart.

But the letter had been mistaken. When the husband returned home and found his wife had died, he had a sculpture carved in her honor and placed where she had spent so many days faithfully waiting.

Another legend says that the husband never returned from the war and, unable to accept his death, the woman stayed waiting on the balcony and eventually turned to stone, and still waits today for a reunion that will never come.

— By Justin Spike in Budapest, Hungary

Thailand: Lady Nak of Phra Khanong

Bangkok is home to one of Thailand's most famous pieces of folklore: the tragic love of Mae Nak, or the Lady Nak of Phra Khanong.

The young and pregnant Nak was waiting for her husband, Mak, to come back from war to their home on the banks of Phra Khanong canal. Nak and her baby died during childbirth, but Mak still came home to see them waiting. With his unwavering love, Mak rejected warnings that Nak was a ghost until he saw her stretching her arm from the upper-floor porch to the ground to pick up a lime. He fled, and Nak started terrorizing the town in grief and fury.

In one variation of the story's ending, Nak was stopped either by a shaman who captured her in a clay jar, or a powerful Buddhist monk who performed a rite to rest her spirit in peace.

The story has been reinterpreted into dozens of movies, with the critically acclaimed 1999 version becoming the first Thai movie to gross over 100 million baht — about \$2.7 million at the time. The shrine dedicated to Nak at Wat Mahabut, the temple where her body is believed to be buried, is famous for worshippers seeing their prayers about love and children being answered.

Harris promises to 'represent all Americans' after Biden's remark on Trump supporters and 'garbage'

By WILL WEISSERT and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Kamala Harris called Wednesday for Americans to "stop pointing fingers at each other" as she tried to push past comments made by President Joe Biden about Donald Trump's supporters and "garbage" and keep the focus on her Republican opponent in the closing days of the race.

"We know we have an opportunity in this election to turn the page on a decade of Donald Trump, who has been trying to keep us divided and afraid of each other," the Democratic nominee said.

Harris held rallies in a trio of battleground states as part of a blitz in the closing week of the election, with stops Wednesday in Raleigh, North Carolina; Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; and Madison, Wisconsin.

She stressed unity and common ground, expanding on her capstone speech Tuesday in Washington, where she laid out what her team called the "closing argument" of her campaign.

"I am not looking to score political points," the vice president said. "I am looking to make progress."

As she waited for Harris to take the stage in Raleigh, 35-year-old Liz Kazal said she was "cautiously optimistic" about the election. She's tried to volunteer for the campaign every week, including making phone calls, knocking on doors with her toddler daughter and raising money for Harris' candidacy.

"You hope for the best and plan for the worst," Kazal said.

Meanwhile, the White House rushed to explain that the president's comment about "garbage" was a reference to rhetoric from Trump allies, not Trump's supporters themselves. Press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Biden "does not view Trump supporters or anybody who supports Trump as garbage."

The controversy began Tuesday — at the same time Harris was speaking near the White House — when Biden participated in a campaign call organized by the Hispanic advocacy group Voto Latino. Biden used the opportunity to criticize Sunday's Madison Square Garden rally, where a comedian described Puerto Rico as a "floating island of garbage."

"The only garbage I see floating out there is his supporters. His demonization of Latinos is unconscionable, and it's un-American," Biden said. "It's totally contrary to everything we've done, everything we've been."

Harris told reporters before boarding Air Force Two for her flight to Raleigh that she disagrees "with any criticism of people based on who they vote for."

"I will represent all Americans, including those who don't vote for me," she said.

Her words were an attempt to blunt the controversy over Biden's comments and put some distance between herself and the president, something she has struggled with in the past.

Republicans seized on Biden's comments, claiming they were an echo of the time when Hillary Clinton, as the Democratic nominee in 2016, said half of Trump's supporters belonged in a "basket of deplorables."

"We know what they believe. Because look how they've treated you," Trump said at his rally in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, on Wednesday. "They've treated you like garbage. The truth is, they've treated our

whole country like garbage.”

He also said, “Without question, my supporters are far higher-quality than Crooked Joe’s,” using his nickname for the president.

After landing in Green Bay, Wisconsin, for another rally later in the day, Trump posed for photos while wearing a neon orange and yellow vest and sitting in the passenger seat of a garbage truck festooned with American flags and campaign signs.

“How do you like my garbage truck?” Trump said as he took questions from reporters.

“Joe Biden should be ashamed of himself, if he knows what he’s even doing,” Trump said.

Travis Waters, 54, who attended Harris’ second rally of the day in Harrisburg, shrugged off the commotion over Biden’s comments.

“Donald Trump has said so much about so many other groups and I don’t hear the media having the same outrage,” Waters said.

In attacking Biden — and by extension, Harris — Republicans have glossed over Trump’s own history of insulting and demonizing rhetoric, such as calling the United States a “garbage can for the world” or describing political opponents as “the enemy within.” Trump has also described Harris as a “stupid person” and “lazy as hell,” and he’s questioned whether she was on drugs.

Trump has also refused demands to apologize for the comment about Puerto Rico at his rally, acknowledging that “somebody said some bad things” but adding that he “can’t imagine it’s a big deal.”

Political attack lines have a history of occasionally boomeranging back on people who use them. For example, Ohio Sen. JD Vance, now Trump’s running mate, once described Democrats as beholden to “a bunch of childless cat ladies who are miserable at their own lives and the choices that they’ve made.”

Vance’s 3-year-old comments resurfaced once he became the vice presidential nominee, energizing Harris supporters who repurposed the label as a point of pride on shirts and bumper stickers — much like Trump’s supporters once cheerfully branded themselves as “deplorables.”

At each of Harris’ rallies, she was confronted by pro-Palestinian protestors objecting to her support for Israel’s military campaign against Hamas in Gaza.

“We all want the war in Gaza to end and get the hostages out,” Harris said during one interruption in Madison.

Then she added, “Everyone has a right to be heard, but right now I’m speaking.”

The crowd roared in approval, drowning out another group of protestors who unfurled a banner saying “No Funding for War Crimes.”

With just days to go before the end of the campaign, many of Harris’ supporters were on edge. Holly Meyer, 65, said she was nervous as she attended the Madison rally.

“But I’m also optimistic,” she said. “People just seem to be energized by Vice President Harris.”

Donald Trump boards a garbage truck to draw attention to Biden remark

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP) — Donald Trump walked down the steps of the Boeing 757 that bears his name, walked across a rain-soaked tarmac and, after twice missing the handle, climbed into the passenger seat of a white garbage truck that also carried his name.

The former president, once a reality TV star known for his showmanship, wanted to draw attention to a remark made a day earlier by his successor, Democratic President Joe Biden, that suggested Trump’s supporters were garbage. Trump has used the remark as a cudgel against his Democratic rival, Vice President Kamala Harris.

“How do you like my garbage truck?” Trump said, wearing an orange and yellow safety vest over his white dress shirt and red tie. “This is in honor of Kamala and Joe Biden.”

Trump and other Republicans were facing pushback of their own for comments by a comedian at a weekend Trump rally who disparaged Puerto Rico as a “floating island of garbage.” Trump then seized on

a comment Biden made on a late Wednesday call that “The only garbage I see floating out there is his supporters.”

The president tried to clarify the comment afterward, saying he had intended to say Trump’s demonization of Latinos was unconscionable. But it was too late.

On Thursday, after arriving in Green Bay, Wisconsin, for an evening rally, Trump climbed into the garbage truck, carrying on a brief discussion with reporters while looking out the window — similar to what he did earlier this month during a photo opportunity he staged at a Pennsylvania McDonalds.

He again tried to distance himself from comedian Tony Hinchcliffe, whose joke had set off the firestorm, but Trump did not denounce it. He also said he did not need to apologize to Puerto Ricans.

“I don’t know anything about the comedian,” Trump said. “I don’t know who he is. I’ve never seen him. I heard he made a statement, but it was a statement that he made. He’s a comedian, what can I tell you. I know nothing about him.”

A spokesperson for Trump said the joke doesn’t reflect his views, but the former president has not addressed it himself.

“I love Puerto Rico and Puerto Rico loves me,” Trump said from the garbage truck.

He ended the brief appearance by telling reporters: “I hope you enjoyed this garbage truck. Thank you very much.”

When he took the stage a short time later, he was still wearing the orange vest.

Indians celebrate Diwali by lighting a record number of earthen lamps

By BISWAJEET BANERJEE Associated Press

LUCKNOW, India (AP) — Millions of Indians began celebrating the annual Hindu festival of lights, Diwali, by symbolically lighting a record 2.51 million earthen oil lamps at dusk on Wednesday on the banks of the river Saryu in a northern Indian city they believe to be the birthplace of the deity, Lord Ram.

Diwali is the most important festival of the year in India — for the Hindu majority in particular. It is marked by socializing and exchanging gifts with loved ones. Many light earthen oil lamps, candles, and fireworks are set off. In the evening, a special prayer is dedicated to the Hindu goddess Lakshmi, who is believed to bring luck and prosperity.

A Guinness World Records team presented a certificate to Uttar Pradesh state Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, acknowledging the unprecedented number of oil lamps, exceeding last year’s 2.2 million. Drone cameras closely monitored the event.

The celebrations took place within the northern city of Ayodhya where Prime Minister Narendra Modi nine months ago opened a controversial Hindu temple built on the ruins of a historic mosque following a Supreme Court decision, seen as a political win for the populist leader. The establishment of the temple dedicated to Lord Ram fulfilled a long-standing demand by millions of Hindus

On Wednesday, thousands of volunteers lit lamps, called “Diyas” along riverbanks, lanes, fronts, and roofs of homes.

“More than 30,000 volunteers, primarily college students, worked meticulously to maintain the systematic pattern of burning lamps for the prescribed time,” said Dr. Pratibha Goyal, vice-chancellor of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Avadh University, who coordinated the massive effort.

The earthen lamps lit along 55 riverfront steps of the river Saryu created a captivating display throughout 1.5 kilometers (1 mile). As the lamps remained lit for over five minutes, government spokesperson Shishir Singh said Ayodhya achieved its seventh consecutive world record for the largest display.

Singh said that around 91,000 liters (about 24,000 gallons) of mustard oil were used to light the lamps.

The event transformed Ayodhya into a city of lights amid devotional bhajan singing. A laser show depicting scenes from the epic Ramayana added to the immersive experience and an eco-friendly fireworks show lit the skyline. Traditional decorations, including elaborate arches and grand gateways along the

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main highways, were in abundance, capturing the festive atmosphere as folk cultural performances drew pilgrims to the streets.

The festival also featured a massive praying ceremony performed by 1,100 priests along riverbanks.

Security was tightened across the city. Paramilitary commandos, bomb detectors, dog squads, face-recognition technology, and real-time monitoring drones were deployed throughout the city, police officer Rajkaran Nayyar said.

Major Hindu festivals like Dussehra and Diwali are associated with mythological tales of Lord Ram extolling the virtues of truth, sacrifice, and ethical governance.

Diwali's main festival celebrations will be held across the country on Thursday.

At least 95 people die in devastating flash floods in Spain

By ALICIA LEÓN, JOSEPH WILSON and TERESA MEDRANO Associated Press

UTIEL, Spain (AP) — Flash floods in Spain turned village streets into rivers, ruined homes, disrupted transportation and killed at least 95 people in the worst natural disaster to hit the European nation in recent memory.

Rainstorms that started Tuesday and continued Wednesday caused flooding across southern and eastern Spain, stretching from Malaga to Valencia. Muddy torrents tumbled vehicles down streets at high speeds while debris and household items swirled in the water. Police and rescue services used helicopters to lift people from their homes and rubber boats to reach drivers stranded atop cars.

Emergency services in the eastern region of Valencia confirmed a death toll of 92 people on Wednesday. Another two casualties were reported in the neighboring Castilla La Mancha region, while southern Andalusia reported one death.

"Yesterday was the worst day of my life," Ricardo Gabaldón, the mayor of Utiel, a town in Valencia, told national broadcaster RTVE on Wednesday. He said six residents perished and more are missing.

"We were trapped like rats. Cars and trash containers were flowing down the streets. The water was rising to 3 meters (9.8 feet)," he said.

Spain's government declared three days of mourning starting Thursday.

"For those who are looking for their loved ones, all of Spain feels your pain," Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said in a televised address.

Rescue personnel and more than 1,100 soldiers from Spain's emergency response units were deployed to affected areas. Spain's central government set up a crisis committee to coordinate rescue efforts.

Javier Berenguer, 63, escaped his bakery in Utiel when crushing water threatened to overwhelm him. He said it rose to 2.5 meters (8.2 feet) inside his business, and he fears his livelihood has been destroyed.

"I had to get out of a window as best I could because the water was already coming up to my shoulders. I took refuge on the first floor with the neighbors and I stayed there all night," Berenguer told The Associated Press. "It has taken everything. I have to throw everything out of the bakery, the freezers, ovens, everything."

María Carmen Martínez, another Utiel resident, witnessed a harrowing rescue.

"It was horrible, horrible. There was a man there clinging to a fence who was falling and calling people for help," she said. "They couldn't help him until the helicopters came and took him away."

One Valencia town, Paiporta, suffered exceptional loss. Mayor Maribel Albalat told RTVE that over 30 people died in the town of some 25,000 people. Those included six residents of a senior residence. News media broadcast footage of seniors in chairs and wheelchairs at a Paiporta nursing home, some crying out in apparent terror as the water rose over their knees.

"We don't know what happened, but in 10 minutes the village was overflowing with water," Albalat said.

Spain's national weather service said it rained more in eight hours in Valencia than it had in the preceding 20 months, calling the deluge "extraordinary."

Located south of Barcelona on the Mediterranean coast, Valencia is a tourist destination known for its beaches, citrus orchards, and as the origin of the rice dish, paella. The region has gorges and small river-

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beds that spend much of the year completely dry but quickly fill with water when it rains. Many of them pass through populated areas.

As the floods receded, thick layers of mud mixed with refuse made some streets unrecognizable.

"The neighborhood is destroyed, all the cars are on top of each other, it's literally smashed up," Christian Viena, a bar owner in the Valencian village of Barrio de la Torre, said by phone. "Everything is a total wreck, everything is ready to be thrown away. The mud is almost 30 centimeters (11 inches) deep."

Outside Viena's bar, people were venturing out to see what they could salvage. Cars were piled up and the streets were filled with clumps of water-logged branches.

Spain has experienced similar autumn storms in recent years. Nothing, however, compared to the devastation over the last two days, which recalls floods in Germany and Belgium in 2021 in which 230 people were killed.

The death toll will likely rise with other regions yet to report victims and search efforts continuing in hard-to-reach places.

"We are facing a very difficult situation," minister of territory policies Ángel Víctor Torres said. "The fact that we can't give a number of the missing persons indicates the magnitude of the tragedy."

Spain is still recovering from a severe drought and has registered record high temperatures in recent years. Scientists say increased episodes of extreme weather are likely linked to climate change. The prolonged drought makes it more difficult for the land to absorb high volumes of water.

The storms also unleashed a rare tornado and a freak hailstorm that punched holes in car windows and greenhouses.

Transport was also affected. A high-speed train with nearly 300 people on board derailed near Malaga, although rail authorities said no one was hurt. High-speed train service between Valencia city and Madrid was interrupted, and the transport ministry said it could take up to four days to restore highspeed service to the capital due to the damage done to the line. Bus and commuter rail lines were likewise interrupted. Many flights were cancelled Tuesday night, stranding some 1,500 people overnight at Valencia's airport. Flights resumed Wednesday.

Soccer games involving Valencia and Levante were canceled and players from Barcelona and Madrid held a moment of silence for victims of the flood before training Wednesday.

Valencian regional President Carlos Mazón urged people to stay at home, saying travel by road was difficult due to fallen trees and wrecked vehicles. Rescue efforts were hampered by downed power lines and power outages, and the regional emergency service responded to some 30,000 calls, Mazón said.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told reporters in Brussels that the EU will "help coordinate the rescue teams" using its Copernicus geo-monitoring satellite system.

Some residents appealed for news of their missing loved ones via social media, television and radio broadcasts.

Leonardo Enrique told RTVE that his family searched for hours for his 40-year-old son, Leonardo Enrique Rivera, who was driving a delivery van when the rain began. His son sent a message saying his van was flooding and that he had been hit by another vehicle near Ribarroja, an industrial town that is among the worst affected, Enrique said.

Trial begins in the assassination of Rio de Janeiro councilwoman Marielle Franco

By ELÉONORE HUGHES Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — A trial opened Wednesday against two former policemen accused in the 2018 killing of Rio de Janeiro councilwoman Marielle Franco, who was Black, bisexual and from humble roots and who has become a major icon of Brazil's political left.

Franco, 38, and her driver, Anderson Gomes, were killed in a drive-by shooting on March 14, 2018. Ronnie Lessa is accused of firing the gun, while Elcio Queiroz is accused of being the driver.

Two brothers with purported ties to criminal groups — one of them a sitting federal lawmaker — have

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been accused of ordering the killing, allegedly because the councilwoman's work went against the interests of those gangs, known as militias. They have yet to go on trial.

Lessa and Queiroz, arrested in 2019, have signed plea bargains confessing their roles, but the jury has final word on their guilt. Jurors could technically overrule the plea bargains, but analysts say that is unlikely.

Hundreds of demonstrators gathered Wednesday in front of the trial venue in Rio de Janeiro, many carrying sunflowers and shouting "Justice!"

"Today we have a chance to change the face of justice in Rio de Janeiro and in Brazil," Antônio Francisco da Silva Neto, Marielle's father, told journalists before the trial began. Her mother, sister and daughter were also on site, as was Anderson's wife, Agatha Arnaus.

"These individuals, confessed defendants, need to be condemned in an exemplary way so that the message gets across that they are not God, they cannot take the life of any human being and go unpunished," he added.

Known universally by her first name, Marielle, the killing was seen in Brazil as an attack on democracy. Raised in one of Rio's poor communities known as favelas, she became known for her efforts to improve the lives of ordinary Rio residents. Following her election in 2016, she fought against violence targeting women while defending human rights and social programs.

Outrage over her killing sparked mass protests. Her silhouette can be found printed on T-shirts and painted on walls nationwide.

The accused faced questions over the double deaths and also the attempted killing of Fernanda Chaves, Franco's assistant and friend, who was injured but survived.

Chaves recounted Marielle's final moments before the court on Wednesday.

"We were talking about things about life, work, domestic things. At one point she was doubting whether to stop or not to buy bread at the bakery ... It was when the car was going very slowly that I heard a rush... As an immediate reflex, I got down," Chaves said. "I noticed (Anderson's) right arm was off the steering wheel, Marielle was immobile. I felt her arm on top of me, the weight of her body against me."

Lessa told the court that he fired the shots to Marielle's head, and that Anderson was killed accidentally.

"I took the risk, knowing that the ammunition wasn't appropriate. It was a 9mm ammunition... if it had been a revolver, for example, only the councilwoman would have died, not Anderson," he said.

Prosecutors are seeking the maximum prison sentence for the double killings, which could reach 84 years each, according to Rio's public prosecutors' office.

In September, Edilson Barbosa dos Santos was convicted of dismantling the car used in the drive-by shooting. But many see Wednesday's trial as the first time some of the main people allegedly responsible for her death are held to account.

Both defendants participated in the trial by videoconference from prison. Lessa is in Sao Paulo while Queiroz is in Brazil's capital, Brasilia. The jury heard eight witnesses, six called by the state public prosecutors' office and two others by Lessa's defense. Queiroz's defense opted not to call any.

Federal authorities started investigating the case in earnest once leftist President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva took office in 2023.

In March, Federal Police detained federal lawmaker Chiquinho Brazão and his brother Domingos Brazão, a member of Rio state's accounts watchdog, on suspicion of ordering Franco's killing. Both are allegedly connected to the militias, which illegally charge residents for various services, including protection. They have denied any involvement in the killing or with militias.

In his plea bargain, Lessa told police that the two politician brothers hired him and informed him that the then-chief of the state's civil police, Rivaldo Barbosa, had signed off beforehand. Barbosa was also arrested in March.

Police accuse the politicians of ordering her killing because she was an obstacle to militias' interests.

Guilherme Catramby, a delegate of the Federal Police, joined the case at the request of the then Minister of Justice, Flávio Dino, early 2023. He said the motivation of the crime was "undoubtedly" Marielle's work regarding land rights, even though it wasn't central to her mandate.

"Marielle's mandate ... (was) a thorn in the side of militia interests, especially in the West Zone of Rio de Janeiro," he added.

Before the trial started, Anielle Franco, Marielle's sister and Lula's minister for racial equality, said the day bought a "mixture of feelings."

"It's a certainty that we fought hard and we're going to keep fighting. Not just for Mari, for Anderson, but for everyone who will come. For my daughters, for my granddaughters and for all the generations to come. So that we have a safer place."

Election 2024 Latest: Trump and Harris lean into the campaign's last leg with less than a week left

By The Associated Press undefined

Donald Trump and Kamala Harris crisscrossed several swing states on Wednesday, passing each other in Wisconsin, where the former president appeared in Green Bay with a one-time local icon, retired NFL quarterback Brett Favre.

Mumford & Sons, Gracie Abrams, Remi Wolf and members of the band The National appeared at Harris' rally Wednesday night in Madison.

Harris on Tuesday sought to remind Americans what life was like under Trump and then offered voters a different path forward if they send her to the White House, in a speech billed as her campaign's closing argument.

Follow the AP's Election 2024 coverage at: <https://apnews.com/hub/election-2024>.

Here's the latest:

Harris strikes open tone in Wisconsin

Vice President Kamala Harris, as she has done all day on the campaign trail, struck a conciliatory tone in Wisconsin on Wednesday, telling voters she is looking for "common ground" with people who disagree with her.

"As president, I will seek to find common ground and common sense solutions to the problems you face," she said. "I'm not looking to score political points, I am looking for progress."

Harris has spent considerable time in the close of her campaign reaching out to one-time Trump voters and those who disagree with her on certain issues.

She has had former Trump supporters introduce her at events. And has touted that she wants to put a Republican in her would-be cabinet. "Unlike Donald Trump, I don't believe that people who disagree with me are the enemy," she said in Wisconsin.

Trump thanks Brett Favre for his support at Wisconsin rally

Trump thanks NFL legend Brett Favre for endorsing him during a rally in Green Bay, the Wisconsin city where he led the Packers to a Super Bowl victory and was the league's Most Valuable Player three times.

"Thank you, Brett. What a great honor. What a great champion," Trump said. He joked that he's "a little upset because I think he got bigger applause than me, and I'm not happy."

Favre has been in the news lately for a welfare scandal in his home state of Mississippi. Favre, 55, is not facing any criminal charges, but he is among more than three dozen people or groups being sued as the state tries to recover misspent money.

"He's got a little problem for himself and I thought it was very brave of him to come out," Trump said.

Harris confronted pro-Palestinian protesters at all three of her events today

Harris has confronted pro-Palestinian protesters at all three of her events on Wednesday, using each interruption to fire up her supporters.

At her rallies in North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, a group of people protested on behalf of Palestinians, criticizing Harris for the Biden administration's handling of the war between Israel and Hamas.

"We all want the war in Gaza to end and to get the hostages out and I will do everything in my power to make it heard and known," Harris said in Wisconsin. "And everyone has a right to be heard, but right now I am speaking."

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Harris' supporters erupted at her comment, a reference to what she told then-Vice President Mike Pence during their debate in 2020. The reaction largely drowned out the protesters.

Historians for Harris sign open letter endorsing her candidacy

Ken Burns, Ron Chernow and Jon Meacham are among hundreds of historians who have signed an open letter endorsing Vice President Kamala Harris for president.

Calling themselves "Historians for Harris," the signees condemned Republican nominee Donald Trump as "openly hostile to democracy and to American constitutional customs," and praised Harris for dedicating "her life to affirming the rule of law and democracy."

"We believe, based on our study of the past, that the nation stands at an unprecedented historical as well as a political crossroads," the letter reads in part. "We appeal to our fellow citizens, whether conservative, independent, or liberal, regardless of party affiliation, to vote for Kamala Harris and Tim Walz."

Organizers of the letter, published Wednesday, include Burns, Chernow, Meacham, Beverly Gage, Sean Wilentz and Sidney Blumenthal. Supporters also include such Pulitzer Prize winners as Eric Foner, David Blight, Rick Atkinson and Stacy Schiff.

Trump distancing himself from anti-Puerto Rico joke

Trump distanced himself from a comedian whose joke disparaging Puerto Rico set off a firestorm, but he did not denounce the remark referring to the territory as a "floating island of garbage."

"I don't know anything about the comedian," Trump told reporters in Green Bay, Wisconsin. "I don't know who he is. I've never seen him. I heard he made a statement, but it was a statement that he made. He's a comedian, what can I tell you. I know nothing about him."

Trump made the comment while seated in the passenger seat of a garbage truck, hoping to draw attention to Biden's comment that seemed to compare Trump supporters to "garbage."

"I love Puerto Rico and Puerto Rico loves me," Trump said. "Nobody's done more for Puerto Rico than me," he added. "I took care of them when they had the two hurricanes. And nobody gets along better with Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican people than me. They love me and I love them."

Harris tells protester they have 'right to be heard,' but 'right now I am speaking'

Vice President Kamala Harris, faced by a protester at her rally in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, on Wednesday, said the person who yelled "Free Palestine" had a "right to be heard" but "right now, I am speaking."

The comment, a call back to what Harris said when then-Vice President Mike Pence attempted to interrupt her during their debate in 2020, earned huge applause from the supportive crowd.

Here is the thing, let me say something, we are six days out from an election, we are six days away from an election and ours is about a fight for democracy and your right to be heard," Harris said after the protester shouted.

"That is what is on the line in this election. That is what is on the line in this election." She added: "Look everybody has a right to be heard but right now I am speaking."

Harris has faced pro-Palestinian protestors at a series of events during the close of her campaign.

Harris urges voters to cast ballots early and talk to family and friends

Vice President Kamala Harris stressed the importance of early voting during a rally in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, on Wednesday, urging her supporters to not only cast their own ballot, but to encourage family and friends to do the same.

"Pennsylvania, if you still have a ballot you can take it to a ballot drop box or an election office in your county by 8 p.m. on Election Day," she said. "Let's spread the word."

Pennsylvania is a key state to both Harris and former President Donald Trump. Polls show a tight race in the commonwealth and both campaigns have spent considerable time in Pennsylvania in the final weeks of the campaign.

"I'm visiting this afternoon because we need your vote, Pennsylvania, we need your vote. Because we have just six days left in one of the most consequential elections in our lifetime," Harris said.

Suspect in ballot drop box fires is an experienced metalworker, investigators say

Investigators say the man suspected of setting fires in ballot drop boxes in Oregon and Washington state is an experienced metalworker and may be planning additional attacks.

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Portland Police Bureau spokesman Mike Benner said Wednesday that authorities believe the man who set the incendiary devices at ballot boxes in Portland and nearby Vancouver, Washington, had a "wealth of experience" in metal fabrication and welding.

The suspect is described as white and 30 to 40 years old, balding or with very short hair. Police previously said surveillance video showed the man driving a black or dark-colored 2001 to 2004 Volvo S-60. The vehicle did not have a front license plate, but it did have a rear plate with unknown letters or numbers.

Some voters in Washington and Oregon are still waiting for their ballots

Election officials in Washington state and Oregon say the U.S. Postal Service has not delivered ballots to some voters.

In Coos County, along Oregon's western coast, an unknown number of ballots have not been delivered, and frustrated voters are inundating the clerk's office with phone calls, County Clerk Julie Brecke said.

Coos County has about 50,000 active and registered voters.

"There's no way to know the total number of ballots affected, because we only know there's a problem if voters tell us," Laura Kerns, a spokesperson for the Oregon Secretary of State's office, said in an email Wednesday.

In Whitman County, Washington, Auditor Sandy Jamison said up to 300 ballots had not been delivered, mostly to post office box holders in the town of Garfield, about 55 miles southeast of Spokane.

Officials are urging residents in the two vote-by-mail states to reach out for replacement ballots ahead of next Tuesday's election.

The Postal Service did not immediately return messages seeking comment.

Michigan removes 2 township clerks after they expressed plans to hand-count votes

Two Michigan township clerks in the Upper Peninsula have been removed from their election duties after expressing plans to hand-count votes in the upcoming November election, according to a letter sent by the state's Bureau of Elections director.

In the directive dated Oct. 28, Director Jonathan Brater said that Rock River Clerk Tom Schierkolk and Deputy Clerk David LaMere were barred from administering elections until further notice.

Schierkolk and LaMere did not respond to messages the Associated Press left at their office.

The letter was first reported by the New York Times.

Michigan uses electronic voting machines to tabulate ballots and a hand-count would be unlawful, Brater said.

Research shows that hand-counting is slower and more prone to errors than using machine tabulators. Rock River is about 27 miles from Marquette, Michigan, and home to just over 1,200 people, according to the 2020 Census.

Harris distances herself again from Biden's 'garbage' comments

The Democratic nominee for president told ABC in a Wednesday interview, "I strongly disagree with any criticism of the people based on who they vote for."

Harris' response, made after speaking at a rally in North Carolina, echoes her earlier comments about Biden setting off a firestorm when he responded Tuesday to a comedian at a recent Trump rally calling Puerto Rico "a floating island of garbage in the middle of the ocean." Biden said, "The only garbage I see floating out there is his supporters. His demonization of Latinos is unconscionable, and it's un-American."

Biden and the White House rushed to explain that the president was talking about the rhetoric on stage, not Trump's supporters themselves.

Nicky Jam withdraws his endorsement of Donald Trump

Puerto Rican reggaeton singer Nicky Jam has withdrawn his endorsement of Donald Trump in the 2024 presidential election a month after appearing at a rally for the candidate.

Tony Hinchcliffe, a comic who called Puerto Rico "garbage" before a packed Trump rally in New York appears to be the catalyst.

"The reason why I supported Donald Trump was because I thought he was the best for the economy in the United States, where many Latinos live, many of us Latinos live, myself included, many immigrants who are suffering because of the economy and him, being a businessman, I thought it was the best move,"

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Jam said in Spanish, in a video statement posted to his official Instagram page.

□ Read more about Jam's response to Hinchliffe's remarks

Video shows routine election operations in a Pennsylvania county, not voter fraud

Election officials in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, on Wednesday shut down rumors of fraud that emerged after a video was falsely identified online as showing busloads of noncitizens skipping the line to vote at a satellite election office.

The video, filmed on Oct. 26, shows a group of people walking up to the South Park Ice Rink office in the borough of Bethel Park and stopping to speak with a woman outside the building. The group was described on social media as "non-english speaking 'citizens'" and "illegal 'voters.'"

Officials said in a statement that because the deadline to register to vote in Pennsylvania was Oct. 21, anyone requesting a mail-in ballot after the deadline would only receive one if they were already registered. Only U.S. citizens can register to vote in Pennsylvania.

The statement explained that the group "came to apply for mail-in ballots and needed the assistance of translators." The video shows a "brief conversation between voters, their translators, and a County employee."

On the ground in Harrisburg

HARRISBURG, Pa. — People attending Kamala Harris' rally in Harrisburg said they wouldn't call Trump supporters "trash" necessarily, and some say they deal every day with Trump supporters, including close relatives, friends and colleagues. But some do see them differently.

Brittany Hausmann, who lives in a very Republican area of Pennsylvania, said many of her close friends are Trump supporters and she tries not to judge them. She said she also tries to have open-minded conversations about politics with them.

Others weren't quite as charitable.

"I would say that some of them are garbage and I would say that some of them are misguided," said Samantha Leister. She doesn't shy away from political conversations: she persuaded her mother-in-law to vote for Harris and is working on her father-in-law. Her parents are Trump supporters, too.

Travis Waters said Trump supporters aren't garbage, but are "detached from reality." He has no one close to him who is a Trump supporter.

But, he said, the difference between the candidates is about much more than politics — "this is about common decency."

Nikki Haley chides Trump and Biden

On Tuesday, Republican Nikki Haley said she was critical of "this masculine bromance stuff" that Trump and his allies are promoting.

A day later, during an appearance on SiriusXM, she condemned Biden for calling Trump supporters "garbage."

Haley said, "At what point does everybody not get — people are smart, they just want to know what you're going to do to make their life better. They don't want to be called a name. This isn't a schoolyard. Like, stop."

Biden will attend the presidential inauguration in January

WASHINGTON — "Yes, he will," said White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, when asked if Biden will attend the inauguration regardless of whether Harris or Trump is elected.

Jean-Pierre said the president believes in and is committed to the peaceful transfer of power and will be on hand for it.

Then-President Donald Trump broke with historical precedent in January 2021 after he lost his bid for reelection to Biden and did not attend Biden's swearing-in at the Capitol.

Trump calls for 'one-day voting'

ROCKY MOUNT, N.C. — "We used to have one-day voting," Trump told a packed hall in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, almost two weeks into the pivotal Southern state's early voting period, and less than a week from election day.

Standing in front of a blue banner emblazoned with "Vote Early," the Republican presidential nominee

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argued that a single day of balloting reduced the risk of mishandling ballots.

Trump painted a scenario where election office workers might have to move boxes of early ballots, mockingly impersonating anonymous elections workers as saying, "There were 14 boxes. Now there are six. What happened to the rest of them?"

Trump's campaign is promoting early voting, as the banner suggested, as the campaign has argued that Trump must compete within the current election structure to win.

The suggestion that more than one day of voting could corrupt the results was in keeping with Trump's continued and unfounded suggestion that the 2020 election, which he lost to Democratic President Joe Biden, was marred by widespread fraud.

Pennsylvania's top election official urges people to get their information from 'trusted sources'

In just the past week, Pennsylvania has seen false and misleading videos surface online, including a video purporting to show an election worker in Bucks County destroying mail ballots cast for former President Donald Trump. County officials quickly debunked the video and federal officials have said Russian actors were behind it as part of an effort to undermine public confidence in the election.

"We know there is already a lot of mis- and disinformation about Pennsylvania's elections, and it's likely to continue in the coming days and weeks ahead," Al Schmidt, Pennsylvania's secretary of state, said Wednesday. "It's critical that, at this juncture in the election cycle, voters get their information from trusted sources. Spreading videos and other information that lack context, sharing social posts filled with half-truths or even outright lies is harmful to our representative democracy."

Officials in Northampton County say false claims around another video, in which a postal worker was filmed delivering ballots, were damaging lies that put routine election operations in a "false light."

Pennsylvania postal worker filmed delivering ballots is targeted online with misinformation

An interim postmaster filmed delivering ballots to a county courthouse in eastern Pennsylvania is being falsely accused of wrongdoing on social media, according to the county government.

Northampton County Executive Lamont McClure told The Associated Press in a phone interview that online videos and screengrabs posted with accusations that the worker committed election fraud or was "acting suspect" are damaging lies that put routine election operations in a "false light."

"This is a postal service servant doing his public duty," McClure said. "Folks should find out all the facts before they go sharing things online."

McClure said the courthouse is surrounded by security cameras and other safeguards to ensure the election runs smoothly.

The video, which spread rapidly on the social platform X with users actively trying to identify the worker, is the latest example of groundless misinformation that has erupted this week in Pennsylvania, a key battleground in the presidential election.

Trump responds to Biden's comment by accusing him of treating Americans like 'garbage'

"Joe Biden finally said what he really thinks of our supporters. He called them 'garbage.' And they mean it. Even though, without question, my supporters are far higher-quality than crooked Joe's," Trump told an audience in Rocky Mount, North Carolina.

"My response is very simple: You can't lead America if you don't love Americans. You just can't," Trump said.

He went on to suggest that the administration was mistreating Americans by returning to his familiar theme of immigrants who have entered the country illegally.

"We know what they believe," he said. "Because look at how they've treated you. They've treated you like garbage."

Harris is 'trying to disassociate herself' from Biden's policies, Trump says

ROCKY MOUNT, N.C. — But the GOP nominee added that his rival's proposals to boost the U.S. economy "are the plans of a simpleton. They're not going to work."

After a man in the audience criticized Vice President Kamala Harris, Trump laughed.

"He screams, 'she's an idiot,' but I didn't say it," Trump said, smiling.

A new addition to Trump's rally line-up is a video showing clips of all the times Harris in her Tuesday

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night speech in Washington mentioned his name, more than a dozen times.

"She suffers from a very serious disease known as Trump derangement syndrome," he said after the video played. "Many Democrats suffer from that disease, and it's only because of one reason, because we're winning."

Trump tells voters in North Carolina that 'the fate of our nation is in your hands'

ROCKY MOUNT, N.C. — Donald Trump said Wednesday he has seen "even more enthusiasm" in this White House run than in his presidential runs in the 2016 and 2020 cycles.

Calling Vice President Kamala Harris "a low IQ individual," Trump said his Democratic rival is "running a campaign of hate, anger and retribution."

He entered the arena in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, as the song "God Bless the USA" played.

His next stop is Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Minnesota Rep. Tom Emmer refers to Walz as Harris' 'emotional support animal'

ROCKY MOUNT, N.C. — Emmer was one of the introductory speakers at Trump's rally in Rocky Mount.

The Republican congressman said the Harris' campaign has been struggling ever since Walz faced off against Ohio Rep. JD Vance in the vice presidential debate at the beginning of the month. Polls have not indicated a significant change since then.

But Emmer said of Walz, "He was supposed to be Kamala's emotional support animal. But guess what? JD Vance ended that."

Harris responds to a protester by slamming Trump

RALEIGH, N.C. — When Vice President Kamala Harris' speech in North Carolina on Wednesday was interrupted by a protester, the Democratic nominee used the moment to attack her opponent, former President Donald Trump.

The man, who yelled that Harris was "disrespecting the Palestinian community" and interrupted her speech, was drowned out by the crowd chanting Harris' name. Harris has faced a series of pro-Palestinian protests in recent days.

"This is the thing, we know we're actually fighting for a democracy," Harris said. "Unlike Donald Trump, I don't believe that people who disagree with you are the enemy."

Trump has increasingly become fixated on Americans he believes have wronged or betrayed him, referring to them as "the enemy from within." Democrats have seized on the line, accusing Trump, should he win another term in office, of planning to use the power of a White House against Americans who disagree with him.

Harris says Trump is angling to 'ban abortion nationwide'

RALEIGH, N.C. — Harris, speaking at a rally in North Carolina on Wednesday, lamented that a third of women live in a state with "a Trump abortion ban, including North Carolina and every state in the South except for Virginia."

Trump was central in remaking the Supreme Court, nominating three conservative justices who were key to overturning Roe v. Wade and federal abortion protections in 2022. Since that decision, abortion has invigorated the Democratic base and threatened Republicans. Trump has since said he wouldn't sign a federal abortion ban.

"Understand, he's not done," Harris said. "He would ban abortion nationwide."

'It is time for a new generation of leadership in America,' Harris says

RALEIGH, N.C. — Vice President Kamala Harris told an audience in North Carolina on Wednesday that this is a moment "for a new generation of leadership in America," offering herself as both a transition from former President Donald Trump, and, more subtly, President Joe Biden.

Trump is 78 years old and this is his third run for the presidency. Biden, who stepped aside to allow Harris to be the Democratic nominee over the summer, is 81 years old.

"It is time for a new generation of leadership in America. I am ready to offer that leadership," she said to an audience in Raleigh. "Let us lock arms with each other knowing that we have so much more in common than what separates us."

"We know we have an opportunity in this election to turn the page on a decade of Donald Trump who

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has been trying to keep us divided and afraid of each other," Harris added. "We know that is who he is, but North Carolina that is not who we are."

'I feel like I made an honest mistake when I voted for Trump in 2016'

RALEIGH, N.C. — Jennifer Bell, a North Carolina engineer who once voted for former President Donald Trump, introduced Vice President Kamala Harris at a rally in Raleigh on Wednesday, highlighting how flipping Trump voters and independents has become central to Harris' closing message.

Bell is the latest in a growing list of former Trump supporters who have introduced Harris or spoken at one of her rallies in the closing days of the campaign.

"I would invite them to, today, join me in putting country before party," Bell said to one-time Trump voters. "Let's put our principles before partisanship and stand up to support a leader who has shown unwavering dedication to bring our country together."

"As a fiscal conservative, I feel like I made an honest mistake when I voted for Trump in 2016," Bell said to some boos from the audience.

After saying that she thought a businessman would help streamline the government, she added, "The flaw in the plan is he is a failed businessman."

She later said Trump's "extremism destroyed the Republican Party."

Nearly 850,000 people have already cast their ballots in Louisiana

BATON ROUGE, La. — A new record has been set for early in-person voting in Louisiana, with 849,784 people casting their ballots ahead of the conclusion of the early voting window on Monday, Secretary of State Nancy Landry announced. The state saw a 3% increase from 2020 during the same time frame, when the former record was set.

In total, between early voting and returned absentee ballots, nearly one-third of Louisiana's registered voters have already cast their vote ahead of the Nov. 5 election.

"I'm pleased that so many Louisianans have already made their voices heard in this election," Landry said.

'I don't consider Trump to be a real Republican'

RALEIGH, N.C. — Jennifer Phelan, 60, said ahead of Vice President Kamala Harris' rally in Raleigh, North Carolina, that she feels nervous because the election seems so close. To her, it shouldn't be.

"It just seems very much like a cartoon of good and evil," Phelan said.

She still feels fairly confident in North Carolina flipping blue from the conversations she's had since she started volunteering in March, as well as the enthusiasm she sees among fellow volunteers. Phelan remembers discussing the race when Biden was atop the Democratic ticket, and she said more people seemed hesitant about supporting him. That hasn't been the case as much with Harris leading the ticket, she said.

She's also had conversations with some conservatives who said they'd vote for Harris because they don't like Trump — adding that those were "real Republicans" in her eyes.

"I don't consider Trump to be a real Republican," she said.

Sen. Rubio blasts Biden's 'garbage' remark as reflective of every top Democrat

U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, who first told Trump at a Tuesday rally in Pennsylvania that President Joe Biden had called the former president's supporters "garbage," is blaming Democrats for these comments.

"Biden only said out loud what every top democrat actually believes about anyone who votes for Trump," Rubio said on X.

Biden was speaking on a campaign call organized by the Hispanic advocacy group Voto Latino about remarks made by comedian Tony Hinchcliffe during Trump's rally in Madison Square Garden on Sunday where he referred to Puerto Rico as a "floating island of garbage."

"The only garbage I see floating out there is his supporters. His demonization of Latinos is unconscionable, and it's un-American," Biden had said in the call.

'We're the closest we've been since Obama won in '08'

RALEIGH, N.C. — Liz Kazal, a rallygoer at Vice President Kamala Harris' rally in Raleigh, said she's "cautiously optimistic" about the election — a lesson she said she learned from 2016 when Hillary Clinton lost to Donald Trump.

"You hope for the best and plan for the worst," she said on Wednesday.

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Kazal, 35, said she's tried to do some form of volunteering every week — door-knocking with her 2-year-old daughter, phone banking and fundraising for Harris with friends and family. Over the next week, Kazal said she plans to go door-knocking more and hold a phone banking session at her home.

"We're the closest we've been since Obama won in '08," Kazal said.

Kazal has family members who are Trump supporters, but it's been hard to talk to them about politics. To Kazal, it seems like Trump "transcends politics for them."

"I'm at a loss for how to talk to them," Kazal said. "But yeah, I've been able to talk about other issues."

Arnold Schwarzenegger endorses Kamala Harris and Tim Walz

LOS ANGELES — In a lengthy post on the social platform X, the former Republican governor of California said he "hates" politics more than ever, is not happy with either political party and would prefer to "tune out."

But, he said, he is endorsing Democrats Harris and Walz because "I will always be an American before I am a Republican."

Schwarzenegger went on to harshly criticize Donald Trump for rejecting the results of the 2020 presidential vote.

"(R)ejecting the results of an election is as un-American as it gets," he said. "To someone like me who talks to people all over the world and still knows America is the shining city on a hill, calling America ... a trash can for the world is so unpatriotic, it makes me furious.

He ended by saying the country needs to "close the door on this chapter of American history, and I know that former President Trump won't do that. He will divide, he will insult, he will find new ways to be more un-American than he already has been, and we, the people, will get nothing but more anger."

Democrats are leaning on celebrity star power. Will it matter?

WASHINGTON — Kamala Harris has Bruce Springsteen, Taylor Swift and Beyoncé. Donald Trump has Kid Rock, Waka Flocka Flame and Hulk Hogan.

As the 2024 campaign whirls into its final week, Democrats are noticeably leaning on their star power advantage, calling on a diverse range of celebrities to endorse Harris, invigorate audiences and, they hope, spur people to the ballot box.

Democrats have long enjoyed a celebrity advantage and used it to close out presidential campaigns when attention and energy are critical. That upper hand has grown during Trump's rise, a period that saw scores of celebrities, even apolitical stars, break their silence and speak out against the Republican leader. The advantage often means raucous, fiery events in the closing days of a race, but history — namely Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign — highlights how the energy at those events can sometimes paper over broader issues with a candidate.

☐ Read more on the impact of celebrity involvement in campaigning

'I will represent all Americans, including those who don't vote for me'

WASHINGTON — Harris said she spoke with Biden Tuesday night after her speech, but his comments in the campaign call didn't come up.

She said: "I will represent all Americans, including those who don't vote for me."

The flap over the president's comments allowed Harris to make her sharpest break yet with Biden during her three-month campaign for the White House. She's come under fire for not differentiating herself enough from the unpopular Democratic incumbent.

Harris says she disagrees 'with any criticism of people based on who they vote for'

WASHINGTON — The vice president was responding on Wednesday to comments made by President Joe Biden on Tuesday night.

Biden was on a campaign call Tuesday evening reacting to a comic who called Puerto Rico garbage during a Trump rally last weekend. The president said, "The only garbage I see floating out there is his supporters."

Biden's remarks were quickly seized on by Republicans who said he was denigrating Trump supporters, a distraction for Harris when she is trying to reach out to GOP voters.

He quickly sent a social media post seeking to clarify his remarks.

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"His demonization of Latinos is unconscionable," Biden said of Trump. "That's all I meant to say." Harris noted that Biden later clarified his comments.

Walz says Biden calling Trump supporters 'garbage' doesn't undermine Harris' unity message.

Democratic vice-presidential candidate Tim Walz says Kamala Harris's unity message wasn't undermined by President Joe Biden calling Donald Trump's supporters "garbage."

Walz said Wednesday on "CBS Mornings" that Biden "was very clear that he's speaking about the rhetoric we heard, so it doesn't undermine it."

Harris argued the case for her candidacy in a speech Tuesday night in Washington in which she promised to be an inclusive president.

During a call Tuesday organized by a Hispanic advocacy group, Biden said the "only garbage" he sees floating out there are Trump supporters. He was responding to a comic at Trump's Madison Square Garden rally on Sunday who said Puerto Rico is a "floating island of garbage."

Biden later clarified his remarks, saying in a post on the social platform X that he was referring to "hateful rhetoric about Puerto Rico spewed by Trump's supporter" at the rally.

Walz was also asked about Biden's comments when he appeared on ABC's "Good Morning America" and said the president had issued a clarification.

"Let's be very clear, the vice president and I have made it absolutely clear that we want everyone as a part of this. Donald Trump's divisive rhetoric is what needs to end," Walz said.

Trump to campaign with former NFL quarterback

Donald Trump will be campaigning with former Green Bay Packers quarterback Brett Favre in Wisconsin on Wednesday night at the same time that popular musicians will be rallying with Vice President Kamala Harris about two hours away in the swing state's capital city.

Mumford & Sons, Gracie Abrams, Remi Wolf and members of the band The National were slated to appear at the Harris rally Wednesday night in Madison.

At the same time, about 140 miles (225 kilometers) northeast of there, Trump was to hold a rally not far from Lambeau Field with Favre.

Both Harris and Trump will again be in Wisconsin for dueling events on Friday. Trump is holding a rally Friday night in Milwaukee at the Fiserv Center, which was the site of the Republican National Convention. Harris is planning multiple stops in the state but has not said where yet. Wisconsin is one of seven battleground states that's seen multiple visits from Trump, Harris, their running mates and other surrogates.

Two closing arguments show the stark choice between Trump and Harris

NEW YORK — In the shadow of the White House, seven days before the final votes of the 2024 election are cast, Kamala Harris vowed to put country over party and warned that Donald Trump is obsessed with revenge and his own personal interests.

Less than 48 hours earlier inside Madison Square Garden, Trump called his Democratic opponent "a trainwreck who has destroyed everything in her path." His allies on stage labeled Puerto Rico a "floating island of garbage" and made a baseless claim that Harris, a former prosecutor and senator who is trying to become the first woman to be elected president, had begun her career as a prostitute.

Two nights and 200 miles apart, the dueling closing arguments outlined in stark terms the choice U.S. voters face on Nov. 5 when they will weigh two very different visions of leadership and America's future.

Read more about what Trump and Harris are presenting to voters

Police say the man behind ballot box fires has metalworking experience and might plan more attacks

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and CLAIRE RUSH Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The man suspected of setting fires in ballot drop boxes in Oregon and Washington state is an experienced metalworker and may be planning additional attacks, authorities said Wednesday.

Investigators believe the man who set the incendiary devices at ballot boxes in Portland, Oregon, and nearby Vancouver, Washington, had a "wealth of experience" in metal fabrication and welding, said Port-

land Police Bureau spokesperson Mike Benner.

The way the devices were constructed and the way they were attached to the metal drop boxes showed that expertise, Benner said.

Authorities described the suspect as a white man, age 30 to 40, who is balding or has very short hair.

Police previously said surveillance video showed the man driving a black or dark-colored 2001 to 2004 Volvo S-60. The vehicle did not have a front license plate, but it did have a rear plate with unknown letters or numbers.

The incendiary devices were marked with the message "Free Gaza," according to a law enforcement official who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss an ongoing investigation.

A third device placed at a different drop box in Vancouver earlier this month also carried the words "Free Palestine" in addition to "Free Gaza," the official said.

Investigators are trying to identify the person responsible and the motive for the suspected arson attacks, which destroyed or damaged hundreds of ballots at the drop box in Vancouver on Monday when the box's fire suppression system didn't work as intended. Authorities are trying to figure out whether the suspect actually had pro-Palestinian views or used the message to try to create confusion, the official said.

Surveillance images captured a Volvo pulling up to a drop box in Portland just before security personnel nearby discovered a fire inside the box on Monday, Benner said. The early-morning fire was extinguished quickly thanks to the box's suppression system and a nearby security guard, police said. Just three of the ballots inside were damaged.

The ballot box in Vancouver that burned also had a fire suppression system inside, but it failed to prevent hundreds of ballots from being scorched, said Greg Kimsey, the longtime elected auditor in Clark County, Washington, which includes Vancouver.

Elections staff were able to identify 488 damaged ballots retrieved from the box, and as of Tuesday evening, 345 of those voters had contacted the county auditor's office to request a replacement ballot, the office said in a statement Wednesday. The office will mail 143 ballots to the rest of the identified voters on Thursday.

Six of the ballots were unidentifiable, and the office said the exact number of destroyed ballots wasn't known, as some may have completely burned to ash.

Election staff on Wednesday planned to sort through the damaged ballots for information about who cast them, in the hopes that those voters can be given replacement ballots. Kimsey urged voters who dropped their ballots in the transit center box between 11 a.m. Saturday and early Monday to contact his office for a replacement ballot.

Authorities in Portland said Monday that enough material from the incendiary devices was recovered to show that the two fires were connected — and that they were connected to an Oct. 8 incendiary device at a different ballot drop box in Vancouver. No ballots were damaged in that incident.

Voters in Washington are encouraged to check the status of their ballots at www.votewa.gov to track their return status. If a returned ballot is not marked as "received," voters can print a replacement ballot or visit their local elections department for a replacement, the secretary of state's office said.

Fourth mass coral bleaching prompts UN emergency session at Colombia biodiversity summit

By STEVEN GRATTAN Associated Press

CALI, Colombia (AP) — The United Nations, scientists and governments made an urgent call Wednesday for increased funding to protect coral reefs under threat of extinction.

Research this year shows that 77% of the world's reefs are affected by bleaching, mainly due to warming ocean waters amid human-caused climate change. It's the largest and fourth mass global bleaching on record and is impacting both hemispheres, United Nations Capital Development Fund said.

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The findings prompted a U.N. special emergency session — typically called to address escalating conflicts or natural disasters — on corals to be convened on sidelines of the U.N. biodiversity summit, known as COP16, nearing its end after two weeks in Cali, Colombia.

Coral reefs are vital ecosystems that support over 25% of marine life and nearly a billion people, many relying on reefs for food security, coastal protection and livelihoods, the U.N. development fund said.

After the emergency session, the governments of New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Germany and France made new pledges totaling around \$30 million to the U.N. fund for coral reefs established in 2020. By 2030, the fund seeks to leverage up to \$3 billion in public and private finance to support coral reef conservation efforts. Around \$225 million has been raised to date.

“Protecting our ocean and its precious habitats is fundamental to life on earth,” said U.K. Minister for Nature Mary Creagh. “But without urgent action, the world’s coral reefs face extinction from global heating, acidification, disease, and pollution; a vital ecosystem lost within our lifetime.”

Next year, a U.N. ocean conference will take place in Nice, France, and countries are being urged beforehand to pledge more to the U.N. global fund for coral reefs with the aim of mobilizing an additional \$150 million in donations by the conference.

“In 2024, climate change and other human impacts triggered the fourth mass coral reef bleaching event, the most extensive and devastating on record,” said Peter Thomson, the U.N. Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for the Ocean. “With the window to protect these ecosystems closing rapidly, world leaders must act now.”

“We must secure a sustainable future for coral reefs and the countless lives that rely on them —before it’s too late,” Thomson said.

A change in water temperature can cause coral to drive out algae that provides nutrition, lose its color and become stressed. Coral may bleach for other reasons, such as extremely low tides, pollution or too much sunlight.

In the world’s largest coral reef ecosystem, Australia’s Great Barrier Reef, bleaching affected 90% of the coral assessed in 2022. The Florida Coral Reef, the third-largest, experienced significant bleaching last year.

The first mass bleaching happened in 1998, the second between 2011-2013, the third in 2016, said Kenyan marine ecologist David Obura, who heads Coastal Oceans Research and Development in the Indian Ocean East Africa.

“They’re lasting more than one year at a time, which is worrying,” Obura said at the U.N. emergency session at COP16.

Dominant Kurdish parties maintain their sway in the election for the parliament in the Iraqi region

By STELLA MARTANY Associated Press

IRBIL, Iraq (AP) — Election results from the vote for the regional parliament in Iraq’s semi-autonomous northern Kurdish region show the two dominant Kurdish parties have maintained their hold while an opposition party has made inroads, officials said Wednesday.

According to the Independent High Electoral Commission, the Kurdistan Democratic Party — with its base of support in the regional capital, Irbil, and the city of in Dohuk — made the strongest showing, securing 39 seats.

The rival Patriotic Union of Kurdistan won 23 seats, continuing its influence over the city of Sulaymaniyah. In the 2018 elections, the two parties won 45 and 21 seats, respectively.

A relatively new opposition party, New Generation, won 15 seats, a significant increase from the eight seats it got in 2018, when the party was first established.

The Kurdistan Islamic Union, which came in fourth with seven seats, announced it will join the New Generation in opposition in the regional, 100-seat parliament. Other minor parties took a smattering of seats.

Despite some technical issues at the polls, voters turned out in large numbers, with 72% of eligible vot-

ers casting ballots.

The surge in support for the New Generation appeared to stem from growing disillusionment among younger voters, who are increasingly frustrated with the region's ongoing economic challenges, including delays in salary payments, high unemployment, and perceived corruption within the traditional political leadership.

Economic concerns remain at the forefront — widespread dissatisfaction over delayed payments to civil servants, fluctuating oil prices, and ongoing budget disputes with the central government in Baghdad have fueled calls for reform.

Three Assyrian Christian candidates and two Turkmen candidates secured the five remaining quota seats for minorities, despite the Iraqi federal court's controversial elimination of the reserved seats for ethnic and religious minorities earlier this year.

These seats are usually filled by candidates backed by the major political parties, leading some to say that they do not offer a genuine minority representation.

"We no longer have true representation in the parliament or the government; our voices are being silenced," said Toma Khoshaba, an Assyrian ethnic activist.

Khoshaba argued that these "so-called independent Assyrian representatives occupying the quota seats are largely supported by the Kurdistan Democratic Party" or by Shiite factions.

"Their loyalty lies with these dominant political groups, not with our communities," he said.

The election outcome will also play a pivotal role in determining how Kurdish leaders handle ongoing disputes with Baghdad, particularly over oil revenue sharing and budget allocations, as well as the region's broader economic challenges.

A Gaza medic realizes he's carrying his own mother's body, killed by an Israeli airstrike

By ABED AL KAREEM HANA and WAFAA SHURAF A Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — A Palestinian ambulance worker made a horrific discovery when the bloody sheet was lifted: The corpse on the stretcher was his own mother, killed by an Israeli airstrike Wednesday in central Gaza.

"Oh God, I swear — she's my mother! I didn't know it was her!" Abed Bardini sobbed as he leaned over his mother, Samira, cradling her head in his arms. Fellow Red Crescent medics tried to console him.

Bardini had unknowingly sat in the ambulance beside her body, wrapped in a white sheet stained dark with blood, as the vehicle bounced across broken roads for about 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) toward Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah.

Three people were killed and at least 10 wounded by the Israeli strike on a car in Maghazi refugee camp, according to Palestinian health officials and Associated Press journalists. Health officials at the hospital said two of the dead were men sitting in the vehicle, and the blast had fatally injured 61-year-old Samira Bardini as she stood nearby.

Abed Bardini was in one of two ambulances dispatched to the scene. Back at the hospital, he unloaded the stretcher with practiced professionalism, squinting into the late afternoon sun as he wheeled the body across the hospital courtyard.

Inside, medical staff pulled back the blanket to check for signs of life, and Bardini's strength collapsed.

Later, his tears exhausted, he sat in the morgue beside Samira's body with his head in his hands, comforted by his Red Crescent colleagues. They held a funeral prayer over her body in the parking lot, then Bardini personally helped carry the body into an ambulance for burial.

A spokesperson for the Israeli military did not immediately comment on the strike. Israel says it carries out precise strikes in Gaza targeting Palestinian militants and tries to avoid harming civilians. But the strikes often kill women and children.

Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people and abducted around 250 in the Oct. 7, 2023, attack on

Israel that triggered the war. Israel's retaliatory war in Gaza has killed more than 43,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities, who do not say how many were combatants but say more than half were women and children. Gaza's Health Ministry said Wednesday that 102 deaths were recorded over the past 24 hours.

Judge sets hearing on \$1M-a-day sweepstakes from Elon Musk PAC helping Donald Trump

By MARYCLAIRE DALE Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A Philadelphia judge has set a hearing Thursday morning in the city prosecutor's bid to shut down Elon Musk's \$1 million-a-day sweepstakes in battleground states. The giveaways come from Musk's political organization, which aims to boost Donald Trump's presidential campaign.

Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner, a Democrat, filed suit Monday to stop the America PAC sweepstakes, which is set to run through Election Day. Judge Angelo Foglietta will hear motions on the issue in a City Hall courtroom.

Matthew Haverstick, one of several lawyers representing the defendants, declined to say late Wednesday if Musk would attend the hearing.

The sweepstakes is open to people in battleground states who sign a petition supporting the Constitution.

Krasner has said he could still consider criminal charges, saying he is tasked with protecting the public from both illegal lotteries and "interference with the integrity of elections."

Election law experts have raised questions about whether it violates federal law barring someone from paying others to vote. Musk has cast the money as both a prize as well as earnings for work as a spokesperson for the group.

Krasner, in the suit, said that America PAC and Musk "are indisputably violating Pennsylvania's statutory prohibitions against illegal lotteries and deceiving consumers."

Both Trump and Harris have made repeated visits to the state as they fight for Pennsylvania's 19 electoral votes.

Musk, who founded SpaceX and Tesla and owns X, has gone all in on Trump this election, saying he thinks civilization is at stake if he loses. He is undertaking much of the get-out-the-vote effort for Trump through his super PAC, which can raise and spend unlimited sums of money.

He has committed more than \$70 million to the super PAC to help Trump and other Republicans win in November.

North Korean troops in Russian uniforms are heading toward Ukraine, US says

By TARA COPP and LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said Wednesday that North Korean troops wearing Russian uniforms and carrying Russian equipment are moving toward Ukraine, in what he called a dangerous and destabilizing development.

Austin was speaking at a press conference in Washington with South Korean Defense Minister Kim Yong-hyun, as concerns grow about Pyongyang's deployment of as many as 12,000 troops to Russia.

The U.S. and South Korea say some of the North Korean troops are heading to Russia's Kursk region on the border with Ukraine, where the Kremlin's forces have struggled to push back a Ukrainian incursion.

Some North Korean advance units have already arrived in the Kursk region, and Austin said "the likelihood is pretty high" that Russia will use the troops in combat.

North Korea's move to tighten its relationship with Russia has triggered alarms across the globe, as leaders worry about how it may expand the war in Ukraine and what Russian military aid will be delivered to Pyongyang in exchange.

Ukraine's U.N. Ambassador Serhiy Kyslytsya, speaking at an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security

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Council on Wednesday, said they expect as many as 4,500 North Korean troops to be at the border this week and to begin directly participating in combat operations against Ukrainian forces in November.

Austin said officials are discussing what to do about the deployment, which he said has the potential to broaden or lengthen the conflict in Ukraine. Asked if it could prompt other nations to get more directly involved in the conflict, he acknowledged that it could "encourage others to take action" but provided no details.

"This is something that we're going to continue to watch, and we're going to continue to work with our allies and partners to discourage Russia from employing these troops in combat," Austin said.

Kim said he doesn't necessarily believe the deployment will trigger war on the Korean Peninsula but could increase security threats.

There is a "high possibility" that Pyongyang would ask for higher technologies in exchange for its troops, such as receiving tactical nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities, he said through an interpreter.

Both Kim and Austin called on North Korea to withdraw its troops.

Russia has had to shift some resources to the Kursk border region to respond to Ukraine's offensive. U.S. leaders have suggested that the use of North Korean forces to augment Russia's defenses indicates that Moscow's losses during the more than two-year war have significantly degraded its military strength.

"They're doing this because (Russian President Vladimir) Putin has lost a lot of troops," Austin said, adding that Moscow has a choice between mobilizing more of its own forces or turning to others for help.

Already, he noted, Russia has sought military weapons from other nations. Those include North Korea and Iran.

The U.S. has estimated there are about 10,000 North Korean troops now in Russia. But others have put the number higher. And Kyslytsya provided an array of more specific numbers and details to the U.N. Security Council.

The Ukrainian ambassador said up to 12,000 North Koreans were being trained at five bases in eastern Russia, including at least 500 officers and three generals from the General Staff.

In addition to wearing Russian uniforms and carrying Russian small arms, Kyslytsya said they will be provided with Russian identity documents, "notably to conceal their presence." He said they are expected to be integrated into units manned by Russia's ethnic Asian minorities, including Buryats.

North Korea's U.N. Ambassador Kim Song defended his country's growing military cooperation with Russia and said Pyongyang stood ready to respond if Russia's "sovereignty and security interests" were threatened.

Earlier, a senior South Korean presidential official, who spoke on condition of anonymity during a background briefing, said that more than 3,000 of the North Korean forces are believed to have moved toward combat zones in western Russia.

A Ukrainian official told The Associated Press that North Korean troops are stationed 50 kilometers (30 miles) away from the Ukrainian border with Russia. The official, was not authorized to disclose the information publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity, did not provide any additional detail.

North Korea also has provided munitions to Russia, and earlier this month, the White House released images it said were of North Korea shipping 1,000 containers of military equipment there by rail.

A key worrisome question is what North Korea will get in return for providing the troops. But officials have yet to say specifically what Pyongyang may have requested or Moscow has offered.

In their meeting at the Pentagon, Kim and Austin agreed to continue large-scale military exercises, increase cooperation on nuclear deterrence and upgrade their abilities to deter and respond to North Korean missile launches by improving early launch warning systems, according to a fact sheet released by the Pentagon on Wednesday.

Austin and Kim are scheduled to meet Thursday with Secretary of State Antony Blinken and South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul at the State Department.

Resentencing hearing for Erik and Lyle Menendez in 1989 killings of their parents set for Dec. 11

By JAIMIE DING Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Erik and Lyle Menendez's resentencing hearing has been set for Dec. 11, when a judge will decide whether they will have a shot at freedom after spending 34 years behind bars for the shotgun killings of their parents in 1989 at their Beverly Hills home.

The date was decided Wednesday by Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Michael Jesic after prosecutors submitted a recommendation for the brothers' resentencing last week. After an initial mistrial with a hung jury for each of the brothers, they were convicted of killing their parents, Kitty and Jose Menendez, and sentenced to life without parole in prison.

The brothers' attorneys never disputed the pair killed their parents, but argued that they acted out of self-defense after years of emotional and sexual abuse by their father. Much of the evidence related to abuse was excluded from their second trial.

Los Angeles County District Attorney George Gascón said his office would recommend the brothers be given a sentence of 50 years to life, which would make them immediately eligible for parole since they were under the age of 26 when the crime was committed.

If the judge approves the resentencing, the brothers will still need a state parole board to grant their release. California Gov. Gavin Newsom then has 150 days to review its decision.

Gascón said he took several factors into consideration when making his recommendation, including the brothers' rehabilitation in prison. In documents filed by his office, prosecutors pointed to the brothers' educational achievements — both have attained several degrees — and contributions to the community, such as a prison beautification program started by Lyle Menendez.

Multiple generations of family members of Erik and Lyle Menendez have pleaded for the brothers' release from prison, saying they deserve to be free because they had been "brutalized" and sexually abused by their father.

However, not everyone in Gascón's office agreed with his decision. One of the brothers' uncles also wants them to remain in prison. Those opposed to resentencing will likely have an opportunity to argue their case in front of the judge.

Their attorneys said the brothers will also have a hearing Nov. 25 regarding a habeas petition filed last year that asks the court to look at new evidence not previously introduced at their second trial. This could still potentially be another pathway to freedom.

The brothers also submitted a request to Newsom for clemency earlier this week. Gascón said Wednesday that he supports the request and that his office has sent letters of support to the governor.

"They have respectively served 34 years and have continued their educations and worked to create new programs to support the rehabilitation of fellow inmates," Gascón said in a statement.

Newsom mentioned the case on iHeartRadio's "Politickin'" podcast recently and said he was reviewing the matter. He noted that the Netflix drama "Monsters: Lyle and Erik Menendez Story" had brought attention to the case, with even his kids asking him about it, and that his team had examined Gascón's decision.

Microsoft reports quarterly sales up 16% to \$65.6 billion as investors ask if AI spending worth it

By MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writer

Microsoft on Wednesday reported its quarterly sales grew 16% to \$65.6 billion as the company sought to assure investors its huge spending on artificial intelligence is paying off.

The company has spent billions of dollars to expand its global network of data centers and other physical infrastructure required to develop AI technology that can compose documents, make images and serve as a lifelike personal assistant at work or home.

As a result, AI-related products are now on track to contribute about \$10 billion to the company's an-

nual revenue, the “fastest business in our history to reach this milestone,” CEO Satya Nadella said on a call with analysts Wednesday.

The software maker also reported an 11% increase in quarterly profit to \$24.7 billion, or \$3.30 per share, which beat Wall Street expectations for the July-September period.

Analysts polled by FactSet Research were expecting Microsoft to earn \$3.10 per share on revenue of \$64.6 billion.

Microsoft hasn’t yet formally reported revenue specifically from AI products but says it has infused the technology and its AI assistant, called Copilot, into all of its business segments, particularly its Azure cloud computing contracts.

Leading in sales for the quarter was Microsoft’s productivity business segment, which includes its Office suite of email and other workplace products, growing 12% to \$28.3 billion.

Microsoft’s cloud-focused business segment grew 20% from the same time last year to \$24.1 billion for the three months ending Sept. 30.

Its personal computing business, led by its Windows division, grew 17% to \$13.2 billion. A big part of that growth came from Microsoft’s Xbox video game business, which was boosted by its purchase of game publishing giant Activision Blizzard a year ago.

Microsoft and the computer makers that run its Windows operating system also this year unveiled a new class of AI-imbued laptops as the company confronts heightened competition from Big Tech rivals in pitching generative AI technology to consumers and workplaces.

Building and operating AI systems is costly and Microsoft reported spending \$20 billion over the quarter, mostly for its cloud computing and AI needs. That includes building energy-hungry computing centers and supplying them with specialized chips to train and run AI models.

Microsoft has also invested billions of dollars in AI startups, particularly its partner OpenAI, maker of ChatGPT and the underlying chatbot technology on which Microsoft’s own Copilot is based.

Nadella emphasized the company’s push to get customers applying AI platforms in their workplaces as AI tools transform jobs and work tasks.

Nadella, now in his tenth year as CEO, saw his annual compensation increase 63% this year to \$79 million, according to a statement filed ahead of Microsoft’s upcoming annual shareholder meeting in December. That’s despite Nadella offering to have his cash incentive reduced to reflect his personal accountability for handling cybersecurity threats.

Earlier this year, a scathing report by a federal review board found “a cascade of security failures” by Microsoft let Chinese state-backed hackers break into email accounts of senior U.S. officials.

Taxes, spending and borrowing all higher as the new Labour government seeks to ‘rebuild’ the UK

By PAN PYLAS and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Treasury chief Rachel Reeves raised taxes Wednesday by around 40 billion pounds (\$52 billion) to plug a hole she claims to have identified in the public finances and fund the U.K.’s cash-starved public services, in a beefy budget that could set the political tone for years to come.

In the Labour Party’s first budget since regaining power after 14 years in July, Reeves also changed the U.K.’s debt rules — a move that will allow the government to borrow more to, as she explained, “invest, invest, invest,” but which opposition figures described as a “fiddling of the books.”

Her biggest cash commitment was an additional 25 billion pounds for the cherished National Health Service, which has seen waiting lists rise to record levels in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

“The choices that I have made today are the right choices for our country,” Reeves at the end of a statement that lasted almost 80 minutes. “To restore stability to our public finances. To protect working people. To fix our NHS. And to rebuild Britain.”

The overall increase in taxes, which proportionately is the biggest for over three decades, comes in large

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part from an increase in the tax businesses pay for employing people. Reeves said it was needed because of the economic "black hole" left by the previous Conservative government.

The overall tax burden is forecast to rise from 36.4% of the U.K.'s annual GDP in 2024/25, to a "historic high" of 38.3% in 2027/28, according to the independent Office for Budget Responsibility.

The biggest single tax increase — worth 25 billion pounds — is a rise of 1.2 percentage points in national insurance contributions paid by employers and which will be paid on lower salaries. The levy, which was originally designed to pay for benefits and help fund the NHS but which is really absorbed into the overall tax take, will remain unchanged for employees. Reeves insisted that many smaller businesses will not be affected as she doubled an allowance that helps them offset their liability.

Billions more will come from increases in capital gains tax and closing loopholes in the way inherited money is taxed, and raising taxes on those who use private jets or send their children to fee-paying schools.

One tax that was surprisingly left unchanged was the levy that drivers pay at the gas pump, but taxes on alcoholic drinks were increased — though a pint of draught beer or cider was cut by a penny.

Reeves used some of the taxes raised, along with extra borrowing, to increase spending for a number of government departments, including education. Schools will get more money to create breakfast clubs and upgrade facilities.

She also set aside 11.8 billion pounds to compensate victims of an infected blood scandal in the 1970s and 1980s and 1.8 billion pounds to compensate victims of the Post Office Horizon scandal, in which hundreds of branch managers were wrongly convicted of theft and fraud as a result of a faulty computer system.

The center-left Labour party won a landslide election victory July 4 after promising to end years of turmoil and scandal under successive Conservative governments, get Britain's economy growing and restore frayed public services. But the scale of the measures announced on Wednesday by Reeves exceeded Labour's cautious general election campaign.

Reeves and Prime Minister Keir Starmer say they inherited an economy that was in a far more parlous state than they thought.

Reeves said her budget measures were needed to "fix the foundations" of an economy that she argued has been undermined by the Conservatives. They insist that they left an economy that was growing, albeit modestly, and borrowing back under control following the pandemic and the spike in energy costs in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

During the election, Labour said it would not raise taxes on "working people" — a loose term whose definition has been hotly debated in the media for weeks. Though Reeves did not increase taxes on income or sales, the Conservatives said hiking taxes on employers was a breach of Labour's election promise and would lead to lower wages.

"Time and again, we Conservatives warned Labour would tax, borrow and spend far beyond what they were telling the country," said Rishi Sunak, the former prime minister who leads the party until his successor is announced on Saturday.

"And time and again, they denied they had such plans. But today, the truth has come out."

Reeves — Britain's first female chancellor of the exchequer since the position was created 800 years ago — also said she is tweaking the government's debt rules by accounting for assets as well as liabilities. The change will in effect free up billions more for investment in health, schools, transport and other big infrastructure projects, particularly in the transition to net zero.

Though the budget is arguably the most consequential since 2010 in the wake of the global financial crisis, Reeves will have been careful not to cause concern in financial markets. Two years ago, the short-lived premiership of Liz Truss foundered after a series of unfunded tax cuts roiled financial markets and sent borrowing costs surging.

Early signs suggested some nervousness in the markets, with the interest rates charged on British government debt edging higher following Reeves' statement.

Part of the reason appears to be that big changes in tax and spend do not appear to be doing much to bolster the economy. The Office for Budget Responsibility, which provides the forecasts for the government, said the economy will get a boost over the coming couple of years but that growth subsequently

will be lower than previously thought.

Thomas Pope, deputy chief economist at the Institute for Government think tank, said the budget marked a "really big shift," particularly on tax

"The proceeds of that tax revenue is going to be spent on public services, on investments that Rachel Reeves will hope, in five years at least, means that people feel better off come the next election than they do right now," he said.

Supreme Court's conservative justices leave in place Virginia's purge of voter registrations

By MARK SHERMAN and DENISE LAVOIE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court's conservative majority on Wednesday left in place Virginia's purge of voter registrations that the state says is aimed at stopping people who are not U.S. citizens from voting.

One Virginian, whose registration was canceled despite living in the state her entire life, called the purge "a very bad October surprise."

The high court, over the dissents of the three liberal justices, granted an emergency appeal from Virginia's Republican administration led by Gov. Glenn Youngkin. The court provided no rationale for its action, which is typical in emergency appeals.

The justices acted on Virginia's appeal after a federal judge found that the state illegally purged more than 1,600 voter registrations in the past two months. A federal appeals court had previously allowed the judge's order to remain in effect.

The specter of immigrants voting illegally has been a main part of the political messaging this year from former President Donald Trump and other Republicans, even though such voting is rare in American elections.

Trump had criticized the earlier ruling, calling it "a totally unacceptable travesty" on social media. "Only U.S. Citizens should be allowed to vote," Trump wrote.

Youngkin said voters who believe they were improperly removed from the rolls can still vote in the election because Virginia has same-day registration.

"And so there is the ultimate, ultimate safeguard in Virginia, no one is being precluded from voting, and therefore, I encourage every single citizen go vote," Youngkin told reporters.

That option was noted also by the campaign of Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee for the White House.

"Every eligible voter has a right to cast their ballot and have their vote counted, and this ruling does not change that," campaign spokesman Charles Lutvak said in a statement. "Our campaign is going to make sure every eligible voter is able to vote. Voting by noncitizens remains illegal under federal law."

Rina Shaw, 22, of Chesterfield, Virginia, said she was born in Virginia, has lived in the state her whole life and has never left the U.S.

Shaw thinks she may have forgotten to check a citizenship box on a form when she was updating her voter registration at the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles while getting her learner's permit.

"My first reaction was that that was just ridiculous and it shouldn't have been allowed in October, of all months. It should have been something that happened six months before the election rather than right on the eve of it," Shaw said.

She planned to cast her ballot during early voting on Wednesday and said she still found the error troubling. Shaw said her voter registration has now been restored.

The Justice Department and a coalition of private groups sued the state earlier in October, arguing that Virginia election officials, acting on an executive order issued in August by Youngkin, were striking names from voter rolls in violation of federal election law.

The National Voter Registration Act requires a 90-day "quiet period" ahead of elections for the maintenance of voter rolls so that legitimate voters are not removed from the rolls by bureaucratic errors or

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last-minute mistakes that cannot be quickly corrected.

Youngkin issued his order on Aug. 7, the 90th day before the Nov. 5 election. It required daily checks of data from the state Department of Motor Vehicles against voter rolls to identify people who are not U.S. citizens.

Protect Democracy, one of the groups that brought the lawsuit, cited media interviews with other voters as showing that the Youngkin administration's purge has removed U.S. citizens from the voter rolls.

One example is Nadra Wilson, who lives in Lynchburg, Virginia, and told NPR she got swept up in the purge. "I was born in Brooklyn, New York. I'm a citizen," Wilson said, before showing her American passport as proof of her citizenship.

Project Democracy said in a statement that "this program removes eligible voters. Virginia has not presented any evidence of noncitizens participating in elections. Because there is none. And it's actually eligible VA voters that have been caught in the middle of this election-subversion scheme."

U.S. District Judge Patricia Giles said elections officials still could remove names on an individualized basis, but not through a systematic purge.

Giles had ordered the state to notify affected voters and local registrars by Wednesday that the registrations have been restored.

Virginia's deadline to register to vote was Oct. 15, but since 2022, the state has allowed same-day registration, which allows people to register to vote in-person and immediately submit a provisional ballot after the deadline to register has passed. The state Department of Elections does not remove names from the voting rolls after the Oct. 15 deadline unless they are names of deceased people.

Nearly 6 million Virginians are registered to vote.

In a similar lawsuit in Alabama, a federal judge this month ordered the state to restore eligibility for more than 3,200 voters who had been deemed ineligible noncitizens. Testimony from state officials in that case showed that roughly 2,000 of the 3,251 voters who were made inactive were actually legally registered citizens.

McDonald's E. coli case count rises as federal officials inspect an onion grower

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal officials on Wednesday reported more cases of E. coli poisoning among people who ate at McDonald's, as government investigators seeking the outbreak's source identified an "onion grower of interest" in Washington state.

The Food and Drug Administration said 90 people across 13 states have fallen ill in the outbreak, up from 75 at the end of last week. The number of people hospitalized increased by five, to 27 people. One death has been tied to the outbreak.

Officials have said raw, slivered onions on McDonald's Quarter Pounder hamburgers are the likely source of the E. coli. McDonald's said the onions came from a single supplier, the California-based Taylor Farms. The company has since recalled the yellow onions it sent to McDonald's and other restaurant chains.

The FDA said Wednesday it has begun inspecting Taylor Farm's processing center in Colorado Springs as well as an "onion grower of interest" in Washington state. It did not name the grower.

More than 80% of people with E. coli interviewed by government investigators reported eating McDonald's items containing fresh, slivered onions, the FDA noted.

McDonald's said last week that onions from the Colorado Springs facility were distributed to approximately 900 of its restaurants, including some in transportation hubs like airports. The restaurant chain announced that it would resume serving Quarter Pounders at hundreds of its restaurants after testing ruled out beef patties as the source of the outbreak.

The strain of E. coli behind the outbreak can cause dangerous diarrhea and lead to kidney failure and other serious problems. 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 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

FDA officials said Wednesday the current risk of illness "is low because the onions have been recalled and should no longer be available." They noted that all of the reported cases occurred before Taylor Farms and McDonald's removed the onions from the market.

Abortion-rights groups outspend opponents by more than 6 to 1 in ballot measure campaigns

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

The groups promoting ballot measures to add amendments to the constitutions in nine states that would enshrine a right to abortion have raised more than \$160 million.

That's nearly six times what their opponents have brought in, The Associated Press found in an analysis of campaign finance data compiled by the watchdog group Open Secrets and state governments.

The campaign spending reports are a snapshot in time, especially this late in the campaigns, when contributions are rolling in for many.

The cash advantage is showing up in ad spending, where data from the media tracking firm AdImpact shows campaigns have spent more than three times as much as opponents in ads on TV, streaming services, radio and websites.

Abortion-rights supporters have prevailed on all seven ballot measures that have gone before voters since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in 2022, which ended a nationwide right to abortion and opened the door for the bans and restrictions that are now being enforced in most Republican-controlled states.

Most of the money is going to Florida

Florida is the behemoth in this year's abortion ballot-measure campaigns.

Proponents of the measure have raised more than \$75 million and opponents \$10 million. Combined, that's nearly half the national total.

The state Republican Party is using additional funds, including from corporations across the country, to urge voters to reject the measure. Including that, supporters still lead in ad-buying: \$60 million to \$27 million.

The total spent as of Tuesday is about the same amount spent on the state's U.S. Senate race.

The amendment would overturn a ban on most abortions after the first six weeks of pregnancy — when women often don't know they're pregnant — that was signed by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis and took effect in May. DeSantis' administration has taken steps to thwart the campaign for the amendment.

Florida's ballot measure rules give opponents a boost: Passage requires approval from 60% of voters instead of a simple majority.

An influx of funding arrives in South Dakota

South Dakota is an outlier, with a significant funding advantage for anti-abortion groups.

According to an Associated Press analysis of state campaign disclosures, they've raised about \$2 million compared with abortion-rights supporters' \$1 million.

There was a big change last week when the abortion-rights group Dakotans for Health reported that it had received \$540,000 from Think Big America, a fund launched by Illinois Gov. Jay Pritzker, a Democrat. The fund's director, Mike Ollen, said that's helping ads get seen more widely in what could be a close race.

Before that, national abortion-rights groups, including the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, had mostly ignored South Dakota because, they said, the ballot measure doesn't go far enough. It would allow regulations of abortions after the first 12 weeks of pregnancy if they relate to the health of the woman.

"We find ourselves being caught between being way too extreme on the right end of the spectrum and not extreme enough on the left end of the spectrum," said Rick Weiland, co-founder of Dakotans for Health. "We think we're right in the middle."

The anti-abortion campaign in South Dakota, like those elsewhere, is focused largely on portraying the

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amendment as too extreme. The Think Big money provided a new chance to do that.

"South Dakotans don't want extreme Chicago, San Francisco, and New York views tainting our great state," Life Defense Fund spokesperson Caroline Woods said in a statement.

One anti-abortion group reported a \$25,000 contribution last week from South Dakota Republican Gov. Kristi Noem's political action committee.

Funding is close to even in a state with competing ballot measures

Nebraska has competing ballot measures.

One would allow abortion until viability, considered to be somewhere after 20 weeks. The other would bar abortion in most cases after the first 12 weeks — echoing current state law, but also allowing for a stricter one.

The side pushing to keep restrictions is leading the fundraising race, with at least \$9.8 million. One prominent family has supplied more than half of that. Republican U.S. Sen. Pete Ricketts has contributed more than \$1 million, and his mother, Marlene Ricketts, has chipped in \$4 million.

The campaign for more access has raised at least \$6.4 million.

In some states, the opposition has been quiet

In most places, abortion-rights supporters have a big fundraising lead.

In Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, Montana and Nevada, the opponents had each reported raising less than \$2 million before Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the groups promoting the questions in those states have all collected at least \$5 million.

The ballot questions have different circumstances.

Missouri's amendment would open the door to blocking the state's current ban on abortion at all stages of pregnancy, with some exceptions. Proponents of the measure have raised more than \$30 million to opponents' \$1.5 million.

In Arizona, passing the abortion amendment would roll back a ban after the first 15 weeks of pregnancy and instead allow it until fetal viability, and later in some cases. The state's Supreme Court ruled this year that an 1864 ban on abortion at all stages of pregnancy could be enforced, but the Legislature promptly repealed it.

Colorado is one of the few states that already has no gestational limits on when during pregnancy abortion can be obtained. Montana allows abortion until viability.

Opponents of Nevada's measure have not reported any spending. To take effect, the amendment needs to pass this year and again in 2026.

Fundraising has been low on both sides in Maryland, though Pritzker's fund says it's sending money there, and New York, where a ballot measure doesn't mention abortion specifically but would bar discrimination based on "pregnancy outcomes and reproductive healthcare and autonomy."

Big contributions from national groups are one-sided

Liberal groups, including those that aren't required to report who their donors are, are far more active in the campaigns than their anti-abortion counterparts.

The Fairness Project, which promotes progressive ballot measures, has pledged \$30 million for this year's abortion amendments. So far, \$10 million in its contributions have shown up in campaign finance reports.

Several other abortion-rights groups have contributed \$5 million or more. No single entity on the anti-abortion side has reported giving that much.

Groups that funded the majority of last year's campaign against an Ohio abortion-rights amendment that voters approved are absent from this year's list of big contributors.

The Concord Fund, part of a network of political groups centered around conservative legal activist Leonard Leo, didn't show up in campaign finance reports until Wednesday, when a Missouri filing showed the group gave \$1 million the day before to a group opposing the ballot measure there. Leo was a driving force in securing nominations of Supreme Court justices who voted to overturn Roe.

Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America has not been active on abortion ballot measures this year, but it is pumping money into the presidential race in support of Republican Donald Trump.

"This is the most consequential fight for life before us," SBA spokesperson Kelsey Pritchard said in a statement, noting that the group is aiming to spend \$92 million in eight states in the presidential race.

Washington Post report: Subscriber loss after non-endorsement reaches a quarter million

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

The Washington Post has lost at least 250,000 subscribers since announcing last Friday that it would not endorse a candidate for president — roughly 10 percent of its digital following, the newspaper reported Wednesday.

The Post would not officially confirm that figure, saying it was a private company, but it was reported in a story in the newspaper that cited documents and two unnamed sources who were familiar with the figures. Another non-endorsement last week has caused thousands of Los Angeles Times readers to cancel subscriptions, although not nearly at the Post's level.

One journalism historian, Jon Marshall at Northwestern University, said he had a hard time recalling a comparable response, although a boycott of the Arkansas Gazette when it supported the integration of Little Rock schools in 1957 cost that newspaper more than \$20 million in today's dollars.

The Post's owner, Jeff Bezos, said presidential endorsements create a perception of bias at the newspaper while having little real influence on how readers vote. He said his only regret was making the decision known when passions are heated so close to Election Day; the paper's editorial staff had reportedly prepared an endorsement of Democrat Kamala Harris.

"A lot of people would have forgotten about the Harris endorsement slated to run in the newspaper," the Post's media critic, Erik Wemple, wrote. "Few will forget about the decision not to publish it."

The Post's executive editor, Matt Murray, told employees in a staff meeting that there were "several positive days" of new subscribers signing up, although he didn't mention any numbers, the newspaper reported.

Some of the Post's angry digital readers have also already paid for a year's access, and will retain that until their subscriptions expire.

"After another month or so, the election will have ended, and there may be people who say that 'I need the Post more than they need me' and come back," said Rick Edmonds, media business analyst at the Poynter Institute.

The Post also saw a big increase in subscribers during Donald Trump's presidency from people attracted to the newspaper's aggressive coverage, raising the possibility of a repeat if the man that the newspaper wasn't prepared to endorse is returned to office.

In the meantime, Edmonds said, "it's very bad." After losing readers during the Biden administration, the Post had reportedly seen positive signs of growth — until this week.

Winter depression is real and there are many ways to fight back

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

As winter approaches and daylight hours grow shorter, people prone to seasonal depression can feel it in their bodies and brains.

"It's a feeling of panic, fear, anxiety and dread all in one," said Germaine Pataki, 63, of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

She's among the millions of people estimated to have seasonal affective disorder, or SAD. Her coping strategies include yoga, walking and an antidepressant medication. She's also part of a Facebook group for people with SAD.

"I try to focus on helping others through it," Pataki said. "This gives me purpose."

People with SAD typically have episodes of depression that begin in the fall and ease in the spring or summer. Changing the clocks back to standard time, which happens this weekend, can be a trigger for SAD. A milder form, subsyndromal SAD, is recognized by medical experts, and there's also a summer

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variety of seasonal depression, though less is known about it.

In 1984, a team led by Dr. Norman Rosenthal, then a researcher at the National Institutes of Health, first described SAD and coined the term. "I believe that because it is easy to remember, the acronym has stuck," he said.

What causes seasonal affective disorder?

Scientists are learning how specialized cells in our eyes turn the blue wavelength part of the light spectrum into neural signals affecting mood and alertness.

Sunlight is loaded with the blue light, so when the cells absorb it, our brains' alertness centers are activated and we feel more wakeful and possibly even happier.

Researcher Kathryn Roecklein at the University of Pittsburgh tested people with and without SAD to see how their eyes reacted to blue light. As a group, people with SAD were less sensitive to blue light than others, especially during winter months. That suggests a cause for wintertime depression.

"In the winter, when the light levels drop, that combined with a lower sensitivity, might be too low for healthy functioning, leading to depression," Roecklein said.

Miriam Cherry, 50, of Larchmont, New York, said she spent the summer planning how she would deal with her winter depression. "It's like clockwork," Cherry said. "The sunlight is low. The day ends at 4:45, and suddenly my mood is horrible."

Does light therapy help?

Many people with SAD respond to light therapy, said Dr. Paul Desan of Yale University's Winter Depression Research Clinic.

"The first thing to try is light," Desan said. "When we get patients on exposure to bright light for a half an hour or so every morning, the majority of patients get dramatically better. We don't even need medications."

The therapy involves devices that emit light about 20 times brighter than regular indoor light.

Research supports using a light that's about 10,000 lux, a measure of brightness. You need to use it for 30 minutes every morning, according to the research. Desan said this can help not only people with SAD but also those with less-severe winter blahs.

Special lights run from \$70 to \$400. Some products marketed for SAD are too dim to do much good, Desan said.

Yale has tested products and offers a list of recommendations, and the nonprofit Center for Environmental Therapeutics has a consumer guide to selecting a light.

If your doctor diagnosed you with SAD, check with your insurance company to see if the cost of a light might be covered, Desan suggested.

What about talk therapy or medication?

Antidepressant medications are a first-line treatment for SAD, along with light therapy. Doctors also recommend keeping a regular sleep schedule and walking outside, even on cloudy days.

Light therapy's benefits can fade when people stop using it. One type of talk therapy — cognitive behavioral therapy, or CBT — has been shown in studies to have more durable effects, University of Vermont researcher Kelly Rohan said.

CBT involves working with a therapist to identify and modify unhelpful thoughts.

"A very common thought that people have is 'I hate winter,'" Rohan said. "Reframe that into something as simple as 'I prefer summer to winter,'" she suggested. "It's a factual statement, but it has a neutral effect on mood."

Working with a therapist can help people take small steps toward having fun again, Rohan said. Try planning undemanding but enjoyable activities to break out of hibernation mode, which "could be as simple as meeting a friend for coffee," Rohan said.

What else might work?

People with SAD have half the year to create coping strategies, and some have found hacks that work for them — though there may be scant scientific support.

Elizabeth Wescott, 69, of Folsom, California, believes contrast showers help her. It's a water therapy

borrowed from sports medicine that involves alternating hot and cold water while taking a shower. She also uses a light box and takes an antidepressant.

"I'm always looking for new tools," Wescott said.

Cherry in New York is devoting a corner of her garden to the earliest blooming flowers: snowdrops, winter aconite and hellebores. These bloom as early as February.

"That's going to be a sign to me that this isn't going to last forever," Cherry said. "It will get better, and spring is on its way."

A new push to wind down the Middle East wars faces familiar challenges

By BASSEM MROUE, JULIA FRANKEL and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — The United States and other mediators are ramping up efforts to halt the wars in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip, circulating new proposals to wind down the regional conflict during the Biden administration's final months.

Negotiations on both fronts have been stalled for months and none of the warring parties have shown any sign of backing down from their demands.

Senior White House officials Brett McGurk and Amos Hochstein are scheduled to visit Israel on Thursday for talks on possible cease-fires in both Lebanon and Gaza, and the release of hostages held by Hamas. CIA Director Bill Burns will go to Egypt to discuss those efforts.

A proposal to end the war between Israel and Hezbollah calls for a two-month cease-fire during which Israeli forces would withdraw from Lebanon, and Hezbollah would end its armed presence along the country's southern border, two other officials familiar with the talks said.

But Israel is unlikely to trust U.N. peacekeepers and Lebanese troops to keep Hezbollah out of a reestablished buffer zone in Lebanon. It wants the freedom to strike the militants if needed. Lebanese officials want a complete withdrawal.

Separately, the U.S., Egypt and Qatar have proposed a four-week cease-fire in Gaza during which Hamas would release up to 10 hostages, according to an Egyptian official and a Western diplomat.

But Hamas still appears unwilling to release scores of hostages without securing a lasting cease-fire and a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, even after the killing of its top leader, Yahya Sinwar. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has insisted on lasting Israeli control over parts of the territory.

In Lebanon, a push to revive the UN resolution that ended the last war

During his visit to Beirut last week, Hochstein met with Lebanon's Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri. They agreed on a roadmap on how to implement U.N. Security Council resolution 1701, which ended the 34-day Israel-Hezbollah war in 2006, according to a Lebanese official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the closed-door talks.

The resolution stipulates a cease-fire between Israel and Hezbollah, withdrawal of Israeli forces from all Lebanese territory, and withdrawal of all armed forces except for U.N. peacekeepers and the Lebanese army from the area south of the Litani River, some 30 kilometers (20 miles) north of the border.

On Wednesday, Hezbollah's newly chosen leader, Naim Kassem, said the group will not "beg" for a cease-fire. "If the Israelis decide to stop the aggression, we say that we accept, but according to the conditions that we see as suitable," he said during a televised address.

Israel has not publicly commented on the proposal to end the fighting in Lebanon, which started more than a year ago and dramatically intensified in mid-September. Lebanon's caretaker prime minister, Najib Mikati, told a Lebanese TV station that he spoke with Hochstein ahead of his trip to Israel and was "cautiously optimistic."

U.S. officials say there are competing proposals being discussed for a cease-fire in Lebanon, including one idea calling for an immediate truce followed by two months to fully implement the resolution.

The Lebanese official said that once a cease-fire is reached, a 60-day period will start in which the Lebanese army and the peacekeeping force known as UNIFIL would deploy in the border area as Israeli

forces and Hezbollah fighters withdraw.

The Lebanese official said the roadmap includes increasing the number of U.N. peacekeepers from 10,000 to 15,000 and boosting the number of Lebanese troops south of the Litani from 4,000 to 15,000.

Resolution 1701 also called for "the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon," including Hezbollah, but that is not part of the initial implementation phase under the current proposal.

Another official familiar with the talks said Israel has requested that any deal include measures to prevent Hezbollah from rearming and guarantees that Israel would be able to act in the buffer zone to combat threats from the militant group.

It is unclear if Lebanon would agree to a deal that allows Israel to continue military operations on Lebanese territory. Lebanese officials have insisted there should be no alteration to Resolution 1701, which stipulates a full Israeli withdrawal.

Hezbollah has said it will not halt its rocket fire on Israel unless there is a cease-fire in Gaza. It is not clear whether that stance has changed after the killing of Hezbollah's longtime leader, Hassan Nasrallah, and several other top commanders in Israeli airstrikes last month.

The U.S. hopes the cease-fire initiatives can prevent the war in Lebanon from becoming as destructive as the war in Gaza, even as it supports Israel's efforts to clear out Hezbollah infrastructure along the country's southern border, said U.S. State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller.

Mediators propose a limited cease-fire in Gaza

The U.S., Egypt and Qatar have proposed a four-week cease-fire in Gaza in which eight to 10 hostages would be released, according to a senior Egyptian official.

Under the plan, humanitarian aid to Gaza would be scaled up, but there would be no guarantees of future talks on a permanent cease-fire, the official said.

Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people and abducted around 250 in the Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed over 43,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities, who do not say how many were combatants but say more than half were women and children.

Around 100 hostages are still being held in Gaza, about a third of whom are believed to be dead.

The latest proposal is based on an initiative by Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi, who proposed a two-day cease-fire in exchange for the release of four hostages last week.

Netanyahu, who has always said he is open to temporary truces for the release of hostages, said in a statement that he had not received a formal proposal based on the Egyptian initiative but "would have accepted it immediately."

Hamas has said it is open to discussing alternative proposals but has stood by its demands for a lasting cease-fire, an Israeli withdrawal and the release of Palestinian prisoners.

The Egyptian official said the mediators were not optimistic.

A Western diplomat in Cairo confirmed that their government had been briefed on the proposal, saying it was being pursued in parallel to the efforts for a cease-fire in Lebanon. Both officials in Egypt spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the talks.

Prosecutors seek a 17-year prison term for Pentagon secrets leaker Jack Teixeira

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Prosecutors plan to argue that a Massachusetts Air National Guard member who pleaded guilty to leaking highly classified military documents about the war in Ukraine should serve nearly 17 years in prison.

In a sentencing memorandum filed Tuesday, prosecutors said Jack Teixeira "perpetrated one of the most significant and consequential violations of the Espionage Act in American history."

"As both a member of the United States Armed Forces and a clearance holder, the defendant took an oath to defend the United States and to protect its secrets — secrets that are vital to U.S. national security and the physical safety of Americans serving overseas," prosecutors wrote. "Teixeira violated his oath,

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almost every day, for over a year.”

Teixeira’s attorneys will argue that U.S. District Judge Indira Talwani should sentence him to 11 years in prison. He is scheduled to be sentenced Nov. 12.

In their sentencing memorandum, they acknowledged that their client “made a terrible decision which he repeated over 14 months.”

“It’s a crime that deserves serious consequences,” the attorneys wrote. “Jack has thoroughly accepted responsibility for the wrongfulness of his actions and stands ready to accept whatever punishment must now be imposed.”

Teixeira, of North Dighton, Massachusetts, pleaded guilty in March to six counts of the willful retention and transmission of national defense information under the Espionage Act nearly a year after he was arrested in the most consequential national security leak in years.

The 22-year-old admitted that he illegally collected some of the nation’s most sensitive secrets and shared them with other users on the social media platform Discord.

When Teixeira pleaded guilty, prosecutors said they would seek a prison term at the high end of the sentencing range. But the defense wrote Tuesday that the 11 years is a “serious and adequate to account for deterrence considerations and would be essentially equal to half the life that Jack has lived thus far.”

Describing Teixeira as autistic, isolated and spending most of his time online especially with his Discord community, his attorneys said Teixeira’s actions, though criminal, were never meant to “harm the United States.” He also had no prior criminal record.

“Instead, his intent was to educate his friends about world events to make certain they were not misled by misinformation,” the attorneys wrote. “To Jack, the Ukraine war was his generation’s World War II or Iraq, and he needed someone to share the experience with.”

Prosecutors, though, countered that Teixeira does not suffer from an intellectual disability that prevents him from knowing right from wrong. They argued that Teixeira’s post-arrest diagnosis as having “mild, high-functioning” autism “is of questionable relevance in these proceedings.”

“Whatever developmental or social difficulties Teixeira may have experienced, his decision to illegally disclose national defense information and put the lives of other people at risk was a volitional choice that he made knowingly, willfully, and with full awareness of the consequences time and time again,” prosecutors wrote.

The security breach raised alarm over America’s ability to protect its most closely guarded secrets and forced the Biden administration to scramble to try to contain the diplomatic and military fallout. The leaks embarrassed the Pentagon, which tightened controls to safeguard classified information and disciplined members found to have intentionally failed to take required action about Teixeira’s suspicious behavior.

Teixeira, who was part of the 102nd Intelligence Wing at Otis Air National Guard Base in Massachusetts, worked as a cyber transport systems specialist, which is essentially an information technology specialist responsible for military communications networks. He remains in the Air National Guard in an unpaid status, an Air Force official said.

Authorities said he first typed out classified documents he accessed and then began sharing photographs of files that bore SECRET and TOP SECRET markings. Prosecutors also said he tried to cover his tracks before his arrest, and authorities found a smashed tablet, laptop and Xbox gaming console in a dumpster at his house.

The leak exposed to the world unvarnished secret assessments of Russia’s war in Ukraine, including information about troop movements in Ukraine, and the provision of supplies and equipment to Ukrainian troops. Teixeira also admitted posting information about a U.S. adversary’s plans to harm U.S. forces serving overseas.

How Mexican cartels manage the flow of migrants on their way to the US border

By MARÍA VERZA Associated Press

CIUDAD HIDALGO, Mexico (AP) — The first place where many migrants sleep after entering Mexico from Guatemala is inside a large structure, a roof above and fenced-in sides on a rural ranch. They call it the “chicken coop” and they don’t get to leave until they pay the cartel that runs it.

Migrant encounters at the U.S.-Mexico border have reached a four-year low, but days before the U.S. election, in which immigration is a key issue, migrants continue pouring into Mexico.

While U.S. authorities give much of the credit to their Mexican counterparts for stemming the flow to their shared border, organized crime maintains stricter control of who moves here than the handful of federal agents and National Guardsmen standing by the river.

Kidnapped migrants who pay the \$100 ransom for their release are stamped to signal that they have paid. From January to August, just in this southernmost corner of Mexico, more than 150,000 migrants were intercepted by immigration agents, considered a fraction of the flow.

Six migrant families interviewed by The Associated Press, who had passed through an initial abduction and were held until paying, explained how it works. A Mexican federal official corroborated much of it. They all requested anonymity for fear of reprisals.

Mexican immigration agents encountered 925,000 undocumented migrants through August of this year, well above last year’s annual total and triple the 2021 total. Yet, they’ve only deported 16,500, a fraction of previous years.

Rev. Heyman Vázquez, a priest in Ciudad Hidalgo along the Suchiate river that divides Mexico and Guatemala, sees it daily.

“It’s them (the cartel) that says who passes and who doesn’t,” Vázquez said. “The numbers of migrants that they take every day are big and they do it in front of the authorities.”

Pay to continue north

On Monday morning, Luis Alonso Valle, a 43-year-old Honduran traveling with his wife and two children, climbed off a raft lashed together with truck inner tubes and boards that had carried them across the Suchiate to Mexico.

They hadn’t made it 50 yards toward Ciudad Hidalgo before three men approached on a motorcycle to tell them they couldn’t keep walking. Then seeing journalists they left. The family looked scared.

In Ciudad Hidalgo’s central plaza, Valle asked for a van that could take them the 23 miles (37 kilometers) to Tapachula, considered the main entry point for southern Mexico. Climbing aboard, the driver asked in a whisper that journalists stop recording. “They (organized crime) are going to stop me,” he said.

This is often how migrants arrive at the ranch. Taxi or van drivers working for the cartel take them there and hand them over. They’re forced to sleep on the ground.

“There were more than 500 people there, some had been there 10, 15 days,” said a Venezuelan woman who was released Sunday with her husband and two children. “Whoever doesn’t have money stays and whoever decides to pay leaves,” she said.

A 28-year-old baker from Ecuador was escorted to a bank to withdraw money to free himself, his wife, daughter and four other relatives. His family was held as insurance until he returned.

Once the payment is made, migrants’ photos are taken and their skin stamped.

Gunmen stop vans and taxis headed to Tapachula and check for the stamps. Those without them are sent back. Migrants said that once they got to Tapachula they were told to wash them off to avoid trouble with other gangs.

According to the nongovernmental organization Fray Matias de Cordova in Tapachula, at least one-third of the hundreds of migrants they have attended to this year arrived stamped. Director Enrique Vidal Olascoaga said those who cannot pay are often sexually assaulted.

None of the families interviewed by AP said they had been harmed.

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The official with knowledge of migrants' statements to investigators said that more than 100 migrants freed by security forces in Ciudad Hidalgo in September, as well as a group of several dozen migrants who were shot at by soldiers on Oct. 1, had passed through similar kidnapping and extortion scenarios.

Cartel-controlled border

Organized crime's strict control at Mexico's southern border tracks with the growing violence generated by the struggle between the Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation cartels. The state of Chiapas is only one of their battlegrounds, but it is key to controlling smuggling routes for people, drugs and weapons from Central America. Migrants have become the most lucrative commodity, according to experts.

The cartels' increasingly aggressive presence is becoming an obstacle to the organizations trying to help migrants. Earlier this month, gunmen killed an outspoken Catholic priest in Chiapas. And Vidal said that sometimes the groups prevent the migrants from receiving humanitarian aid.

President Claudia Sheinbaum has said the government is dealing with the violence, but refuses to confront the cartels. She appears to maintain tactics that began under the administration of former President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, to cycle migrants from the north back down to the south exhausting their resources and keeping them far from the U.S. border — exposing them to more kidnappings and extortion.

Ciudad Hidalgo Mayor Elmer Vázquez claimed to not know anything about migrant safe houses operating in the area and said his town always looks after migrants.

But Rev. Vázquez (no relation to the mayor), who has spent two decades defending migrants, said the prosecutor's office, National Guard, special prosecutor for crimes against migrants do nothing even when crimes are reported.

"They are colluding with organized crime and, of course, they make it look like they're doing their jobs," he said.

Race against time

In August, the U.S. government expanded access to CBP One, an online portal used to schedule appointments to request asylum at the border, south to Chiapas. Mexico requested the move to relieve pressure migrants felt to travel north to get an appointment.

The Mexican government followed by opening "mobility corridors" to help migrants with CBP One appointments to travel safely from southern Mexico to the U.S. border. The appointments are just a first step, but most applicants are allowed to wait out the lengthy process from inside the U.S.

But from Sept. 9 to Oct. 11, Mexico's National Immigration Institute said it had transported only 846 migrants from Tapachula to the northern border. Others traveling on their own have told of being extorted by Mexican authorities and kidnapped — again — by cartels near the northern border, forcing them to miss their appointments.

Donald Trump has said he would do away with CBP One and close other legal routes to enter the U.S.

In Tapachula on Tuesday, hundreds of migrants with confirmed CBP One appointments waited outside Mexican immigration agency offices for permits that would allow them to travel north.

Jeyson Uqueli, a 28-year-old Honduran, had slept outside the office to make sure he was the first in line when it opened. He was traveling alone, but planned to reunite with his sister in New Orleans.

To have any chance at doing so, he would have to make it to the border between Brownsville, Texas and Matamoros, Mexico by Nov. 6 for his CBP One appointment. He planned to fly from Tapachula to the northern city of Monterrey and then take a bus to Matamoros.

He was nervous about making it in time, but relieved to have the appointment, "because Donald Trump is going to come in and get rid of (them)," he said.

Poachers are exploiting the high demand for eagle feathers that are sacred among Native Americans

By MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — America's golden eagles face a rising threat from a black market for their feathers used in Native American powwows and other ceremonies, according to wildlife officials, researchers and tribal members.

The government's response has been two-pronged: A crackdown on rings illegally trafficking dead eagles coupled with a longstanding program that lawfully distributes eagle feathers and parts to tribal members.

But that program has a yearslong backlog, and officials said illegal killings appear to be worsening, with young golden eagles in particular targeted because of high value placed on their white and black wing feathers. Golden eagles, which are federally protected but not considered endangered, already faced pressure — from poisonings, climate change and wind turbines that kill eagles in collisions.

An investigation centered around a Montana Indian reservation recently landed its first conviction — a Washington state man accused with others of killing thousands of birds including at least 118 bald and golden eagles and selling their parts in the U.S. and abroad.

He faces several years in prison during a Thursday sentencing and could be ordered to pay up to \$777,250 in restitution, in a prosecution that's offered a rare glimpse into the black market.

Another investigation involving undercover agents recovered 150 golden and bald eagles over the past decade, with 35 defendants charged and 31 sentenced for wildlife violations, according to court records and federal officials.

Perry Lilley, a member of the Nakota Tribe in northern Montana, attends numerous powwows a year and says he has been solicited to buy eagle feathers. He said illegal shootings were "absolutely wrong" but sympathized with tribal members who don't want to wait years for eagle parts.

Eagle feathers are woven into Native American culture. Beyond powwow regalia, they're presented to high school graduates, used in marriage ceremonies and buried with the dead.

Exploiting Native traditions

A government repository in Colorado that provides dead eagles and their parts for free to tribal members keeps up with orders for individual feathers, such as for graduates. Yet it's unable to meet demand for eagle wings, tails and whole birds, even as powwows become more elaborate and competitive.

That's left an opening for criminals to exploit Native Americans trying to keep traditions alive.

"The amount of money that you can win in powwows has increased a lot in the last 10 years, which has increased some of the demand," said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Chief of Law Enforcement Ed Grace. "If the price of feathers goes up, people ... become opportunistic, and see that you can make a lot of money in a relatively short period of time poaching eagles to provide for the feather trade."

Eagle feathers were on full display at a recent powwow in Billings, where dozens of Native Americans adorned with feathers paraded into a university fieldhouse to kick off dancing competitions. Their feet moved to the beat of a drum, its rhythmic sounds interrupted periodically by high-pitched singing.

Women carried eagle feather fans. Men wore eagle feather headdresses that bounced back and forth as they danced.

Leading the procession was a man wielding a staff topped with an eagle head. Behind him among tribal elders was Kenneth Deputee, Sr., from the nearby Crow Indian Reservation.

Around his waist was a decorative piece strung with eagle feathers, and he carried a short wooden stick carved into a bald eagle head, a single feather hanging from it.

For Deputee, the feathers signify strength and offer protection.

"The feathers are very important," he said. "I'm 72 years old, but once I put that on, I'm ready to rock and roll. ... All that strength comes back to me, you know, so I'm ready to go out there and boogie woogie."

Comanche Nation member Bill Voelker describes powwows differently: more spectacle than spiritual, with some feathers bought online where eagle parts can cost hundreds of dollars.

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Not all powwows have cash prizes.

A 'killing spree' in Montana

In the pending Montana poaching case, the defendant and accomplices allegedly killed about 3,600 birds — including golden and bald eagles — during what one defendant called a "killing spree." Prosecutors say the killings began in 2009 and continued until 2021 on the Flathead Reservation, home of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

Such investigations are resource intensive and can take years, Grace said. That's difficult to sustain for an agency with about three law enforcement officers per state on average.

The case involving 150 eagle carcasses sprawled across several states and included two South Dakota pawn shops, with bird parts bought and sold including in Iowa, Montana, Nebraska and Wyoming.

"Almost all the information we receive on eagle trafficking comes from Native Americans, comes from tribes, comes from public citizens," Grace said. "And then we will look at that intell and specifically go after the larger trafficking groups."

Illegal shootings are a leading cause of eagle deaths, according to a recent government study. The pending Montana case emerged from an area with some of the highest concentrations of eagles and other raptors in the U.S. West.

Online posts from people selling eagle feathers illegally are relatively easy to find on internet marketplaces.

"The biggest atrocity in Indian country today is the powwow but no one will say that out loud because everybody takes part," said Voelker, who operates a tribally sanctioned feather repository and raptor shelter in southern Oklahoma.

Eagles on ice

Voelker's is one of two non-federal feather repositories in the U.S. Most dead eagles, parts and feathers received by tribal members come from the wildlife service's National Eagle Repository.

Inside the service's warehouse-sized building in a nature preserve outside Denver, a wildlife technician recently pulled a cold eagle carcass from a box.

He spread the wings, fanned the tail, examined the feathers, then methodically cut off the tail with a knife and severed the wings and feet with a garden lopper. The pieces went into separate plastic bags to be packaged and mailed to tribal members across the U.S.

The repository receives 3,500 dead bald and golden eagles annually from state wildlife agencies, avian rehabilitation facilities, zoos and other sources. It gets several thousand requests annually from tribal members for feathers, entire eagles and their parts.

Avian flu has slowed processing the birds at the repository; each eagle must now be tested to prevent its spread.

The longest backlog of requests is for young golden eagles.

A dry-erase board in the processing area showed how demand far outstrips supply: 1,242 requests pending for whole immature golden eagles with only 17 available. More than 600 requests for wings; 40 available. Almost 450 tails requested; 17 available.

The repository is currently fulfilling requests for immature golden eagles made in 2013. Wait times for bald eagles or parts are up to two years.

Lilley, the Nakota member, said many feathers in his regalia were gifted to him or came from a dead eagle he found along a fence after it apparently had been shot.

He also received a golden eagle from the government repository years after applying for it.

Lilley recalled his excitement when the package arrived with a whole bird on dry ice.

"I had to get someone to show me how to pluck it, take the feathers off, tail feathers, talons, head and things like that," he said.

One of the bird's feet is affixed to the short staff Lilley wields during powwow dances. A wing is fashioned into a fan.

"For a dancer, when you're outside it gets pretty hot so that's kind of like your AC, that one fan," he said.

This ancient tadpole fossil is the oldest ever discovered

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Scientists have discovered the oldest-known fossil of a giant tadpole that wriggled around over 160 million years ago.

The new fossil, found in Argentina, surpasses the previous ancient record holder by about 20 million years. Imprinted in a slab of sandstone are parts of the tadpole's skull and backbone, along with impressions of its eyes and nerves.

"It's not only the oldest tadpole known, but also the most exquisitely preserved," said study author Mariana Chuliver, a biologist at Buenos Aires' Maimonides University.

Researchers know frogs were hopping around as far back as 217 million years ago. But exactly how and when they evolved to begin as tadpoles remains unclear.

This new discovery adds some clarity to that timeline. At about a half foot (16 centimeters) long, the tadpole is a younger version of an extinct giant frog.

"It's starting to help narrow the timeframe in which a frog becomes a frog," said Ben Kligman, a paleontologist at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History who was not involved with the research.

The results were published Wednesday in the journal *Nature*.

The fossil is strikingly similar to the tadpoles of today — even containing remnants of a gill scaffold system that modern-day tadpoles use to sift food particles from water.

That means the amphibians' survival strategy has stayed tried and true for millions of years, helping them outlast several mass extinctions, Kligman said.

We may not know the next president on Election Day. This Arizona swing county could be why

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Inside a squat building ringed with a chainlink fence and concrete barriers in downtown Phoenix, election workers on Nov. 5 will begin a grindingly slow tally of every ballot cast in the vast expanse of stucco and saguaro that is Maricopa County, Arizona.

In what has become the nation's ultimate swing county, the count here could determine whether Democrat Kamala Harris or Republican Donald Trump will be the next U.S. president. It also is likely to determine the winner of a closely watched race that could decide which party controls the U.S. Senate.

It is one of the most consequential battlegrounds in the country. That means voters, campaigns and people around the world sometimes must wait more than a week to learn who won the county, and with it, statewide races in the swing state of Arizona. This year, election officials warn it could take as long as 13 days to tabulate all of the ballots in Maricopa.

The drawn-out count has made the county a center of election conspiracy theories spawned by Trump. It's also made Maricopa a key part of the former president's campaign to install those who supported overturning the last election in 2020 into positions overseeing future ones.

But the reason it takes so long is simple. With its 4.5 million residents, Maricopa has a higher population than nearly half of the states in the country and is home to 60% of Arizona's voters. Election workers must follow voting laws — which were approved by Republican-controlled legislatures — that slow the count. And it is one of the few counties in the U.S. that is so evenly divided politically that races are often close.

That's made the county "the center of everything," says Joe Garcia, a leader of the Latino activist group Chicanos Por La Causa, noting it is the population center of Arizona, its center of growth and home to the state capital.

"So the power structure, the money and the growth is all here in Maricopa County," he said. "If you can win Maricopa County, you're probably going to win the whole state of Arizona."

Maricopa's position isn't just at the center of Arizona politics. The county has been a regular stop for presidential candidates as they look to clinch Arizona's 11 electoral votes — including Trump and Harris

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and their campaigns this year — and it is a fulcrum on which nail-biter races that can determine control of the House of Representatives and U.S. Senate pivot.

The fast-growing county also has become home to a stew of key demographic groups in the battle for the White House: a growing Latino population, retirees, younger, newly arrived voters and a broad and deep conservative population wrestling with a pivotal splinter group — college-educated, more affluent Republicans who've soured on the party's more pugnacious, and at times anti-democratic, turn under Trump.

It wasn't always like that.

A 'small town' booms

Judy Schwiebert grew up in western Phoenix in the 1960s, when the now-booming city was what she describes as "a pretty small town" and the biggest event of the year was the three-day rodeo.

Everything stopped for the rodeo parade, as horse-drawn carriages, marching bands and dancers made their way through town. Schools closed for the full three days, recalls Schwiebert, who is now a Democratic state representative. In 1969, the county was still home to fewer than 1 million people, less than one-quarter the size it is today. With about 4.5 million residents, Maricopa County now has a population similar to the entire state of Kentucky.

"Over the years here I've seen it grow and grow," Schwiebert said.

The area became a magnet for conservatives like John Kavanagh, a retired New York Port Authority Police officer. After 20 years of policing, Kavanagh and his wife headed west, to Maricopa County. They went in 1993, because his wife couldn't stand the cold in New York and Florida had too much humidity and was "overstocked with New Yorkers."

Kavanagh was like a lot of other people who moved to Arizona in the 1990s — middle-class folks fleeing colder places and what they saw as economic and political dysfunction for a sunny, affordable, and what they perceived as a cleaner city.

"A lot of people came from those other cities, and they don't want a repeat of what they left," Kavanagh said.

In 1993, the county's population was 2.3 million. Republicans dominated the state legislature and Maricopa County politics. As a young state of transplants, it was easier than in other places for new arrivals to enter Arizona politics. Kavanagh was elected to the state's House of Representatives in 2006. Now he is serving his first term in the state Senate; the county's population has nearly doubled since his arrival, and its politics have changed.

Arizona now has a Democratic governor, elected in 2022. Both its U.S. senators — Mark Kelly and Kyrsten Sinema — were elected as Democrats, though Sinema has since become an independent.

Kavanagh attributes the county's leftward shift to a wide array of factors — from societal changes he sees as driven by the media and academia to people moving to Arizona for higher-paying jobs that require more education.

"Hopefully there's a point where people look and see what the result will be if that trend continues," Kavanagh said, predicting a strong November for his Republican Party. "Just look to L.A., look to New York, you know, look to Seattle. That's where the continuing shift left will still occur. So let's do a hard stop and maybe go a few steps back to the right."

Clearly, many who made the move to Maricopa over the past few decades were not like Kavanagh. The county's conservative, low-tax approach attracted businesses as well as individuals, and those companies then attracted workers who sometimes were different from the older transplants to Arizona.

Kevin Henderson moved to Maricopa in 2010 at age 23, after living in Chicago and Portland, Oregon. A Democrat who works in catering, he was pleasantly surprised by life in a then-red state and its residents' live-and-let-live attitude.

"The people were very friendly," said Henderson, now 37. "We are fortunate that, with such an eclectic group of people, we are very understanding and accepting of other people's views."

At the same time that people like Henderson came from other places inside the United States, increased migration to Arizona from Mexico also prompted political change.

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In the 1990s, President Bill Clinton's administration strengthened California's border, pushing illegal migration to Arizona, which already had a robust Hispanic population. Immigration quickly became a political flashpoint, leading many in the growing Latino population living in Maricopa legally to feel that Republicans were demonizing them.

The biggest shift came in 2010, when Arizona's Republican-controlled legislature passed a law allowing local police to stop people they suspected of being in the country illegally. The U.S. Supreme Court overturned the law, but it energized the state's Latinos to organize against Republicans.

The law, which opponents dubbed "Show Me Your Papers," was the harshest anti-immigrant law in the nation, and it changed Arizona politics, Latino activist Garcia said. It led to boycotts and protests. Nationally and internationally, people knew about Republican Sheriff Joe Arpaio — who pushed for the law — and his crime sweeps aimed at immigrants.

"That galvanized the Latino community like nothing ever had ever done before. It galvanized the Latino community more than all the voter groups put together," Garcia said. "It was a curse, but it was a silver lining. It was a blessing because Latinos figured out that, you know what? If we're not involved politically, then we lose."

Republicans swept the state in 2010 and their hammerlock on Maricopa County seemed likely to continue even amid growing Latino dissatisfaction.

But that would change, as a new GOP leader emerged.

Republicans reconsider

The first rumblings that Maricopa County could swing against the long-dominant Republican Party came in 2016.

Even as Trump was winning the county and Arizona, Republican Sheriff Arpaio lost his bid for a seventh term. Arpaio was something of a precursor to Trump, known for his hunger for media attention and jousting with journalists, a hardline stance on immigration and a willingness to go after his critics — he even arrested a Republican county supervisor who criticized him. Trump ultimately pardoned Arpaio after the sheriff was convicted of contempt of court for refusing to obey an injunction against racial profiling of Latinos.

Gordon Keig voted against Arpaio. A lifelong Republican, Keig was increasingly uneasy with his party's growing hostility to immigration and SB 1070, the controversial 2010 law. Though he's a developer and fan of low taxes, Keig was frustrated at how the GOP state legislature kept cutting Arizona's already-low taxes, jeopardizing education funding.

Keig couldn't bring himself to vote for Trump or his 2016 rival, Hillary Clinton. And once Trump came into office and began what Keig saw as his erratic, feud-driven approach to governing — including fighting with Arizona's popular senior Republican Sen. John McCain, whose grandchildren Keig's own daughters knew — Keig couldn't take it anymore. He switched his registration to the Democratic Party.

He did get some pushback. Keig said some friends questioned how he could become a Democrat, but others understood.

"I just felt like the Republican values weren't, weren't there for me anymore," he said. "But I think, you know, even some of my close friends that are still very, you know, active Republican Party members, understand and accept because they, I think they may agree with me that (what) buoyed a lot of the party has gone in a completely different direction."

In 2020, Keig voted for Democrat Joe Biden. The change by voters like him is visible by comparing Maricopa's votes in the 2012 presidential election with 2020. A crescent of more affluent neighborhoods ringing central Phoenix from the north to the southeastern edge, where a new Intel chip plant has attracted high-tech workers, switched from Republican to Democratic. Local political operatives dubbed the area "the flip zone."

The flip zone largely tracks where Maricopa's more educated residents have clustered. Once less educated than the national average, the county now boasts a slightly higher share of adults with four-year-college degrees than the national average — a key indicator of voting Democratic in the age of Trump.

As Maricopa County's political leaning changed, so did the state's. In every presidential election since

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2000, the Republican had won both the county and the state, though Trump's 2016 margin over Hillary Clinton was smaller than previous GOP victories. But in 2020, Democrat Biden won the county, and Arizona.

Trump falsely claimed he won Arizona after his 2020 loss, and he and his allies assailed anyone who argued otherwise.

Watching the reaction of some local Republicans after Biden won the state made Keig even more comfortable with his change.

When the Republican speaker of the Arizona House refused to award the state's electors to Trump, the former president's backers primaried him and forced him out of office. When Maricopa County's Republican supervisors refused Trump's demands to question the vote tally, they, too, were targeted. Threats against Maricopa County Supervisor Bill Gates got so bad he fled his house.

"These are people I really, really admired," Keig said. "And they were just run through the mud."

Denials and conspiracies

Trump's lie that he won Arizona made Maricopa County one of the nation's hotbeds of election denial and conspiracy theories.

After the 2020 election, Trump supporters turned up outside the county elections office, some armed and many waving Trump and American flags, for a "Stop the Steal" rally. His then-attorney, Rudy Giuliani, held hearings at a Phoenix hotel.

The Republican-controlled state Senate launched an error-riddled review of Maricopa's handling of the 2020 election that included inspecting ballots for signs of fibers showing they were secretly made in China. The county became something of a tourist attraction for election deniers who came from other states to watch the show.

County Recorder Stephen Richer, a Republican who defended the accuracy of the county's election results, was singled out for criticism by Trump himself, and Richer and his family faced threats.

In 2022, Republicans who sided with Trump against Richer and the county supervisors ran for top state-wide offices, and all lost. The losing candidate for governor, Kari Lake, made so many claims about the election being stolen and allegations against Richer that he sued his fellow Republican for libel.

Lake is running for Senate this year against Democratic Rep. Ruben Gallego.

Richer says the reason some Republicans remain skeptical of the way elections work in the county isn't because there's anything especially complicated or unusual in how it counts votes. It's because Maricopa — located in a onetime reliably red state where Biden in 2020 defeated Trump by a margin of about 11,000 votes — may be the best place to undermine confidence in national elections.

"I don't think it's the complexity of the process. Our process looks pretty similar to most Western states," Richer said. "I think it is that this is where the action is."

Indeed, Trump, in a campaign appearance in the county in 2023 called the county's Board of Supervisors, which shares election duties with the Recorder, the most important in the country.

The four Republicans on the board also rebuffed Trump's pleas to overturn the election in 2020. Two are retiring after threats, and a Trump ally won the GOP primary to replace one of them. A third was ousted in a primary by another Trump supporter.

In July, Richer lost his Republican primary. The winner, state Rep. Justin Heap, has questioned the ballot-counting process.

Part of what fuels the conspiracy theories is sheer disbelief that Maricopa, a national magnet for conservatives for decades, could go Democratic.

Michelle Ugenti-Rita is an Arizona native who sought a seat on the county Board of Supervisors but lost in a GOP primary in July. Speaking to a group of Republicans gathered in Scottsdale to watch the debate between Trump and Biden earlier this year, she denied the shift is due to actual votes.

"I am tired of the media colluding with the Board of Supervisors and gaslighting us to make us feel like we're liberal, like we're California," Ugenti-Rita told the crowd.

Still, many in Maricopa are keenly aware they're living on a partisan razor's edge, closely balanced between the two sides. Take Sandra Heyn, an 80-year-old retired teacher from California who came to the

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county three years ago to be closer to one of her grown sons.

She's a Republican and devout Lutheran who's uneasy about Trump, even though she voted for him in 2020. But she's bemused at how, when she meets people just in line at the supermarket, the conversation quickly turns to politics.

"I've had people, some people tell me, 'Oh, you're from California. We don't want anybody liberal coming here.' And then I've had other people say ... 'If you're not liberal, keep moving.'"

Why a complete count takes time

The conspiracists have seized on how Maricopa reports its ballot counts in one large burst after Election Day and then in dribs and drabs for more than another week, when it finally becomes clear who won. There are three main reasons for this — Maricopa's size, the closeness of races in the county and Arizona's voting laws, which were written and approved by Republicans.

Maricopa is the second-largest election jurisdiction in the nation. Only reliably Democratic Los Angeles County is larger.

Maricopa reports its results far faster than Los Angeles, but it takes longer to find out who won Maricopa, which creates a false impression of disorder in the vote count there.

The reason Maricopa takes longer is because Maricopa — and Arizona overall — is so evenly divided nowadays that a few thousand votes make the difference. So news organizations have to wait until virtually the last ballot is counted before declaring a winner.

In 2022, a Democrat won the state attorney general's race by 280 votes. In less competitive places, from Florida to California, the victor is usually clear within minutes of polls closing because the tens of thousands of outstanding ballots wouldn't be enough to close the gap.

This election, voters are casting an extra-long two-page ballot that takes longer to tabulate, so it could take up to 13 days before they finish counting, Deputy Elections Director Jennifer Liewer said. The timeline is similar to the number of days it has taken in recent elections to complete the count. Associated Press research found it took 13 days for Maricopa County to finish counting in the 2018 general election, 11 days in 2020 and 13 days in the 2022 midterms.

Arizona's mail voting law also drags out the count. It allows voters to return mail ballots by the close of polls on Election Day. In 2022, some 293,000 voters — representing one-fifth the total vote in Maricopa — dropped off their mail ballots on Election Day.

Mail ballots take longer to count because, before they can be tallied, the envelopes must be scanned, the ballots sorted and the voters' signatures inspected to ensure they're legitimate. Some states like Florida require all mail ballots to be in before Election Day so this process is over when the polls close. Because of Arizona law, when Maricopa's polls close it's just beginning.

Extending the count even longer is a provision in Arizona law that allows voters to "cure" their ballots up to five days after Election Day. That means if the election office thinks the signature on the ballot or some other technical detail is wrong, the voter has five more days to come in and fix it so the ballot counts.

Usually the number of cured ballots is relatively small, but in elections where every vote is essential to determining the winner, the curing process drags the suspense out even more.

Richer noted that, while these processes may sound overly complex to some in the U.S., they're things that Western states like Arizona have been doing for a century or more. Mail voting dates back to the 19th century in the region.

"We vote differently than most of the Eastern United States does," Richer said.

US economy grew at a solid 2.8% pace last quarter on strength of consumer spending

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. economy grew at a healthy 2.8% annual rate from July through September, with consumers helping drive growth despite the weight of still-high interest rates.

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Wednesday's report from the Commerce Department said the gross domestic product — the economy's total output of goods and services — did slow slightly from its 3% growth rate in the April-June quarter. But the latest figures still reflect surprising durability just as Americans assess the state of the economy in the final stretch of the presidential race.

Consumer spending, which accounts for about 70% of U.S. economic activity, accelerated to a 3.7% annual pace last quarter, up from 2.8% in the April-June period. Exports also contributed to the third quarter's growth, increasing at an 8.9% rate.

On the other hand, growth in business investment slowed sharply on a drop in investment in housing and in nonresidential buildings such as offices and warehouses. But spending on equipment surged.

Wednesday's report also contained some encouraging news on inflation. The Federal Reserve's favored inflation gauge — called the personal consumption expenditures index, or PCE — rose at just a 1.5% annual pace last quarter, down from 2.5% in the second quarter and the lowest figure in more than four years. Excluding volatile food and energy prices, so-called core PCE inflation was 2.2%, down from 2.8% in the April-June quarter.

The report is the first of three estimates the government will make of GDP growth for the third quarter of the year. The U.S. economy has continued to expand in the face of the much higher borrowing rates the Fed imposed in 2022 and 2023 in its drive to curb the inflation that surged as the United States bounced back with unexpected strength from the brief but devastating COVID-19 recession of 2020. Despite widespread predictions that the economy would succumb to a recession, it has kept growing, with employers still hiring and consumers still spending. And with inflation steadily cooling, the Fed has begun to cut interest rates.

The report "sends a clear message that the economy is doing well, and inflation is moderating — good news for the Federal Reserve," said Ryan Sweet, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics.

Within the GDP data, a category that measures the economy's underlying strength rose at a solid 3.2% annual rate from July through September, up from 2.7% in the April-June quarter. This category includes consumer spending and private investment but excludes volatile items like exports, inventories and government spending.

"Today's GDP report shows how far we've come since I took office—from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression to the strongest economy in the world," President Joe Biden said.

Other recent economic reports have also pointed to a still-healthy economy. In a sign that the nation's households, whose purchases drive most of the economy, will continue spending, the Conference Board said Tuesday that its consumer confidence index posted its biggest monthly gain since March 2021. The proportion of consumers who expect a recession in the next 12 months dropped to its lowest point since the board first posed that question in July 2022.

At the same time, the nation's once-sizzling job market has lost some momentum. On Tuesday, the government reported that the number of job openings in the United States fell in September to its lowest level since January 2021. And employers have added an average of 200,000 jobs a month so far this year — a healthy number but down from a record 604,000 in 2021 as the economy rebounded from the pandemic recession, 377,000 in 2022 and 251,000 in 2023.

On Friday, the Labor Department is expected to report that the economy added 120,000 jobs in October. That gain, though, will probably have been significantly held down by the effects of Hurricanes Helene and Milton and by a strike at Boeing, the aviation giant, all of which temporarily knocked thousands of people off payrolls.

Despite the continued progress on inflation, average prices still far exceed their pre-pandemic levels, which has exasperated many Americans and posed a challenge to Vice President Kamala Harris' prospects in her race against former President Donald Trump. Most mainstream economists have suggested, though, that Trump's policy proposals, unlike Harris', would worsen inflation.

At its most recent meeting last month, the Fed was satisfied enough with its progress against inflation — and concerned enough by the slowing job market — to slash its benchmark rate by a hefty half per-

centage point, its first and largest rate cut in more than four years. When it meets next week, the Fed is expected to announce another rate cut, this one by a more typical quarter-point.

The central bank's policymakers have also signaled that they expect to cut their key rate again at their final two meetings this year, in November and December. And they envision four more rate cuts in 2025 and two in 2026. The cumulative result of the Fed's rate cuts, over time, will likely be lower borrowing rates for consumers and businesses.

Biden suggests Trump supporters are 'garbage' after comic's insult of Puerto Rico

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden took a swipe against Donald Trump's supporters as he reacted to the Republican presidential nominee's weekend rally at Madison Square Garden, which was overshadowed by crude and racist rhetoric.

In a call organized by the Hispanic advocacy group Voto Latino, Biden on Tuesday responded to a comic at Trump's rally who called Puerto Rico a "floating island of garbage." Biden's initial comments were garbled.

"Just the other day, a speaker at his rally called Puerto Rico a floating island of garbage. Well, let me tell you something, I don't, I don't know the Puerto Rican that I know, the Puerto Rico where I'm fr -- in my home state of Delaware. They're good, decent honorable people," he said.

The president then added: "The only garbage I see floating out there is his supporters. His demonization of Latinos is unconscionable, and it's un-American. It's totally contrary to everything we've done, everything we've been."

White House spokesman Andrew Bates said Biden "referred to the hateful rhetoric at the Madison Square Garden rally as 'garbage.'"

Biden then took to social media to personally clarify what he said.

"Earlier today I referred to the hateful rhetoric about Puerto Rico spewed by Trump's supporter at his Madison Square Garden rally as garbage — which is the only word I can think of to describe it," he posted on X. "His demonization of Latinos is unconscionable. That's all I meant to say. The comments at that rally don't reflect who we are as a nation."

In referring to Trump's supporters as "garbage," however, Biden's tone was at odds with the message that Democratic nominee Kamala Harris is seeking to present as she aims to cast a broad appeal, including to disaffected Republicans. Shortly after Biden's comments, Harris spoke from the Ellipse in Washington, vowing to be a president who would unite the country.

"I pledge to be a president for all Americans," said Harris, who is Biden's vice president.

Harris' running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, said the campaign's message of unity was not undercut by Biden's words.

Walz said Wednesday on "CBS Mornings" that the president "was very clear that he's speaking about the rhetoric we heard, so it doesn't undermine it." Walz added on ABC's "Good Morning America" that he and Harris "have made it absolutely clear that we want everyone as a part of this. Donald Trump's divisive rhetoric is what needs to end."

Republicans quickly highlighted Biden's remark. Trump called up Florida Sen. Marco Rubio during his rally in Allentown, Pennsylvania, to recount what happened.

"Moments ago Joe Biden stated that our supporters, our patriots, are garbage," Rubio said. "He's talking about everyday Americans who love their country."

Trump campaign spokesperson Karoline Leavitt said in a subsequent statement, "There's no way to spin it: Joe Biden and Kamala Harris don't just hate President Trump, they despise the tens of millions of Americans who support him."

A Trump campaign fundraising text declared, "KAMALA'S BOSS JOE BIDEN JUST CALLED ALL MY SUPPORTERS GARBAGE!" before ensuring recipients that Trump himself thinks, "YOU ARE AMAZING!"

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Even some prominent Democrats began distancing themselves from Biden's comments. Speaking on CNN, Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro said he would "never insult the good people of Pennsylvania or any Americans even if they chose to support a candidate that I didn't support."

The comments recalled then-Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton dismissing Trump supporters during a 2016 fundraiser in New York by saying that half would fit into a "basket of deplorables."

Clinton later called that characterization "grossly generalistic." But it became a defiant rallying cry for many Trump backers who said the insult encapsulated the elitist attitudes of Clinton and the Democrats.

As reactions to Biden's reaction began to fly, meanwhile, Trump was asked in an interview Tuesday night with Fox News Channel's Sean Hannity about the racist and vulgar joke at his New York rally. He responded: "Somebody said there was a comedian that joked about Puerto Rico or something. And I have no idea who he is."

The former president added, "I can't imagine it's a big deal."

At a rally Tuesday in Allentown, Pennsylvania, a city with a large Hispanic population, Trump repeated his claim that Biden's immigration policies have allowed other countries to treat the U.S. like "a giant garbage can."

With Election Day now just a week off, Biden has worked to maintain relevance, furiously promoting his administration's accomplishments while Harris in her race against Trump.

But his efforts to remain in the political spotlight might not always be so helpful for the top of the Democratic ticket he's now promoting. That's because, while Harris has been sharply critical of Trump for months, repeatedly calling him "unstable" and "unhinged" and even suggesting that he was "fascist," she has been careful not to decry his supporters.

In fact, the vice president has campaigned extensively with former Republican Rep. Liz Cheney and other former GOP elected officials — hoping to woo conservative crossover voters. The Democratic convention — and Harris ads — have highlighted the stories of everyday Americans who talked about having voted for Trump in the past but now say they are supporting the vice president.

On Tuesday's call, Biden also said that Trump "doesn't give a damn about the Latino community" and urged rejection of the former president even as Trump's campaign says its support is rising among Hispanics, particularly men.

"Vote to keep Donald Trump out of the White House," Biden said. "He's a true danger to, not just Latinos but to all people. Particularly those who are in a minority in this country."

North Korean troops sent to Russia may be pleased to be there, even as they face ferocious fighting

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The thousands of young soldiers North Korea has sent to Russia, reportedly to help fight against Ukraine, include many elite special forces, but that hasn't stopped speculation they'll be slaughtered because they have no combat experience, no familiarity with the terrain and will likely be dropped onto the most ferocious battlefields.

That may be true, and soon. Observers say some of the troops have already arrived at the front. From the North Korean perspective, however, these soldiers might not be as miserable as outsiders think. They may, in fact, view their Russian tour with pride and as a rare chance to make good money, see a foreign country for the first time and win preferred treatment for their families back home, according to former North Korean soldiers.

"They are too young and won't understand exactly what it means. They'll just consider it an honor to be selected as the ones to go to Russia among the many North Korean soldiers," said Lee Woong-gil, a former member of the same special forces unit, the Storm Corps. He came to South Korea in 2007. "But I think most of them won't likely come back home alive."

Troop deployment is Kim's 'big gamble'

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Worries about North Korea's likely participation in the Russian-Ukraine war were highlighted this week when the Pentagon said North Korea has sent about 10,000 troops to Russia, and that they will likely fight against Ukraine "over the next several weeks." South Korea's presidential office said Wednesday that more than 3,000 North Korean soldiers have been moved close to battlefronts in western Russia.

North Korea's troop deployment could mark a serious escalation of the almost three-year war. It caught many outside observers by surprise because North Korea has its own security headache, a festering standoff with the United States and South Korea over its nuclear program.

Large North Korean troop casualties would be a major political blow for the country's 40-year-old ruler, Kim Jong Un, whose government hasn't formally confirmed the deployment. But experts say Kim may see this as a way to get much needed foreign currency and security support from Russia in return for joining Russia's war against Ukraine.

"Kim Jong Un is taking a big gamble. If there are no large casualty numbers, he will get what he wants to some extent. But things will change a lot if many of his soldiers die in battle," said Ahn Chan-il, a former North Korean army first lieutenant who is now head of the World Institute for North Korean Studies think tank in Seoul.

Ordinary soldier's wage is less than \$1, defectors say

The Storm Corps, also known as the 11th Corps, is one of Kim's top units. Its main missions would be infiltrating agents into South Korea, blowing up important facilities in the South and assassinating key figures in the event of war on the Korean Peninsula.

Lee, who served in the Storm Corps in 1998-2003, recalled that his unit received better food and supplies than other units, but many members still suffered from malnutrition and tuberculosis.

Despite a gradual economic recovery in North Korea over the past 30 years, defectors say the average monthly wage for ordinary North Korean workers and soldiers is less than \$1. They say many people engage in capitalist market activities to make a living because the country's state rationing system remains largely broken.

Russia is expected to pay all the costs related to the deployment of North Korean troops, including their wages, which observers estimate will be at least \$2,000 per month for each person. About 90% to 95% of their stipends will likely go to Kim's coffers, and the rest to the soldiers. This means one year of service in Russia would earn a North Korean soldier \$1,200 to \$2,400. That's big enough to prompt many young soldiers to volunteer for risky Russian tours, former soldiers say.

Ahn said North Korea will likely offer other incentives meant to elevate the social standings of soldiers, such as membership in the ruling Workers' Party and the right to move to Pyongyang, the country's showcase capital. Kang Mi-Jin, a defector who runs a company analyzing North Korea's economy, said even family members of soldiers sent to Russia could be given benefits such as good houses or entrance to good universities.

Choi Jung-hoon, a former first lieutenant in North Korea's army, said serving on foreign soil will attract many soldiers who are eager to see other countries for the first time.

North Koreans are barred from accessing foreign news and need state approval to move from one province to another within the country. North Korean construction, logging and other workers sent abroad to bring in foreign currency have often been called "slaves" by international human rights groups. But defectors testify that such overseas jobs are often better than staying in North Korea, and many used bribery and family connections to get them.

"North Korean soldiers would see going to Russia as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," Ahn said.

Ahn and other observers say such views could change if the soldiers see colleagues dying in large numbers. They say many North Korean soldiers could surrender to Ukraine forces and ask for resettlement in South Korea.

North Korean soldiers lack familiarity of the terrain

North Korean soldiers have been trained on the Korean Peninsula's mountainous terrain and are not familiar with the largely flat plain battlefields in the Russian-Ukraine war. They also don't understand

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modern warfare, including drone use, because North Korea hasn't fought a big battle since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War, experts say.

"My heart ached," said Choi, now leader of an activist group in Seoul, when he saw a Ukraine-released video purportedly showing undersized North Korean soldiers believed to be in their late teens or early 20s.

"None would think they are going to Russia to die," Choi said. "But I think they're cannon fodder because they will be sent to the most dangerous sites and will surely be killed."

Leader Kim Jong Un may also be hoping that his troop offer will push Russia to share sophisticated and highly sensitive technology that he needs to perfect his nuclear-capable missiles. That transfer could depend on how long the war continues and how many more troops Kim will send.

Nam Sung-wook, a former director of a think tank run by South Korea's spy agency, said North Korea will likely get hundreds of millions of dollars because of the soldiers' wages. The soldiers will get direct experience of modern warfare but will likely die in large numbers, and Russia will be reluctant to hand over its high-tech missile technology, he said.

"North Korea will continue to hide its troop dispatches from its own people because the public will be agitated if they know their soldiers are being sent abroad to be killed," said Nam, who is now a professor at Korea University in South Korea.

Two closing arguments show the stark choice between Trump and Harris

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — In the shadow of the White House, seven days before the final votes of the 2024 election are cast, Kamala Harris vowed to put country over party and warned that Donald Trump is obsessed with revenge and his own personal interests.

Less than 48 hours earlier inside Madison Square Garden, Trump called his Democratic opponent "a trainwreck who has destroyed everything in her path." His allies on stage labeled Puerto Rico a "floating island of garbage" and made a baseless claim that Harris, a former prosecutor and senator who is trying to become the first woman to be elected president, had begun her career as a prostitute.

Two nights and 200 miles apart, the dueling closing arguments outlined in stark terms the choice U.S. voters face on Nov. 5 when they will weigh two very different visions of leadership and America's future.

Trump's raucous rally, marked by crude and racist insults, highlighted the uglier elements of his coalition. But other parts of it underscored the former businessman's appeal as someone who vows to fix the economy and the border, and as a political outsider eager to defy any and all conventions despite the risks.

Harris, the vice president for the last four years, chose a more formal setting — the grassy Ellipse near the White House — to underscore the seriousness of this moment in American history and the threat Trump poses to democracy. She faced a massive audience in the same place where Trump addressed thousands of his loyalists on Jan. 6, 2021, before they stormed the U.S. Capitol in one of the darkest days of modern history.

But more than simply reminding voters of the danger that Trump poses to U.S. democracy, Harris' remarks were designed to highlight her opponent's record of prioritizing his personal interests instead of the nation's.

"Donald Trump has spent a decade trying to keep the American people divided and afraid of each other. That's who he is. But America, I am here tonight to say: That's not who we are," Harris said. "I pledge to be a president for all Americans — to always put country above party and above self."

Senior adviser Jen O'Malley Dillon noted that Harris' closing argument is designed to reach the narrow slice of undecided voters; many moderate Republicans are among them.

"We know that there are still a lot of voters out there that are still trying to decide who to support — or whether to vote at all," O'Malley Dillon said. "And this race is extremely close. We talk about it as a margin of error race. We know it is going to be closed out in this final week."

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Trump's team is more focused on energizing his partisan base and reaching infrequent voters across the political spectrum who are frustrated by the direction of the country and looking for change.

Still, Trump framed his comments in recent days with a simple question that cuts across political lines, asking voters whether they are better off now than they were four years ago at the end of his first term. While the nation was still in the throes of the pandemic when Trump left office, polls indicate that most voters are unhappy with the direction of the country today.

Trump has vowed to stage the largest deportation operation in U.S. history and impose broad tariffs to generate revenue and boost American manufacturing.

Ever defiant facing criticism from even some Republicans, Trump on Tuesday called his Madison Square Garden event "a lovefest" and did not address the comments of pro-Trump comedian Tony Hinchcliffe, who called Puerto Rico a "floating island of garbage." Hinchcliffe also made demeaning jokes about Black people, other Latinos, Palestinians and Jews in his routine before Trump took the stage.

"Nobody's ever had love like that," Trump said of the hours-long Sunday event that featured his family members and high-level surrogates and supporters including billionaire Elon Musk, TV psychologist "Dr. Phil" McGraw and former Fox News host Tucker Carlson. "It was really love for our country."

The Republican former president on Tuesday also offered a dark assessment of Harris' leadership. He said that she "obliterated" the nation's borders, "decimated the middle class," brought "bloodshed and squalor" to major cities and "unleashed war and chaos all over the world."

"No person who has caused so much destruction and death at home and abroad should ever be allowed to be the president of the United States," Trump told dozens of supporters who gathered at his Florida estate.

Trump senior adviser Jason Miller said Trump has made clear his plans to fix the economy, secure the southern border and "improve people's daily lives."

"Kamala Harris hasn't done any of that," he said. "It's a message of despair, personal attacks and nothing from Harris or her campaign about what they're actually going to do to help Americans. So it's a massive contrast."

Harris has largely moved on from the "joyful" campaigning style that defined her entrance into the presidential contest this summer. She pledged unity on Tuesday night, but she also cast Trump as someone driven more by revenge and grievance than a commitment to the people.

"This is someone who is unstable, obsessed with revenge, consumed with grievance and out for unchecked power," Harris said. "This is not a candidate for president who is thinking about how to make your life better."

She spoke directly to Republican voters at times and promised to listen to those who didn't vote for her if elected. Harris previously said she would include a Republican in her Cabinet.

"Unlike Donald Trump, I don't believe people who disagree with me are the enemy," she said. "He wants to put them in jail. I'll give them a seat at the table."

Heading into the speech, the Democrat's campaign was aware of criticism from her party's far-left base that she has been too focused on courting moderate Republican voters. They urged Harris to focus more on working-class priorities than the threat Trump poses to U.S. democracy.

Ultimately, the vice president's speech was designed to tie both issues together. She warned of Trump threatening democratic norms and vowed to take action against high grocery prices and help first-time home buyers with making a down payment.

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, a top Harris ally, said voters can "walk and chew gum at the same time — meaning they can hear an argument about freedom and about something that affects their pocketbook. And I think she is certainly capable to prosecute both cases at the same time."

Sisters Michelle Detwiler and Renee Newell drove from Virginia to attend Harris' remarks at the Ellipse. "We both have daughters and we're both here for them," Newell said. Detwiler said the location of the event is a "great counterpoint to the imagery of Jan. 6. D.C. is a great city for peaceful public gatherings.

"We're so glad to be here and to experience the joy," she said.

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Today in History: October 31, Indira Gandhi assassinated

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, Oct. 31, the 305th day of 2024. There are 61 days left in the year. This is Halloween.

Today in history:

On Oct. 31, 1984, Indira Gandhi, India's Prime Minister for more than 15 years, was assassinated by two of her own security guards.

Also on this date:

In 1864, President Abraham Lincoln signed a proclamation making Nevada the 36th state, eight days before the presidential election.

In 1913, the Lincoln Highway, the first automobile highway across the United States, was dedicated.

In 1941, work was completed on the Mount Rushmore National Memorial in South Dakota, begun in 1927.

In 1950, Earl Lloyd of the Washington Capitols became the first African-American to play in an NBA game; Lloyd would go on to play for nine seasons, winning an NBA championship in 1955 with the Syracuse Nationals.

In 1961, the body of Josef Stalin was removed from Lenin's Tomb as part of the Soviet Union's "de-Stalinization" drive.

In 1999, EgyptAir Flight 990, bound from New York to Cairo, crashed off the Massachusetts coast, killing all 217 people aboard.

In 2005, President George W. Bush nominated Judge Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court.

In 2011, the United Nations estimated that world population had reached seven billion people (world population is greater than eight billion today).

Today's Birthdays: Actor Lee Grant is 99. Former CBS anchorman Dan Rather is 93. Actor Stephen Rea is 78. Olympic gold medal marathoner Frank Shorter is 77. TV host Jane Pauley is 74. Football coach Nick Saban is 73. Film director Peter Jackson is 63. Rock drummer Larry Mullen Jr. (U2) is 63. Rock musician Johnny Marr is 61. Baseball Hall of Famer Fred McGriff is 61. Actor Dermot Mulroney is 61. Country singer Darryl Worley is 60. Actor-comedian Mike O'Malley is 58. Rap musician Adam Horovitz (Beastie Boys) is 58. Rapper Vanilla Ice is 57. Actor Leticia Wright is 31. Singer Willow Smith is 24.