

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 1 of 85

- [1- MJ's is Hiring](#)
- [2- Weber Landscaping Greenhouse Ad](#)
- [3- Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller](#)
- [8- Coming up on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [9- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [10- Weather Pages](#)
- [14- Daily Devotional](#)
- [15- 2021 Community Events](#)
- [16- News from the Associated Press](#)



## NOW HIRING

MJ's Sinclair of Groton is looking for someone to work weekends and nights. Stop out and see Jeff for an application.



**OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

**Weber  
Landscaping  
Greenhouse  
opening this  
Spring!**



**We will have a full greenhouse of beautiful  
annuals and vegetables.**

**Opening First Week of May!**

**Located behind 204 N State St, Groton  
(Look for the flags)**

**LET US HELP YOU BRIGHTEN  
UP YOUR YARD!**

## #430 in a series

### Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Not much for change. Things aren't getting worse overall, but they're not getting better either; and they should be with all the vaccines going out. That's a worry.

There were 54,520 new cases reported today, bringing us up to 32,257,610, which is 0.2 percent more than yesterday. Fourteen-day average hospitalizations are down slightly at 43,641. And deaths are at 573,951, which is 0.2 percent above yesterday. There were 950 deaths reported today.

On April 28, 2020, one year ago today, we broke one million cases with 1,013,067. That seems quaint now, but keep in mind that less than two months earlier, we had 70 reported cases. There had been 53,026 deaths at this point. The University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) projected the death toll to reach 74,000; don't we all wish that had been accurate? Airlines had begun to require face coverings on flights. Meanwhile, worldwide there were more than three million cases and over 211,000 deaths.

Many states are trending downward, but Oregon seems to be spiking in a new wave of transmission. Cases are up 54 percent and hospitalizations are up 39 percent over the past 14 days. They're having to reintroduce restrictions in the hardest-hit counties, and that, predictably, is not going over well with the populace. Public health officials are attributing this latest surge to new variants, spring break travel, and loosening restrictions before things were well in hand. Let's hope the additional time they've had for vaccination will cut this off before they go where Michigan's been. Every time I think we might just have this, something else crops up. I wonder what state is next—hoping none of them.

India is still on fire with 38 percent of the world's new cases (and only 17.5 percent of its population), a 52 percent increase in a week's time; and the trouble appears to be spreading to neighboring Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. India produces 60 percent of the world's vaccines now, but they're having trouble holding vaccination clinics because the transmission of infection is so rampant and supplies are still short. Hospitals are well past the breaking point and have been for some days—no beds, no staff, no oxygen. People are dying waiting for admission or at home because there's no point in going to the hospital. They continue to report record numbers of new cases day after day, and there is general agreement cases and deaths are wildly underreported. This is a humanitarian crisis and—in case humanitarian concerns don't speak to you—a public health (and therefore economic) crisis for the world. These are the conditions under which a horrifying new variant is likely to emerge. There is one new variant from India now, B.1.617, but this one does not appear to be that one; we're not even sure whether it is more transmissible than others—it may be. B.1.1.7 is right now the biggest problem in vast parts of the country with B.1.617 the primary variant in others. In any case, the situation is dire. Finally, the rest of the world is noticing and has begun to forward supplies, ventilators, components for vaccines, and medications. All of us took too long. I hope collective efforts can bring this carnage under control soon.

The CDC has released a new study of vaccine effectiveness for the mRNA vaccines, the Pfizer/BioNTech and the Moderna. The study involved 417 adults 65 and over with Covid-19 symptoms, 187 of whom tested positive for Covid-19, admitted to 24 hospitals in 14 states in the first three months of this year. Of those, 18 were partially vaccinated and only one was fully vaccinated. Findings were that the vaccines were 64 percent effective after one dose; we do not know the duration of this level of protection in the absence of a second dose. It would be nice if we never have a sufficient sample to study to gather that information. After full vaccination, we are seeing 94 percent effectiveness, which is really, really good in this age group. This is a small and preliminary study, but really, nothing anyone's gathered so far indicates these vaccines are anything but impressive.

A study (in preprint, so not yet peer-reviewed) conducted by Public Health England (PHE) took a look at the effectiveness of a single dose of the Oxford/AstraZeneca and the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines, the two currently authorized for use in the country, at preventing household transmission from an infected vaccinated person. So they were interested in vaccinated people who developed infection anyway (the so-called index case) and how likely those people were to transmit infection to other household members.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 4 of 85

It's a huge study including all adults in England aged 70 and older, some 7.5 million people. They looked for symptomatic PCR-confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection, hospitalizations, and deaths. The two different vaccines showed similar effectiveness.

The likelihood of household transmission was 40 to 50 percent lower in households in which the index case had received one dose of vaccine 21 or more days prior to the positive test. In households where the index case was not vaccinated, there were around 96,898 secondary cases out of 960,765 household contacts (10.1%), whereas in households where the index case had received a dose of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine 21 or more days prior to their diagnosis, there were 196 cases out of 3424 household contacts (5.72%) and in households where the index case had received a dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine 21 or more days prior to their diagnosis, there were 371 secondary cases in 5939 household contacts (6.25%).

Now this was only one dose, but it certainly contributes to the evidence that these vaccines do, indeed, reduce transmission, not just symptomatic disease. I will caution once again that the UK made a decision to delay second doses in the interest of getting more people partially immunized quickly, but there is no support at all for only planning one dose of these two-dose vaccines. The thing is we are not sure how long the protection from a single dose lasts and the protection is far less than a second dose gives; so no one thinks it's a good idea to skip that second dose.

So there's a new piece of misinformation making the rounds, this time not only online, but in flyers handed out door to door in some communities. The author says he is not "trained in medicine nor are we giving medical advice." And in fact, they don't exactly give medical advice. They're "just asking questions," questions designed to perpetuate misinformation about Covid-19 vaccines. I don't know that I have enough time to research and debunk each of their 13 or so questions, most of them couched in a "Does it concern you that . . . ?" format; but I'll take on some of them. I figure, if you can get about so deep into a piece and a good share of the assertions don't hold water, it's probably safe to dismiss the rest of them. Let's give it a go, OK?

The first "Does it concern you" is about how fast these vaccines have been developed and the fact that the vaccine "is not approved," but has emergency use authorization (EUA) instead. They're not wrong that these were developed fast and hold EUAs, not licenses. On the other hand, the conclusion they draw from this sinister development is questionable: that the manufacturers "can only project the long-term effects on your body and they don't really know." This ignores the rigorous review process to which these vaccines were subjected, the same review process that is employed when any vaccine comes to the FDA for approval. This process was radically transparent with data available to be picked over by vaccinologists and immunologists and virologists and anyone else who wanted to pick it over; the meetings of the Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee of the FDA were public. If they'd been anything too hinky at the time, someone would have raised the alarm; scientists are notorious for not keeping their mouths shut. The primary reason EUAs instead of licenses were applied for and granted is that the amount of data available at the time of the EUA was less than is usual for licensing decisions; those data continue to be collected. As for the long-term effects, it is not usual for vaccines to have effects which are not apparent in the fairly short term. With the decades of experience we have with vaccines, we know how long it takes for side effects to show up, and we're well outside that window now. Much use of underlining and bold print (which I cannot reproduce here) is made to suggest there is something unusual and nefarious about the FDA "taking into account the totality of the scientific evidence about the vaccine that is available to the FDA" (something they always have to rely on, the unavailable evidence being—you know—unavailable). First time I've seen "we're going to consider every scrap of information we can lay our hands on" as a sign of a shady deal going down, but there you go.

Next this author asserts that "[a]ll previous vaccines are DNA based." This is simply untrue. Prior to this year, there were no DNA-based vaccines on the market for humans in the US, although as I understand it, there were a couple of veterinary-use DNA-based vaccines available.

We follow up with the question whether "you [are] concerned that, for the first time messenger RNA (mRNA) is the vehicle to introduce this virus into the body of those receiving Mod's and PBNT's injection."

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 5 of 85

Wrong again. This is, for the record, the first time a vaccine on an mRNA platform has been approved for use in the US; but it is wrong, wrong, wrong that any of the vaccines in use introduces the virus into the body. No virus. Not in the vaccine, not on the needle. Not in a boat, not with a goat. Not in the dark, not in a tree. There is no virus, Sam, you see.

Next question: "Are you aware of the function and instability of mRNA?" I'm guessing the author hopes not because folks who are aware of this are laughing about now. For the record, mRNA is super-unstable; that's why these vaccines have to be kept frozen. If you're going to make the case later (and they are—in just a minute here) that this vaccine is going to cause genetic modification, the instability of the mRNA is a major stumbling block for that theory; anything we have to work this hard to keep intact until it can stimulate an immune response is a terrible candidate for doing you some sort of permanent harm: Getting it to hang around long enough for that would be a real trick.

Which brings us to, "Are you aware that RNA vaccines are technically not vaccines but genetic modifiers? Which of your genes will it be modifying? Are you aware it has recently been revealed that, 'RNA has a direct effect on DNA stability?' These are really injections." Let's do the easy one first: Yes, these definitely are injections. No question. An injection, according to Merriam-Webster, is "the act or process of forcing a liquid medicine or drug into someone or something by using a special needle," and that is, indeed what happens when you are vaccinated. Next, as to whether this is a vaccine, same source says a vaccine is (a) "an antigenic preparation of a typically inactivated or attenuated . . . pathogenic agent (such as a bacterium or virus) or one of its components or products (such as a protein or toxin)" or (b) "a preparation of genetic material (such as a strand of synthesized messenger RNA) that is used by the cells of the body to produce an antigenic substance (such as a fragment of virus spike protein)." Hmmm. Looks like a vaccine to me under the part (b) definition (unless you think Merriam-Webster is in on the scam). As for the genetic modification assertion, see above comments from this author on the instability of mRNA. Tough to see how that works when the stuff degrades so fast. He can't have it both ways—wildly unstable RNA plus it hangs around long enough to act as a genetic modifier. You only get one.

Then comes the "proof that the Covid injection was started and cultured with aborted fetal tissue" issue, which borders on true although the situation is more nuanced than this statement makes it. I don't know what sort of "proof" was needed since all companies involved have been completely transparent about their use of fetal cell lines from the beginning—but I have to admit it sounds a lot more secretive and nefarious if you have to go out and dig up "proof" (despite what "they" don't want you to know, right?). We've talked about this one before, and I'll drop the link below; but the short version is that two vaccines were tested using cell lines derived from (I think two) fetuses aborted 40 to 50 years ago and the third used the same fetal cell line in production. For the record, major religious authorities who are not so damned skippy with abortion, to wit, the Pope and evangelical Christian leaders, have said there is an ethical obligation to take the vaccines to protect the lives of tens of thousands who might get Covid-19 if you don't. Here's that Update #385 with the details posted March 14 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/4522031171146587>.

This one's really infuriating: "Does it concern you that according to doctors with Intermountain Healthcare in Utah women who take the Covid-19 injection are showing symptoms of breast cancer?" The cited source here is an online publication called Natural News, where they describe "something terrifying" that turned up this way: "Women who were recently injected with experimental COVID vaccines suffer from abnormal inflammation of the lymph nodes in their breasts. According to the Intermountain Healthcare doctors, women who take the covid-19 vaccines are showing symptoms of breast cancer." We've already talked about this too, and I'll drop that link here as well. What women were showing after vaccination is, specifically, enlarged lymph nodes on the same side of the body as the vaccine was administered; this is a fairly typical (not abnormal) response to some vaccines and to some infections as well. Now that would, if spotted on a mammogram, cause a radiologist to initiate a call-back for follow-up, but I'm hard pressed to call it a "symptom of breast cancer" rather than a possible indicator requiring follow-up. The doctors at Intermountain Health did not put out an alarm that the vaccine was causing breast cancer either; they

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 6 of 85

informed the public that maybe women will want to hold off on mammograms for a few weeks after vaccination to avoid unnecessary follow-up testing. That's all. You can read the original conversation on this subject in my Update #364 posted February 21 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/4455436614472710>. And here's the statement from Intermountain Healthcare on the subject; doesn't sound to me like they're thinking of this as "something terrifying," but you be the judge: <https://intermountainhealthcare.org/.../to-protect-your.../>.

Now, we come to the shocking story of Cayuga County, NY, where there were no deaths in any nursing home prior to December 29, 2020. On December 22, one home began vaccinating residents, and since then (citation was dated January 9), 24 residents have died. Small problem: The article cited here says the outbreak actually began before the vaccinations did. I'm going to say it would be most curious for a vaccine, even one as dangerous as this author purports these to be, to cause a retroactive effect, infecting patients before they were even vaccinated. I'll add that, although I have no way to discover for sure, I'm going to bet the other nursing homes in Cayuga County (or at least some of them) had also been vaccinating on roughly the same time frame—that seems to be the way these things rolled out; and the article did mention that no other nursing homes in the county had had deaths.

Can I just say this just takes us through the first column of a three-column-format, two-page flyer? Sigh. Briefly: A story about 23 care home residents dying in Norway after receiving Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. August bastion of credible, fact-checked news, the New York Post, breathlessly reported that authorities were attributing the deaths to the vaccine; other publications were quoting authorities as explaining that some 400 deaths occur in care home residents in the typical week in Norway irrespective of vaccination, so these deaths were within the normal background number of deaths. People as elderly and frail as those targeted for early vaccination (targeted due to their age and frailty) die a lot more often than the young and hale. Go figure.

Then a retread of the old syncytin-1/Dr. Michael Yeadon/infertility-in-women argument. We've had this discussion before—twice. Best detail can be found in my Update #287 posted December 6 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/4237138519635855>.

Next up: A discussion of the ominous nature of the gubmint's use of 42 U.S. Code §300aa-22 (v)(1), also known as The Public Readiness and Preparedness (PREP) Act to offer liability protection to the evil pharmaceutical companies who make these vaccines. Sounds like a back-room deal cooked up to let Big Pharma run roughshod over us poor dupes who line up like sheep for vaccination, doesn't it? Or it's just a law that's been on the books since 2005, been used many times in the past, including the H1N1 pandemic in 2009, and covers a hell of a lot of people besides the vaccine makers. A PREP Act declaration was initially issued in the current emergency on February 4, 2020, and has been amended seven times so far in this pandemic, most of it with nothing to do with vaccination—things like antivirals, other drugs, biologics, diagnostics, or devices used to "treat, diagnose, cure, prevent, or mitigate" the disease or its transmission. This is how you end up with medical and nursing students legally able to pitch in to treat patients without fear of being sued for practicing without a license, also retired health care personnel whose licenses/registrations have lapsed helping out, people practicing outside their normal specialty or scope of practice, and things like telehealth expansions, also auto manufacturers getting outside their comfort zone to produce ventilators. The purpose of the Act is to protect those who devise and/or deliver any number of emergency measures in a public health emergency so they're not too scared of being sued to come up with solutions. For the record, the Act does not protect them against actions for willful misconduct. There is a Countermeasures Injury Compensation Program to provide benefits to people who are harmed by these emergency measures, although I do understand it's tricky to apply for and receive compensation. This isn't all that nefarious either, as it turns out.

Some more about how these vaccines are gene therapy, not vaccines. Yawn!

Here's one I can get behind: "Are you concerned about the twenty-year explosion in annual advertising expenses by pharmaceutical companies. and (sic) more so, that 'Globally every country except the US and New Zealand has outlawed drug ads targeted to consumers?'" Yes. Yes, I am concerned about that.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 7 of 85

Not sure what it has to do specifically with the current situation, but yes, this is something we should be working on. (See, I can be agreeable.)

But no, I am not "concerned that Christian pastors are now being recruited to push the Covid-19 injection." Not at all. In fact, I wrote about that too in my Update #385 posted March 14 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/4522031171146587>. I applauded the effort then, and I applaud it now. Not concerned.

Then he trots out Dr. Carrie Madej, who is, I gather, a real doctor, but perhaps one who missed a few classes in osteopathic medical school, providing a link to a video of a very long, very fawning interview with her. I listened to it [and I'm just going to say that I lost several IQ points during the experience and now deserve (a lot of) wine—or at least a medal—for that, so feel free to make a donation]. She starts out by "describing" how a "normal" vaccine works, only she gets that wrong, explaining it in terms of homeopathic principles—which, for the record, is not how vaccines work at all. We've talked about how vaccines work approximately a zillion times here; one such occasion was in my Update #37 posted way back on March 31, 2020, at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3474297942586587>; there you can get the basics, and you can also see one of the several times I've been wrong through this thing, rather confidently quoting experts who were predicting it would be a year—or longer—before we had a vaccine in production. (Although I usually hate it, sometimes being wrong is kind of fun; this is one of those times.)

Then she tells us that we're all lab rats in an experiment, that vaccine trials are "not following any sound scientific protocol to make sure that this is safe." Except, of course, she made that up because we totally did follow all the sound scientific protocols to make sure that this is safe and also had a completely transparent regulatory process on the way to granting EUA, watched carefully by innumerable experts in various fields who were totally prepared to call this out if it had not gone according to "sound scientific protocols."

After that, Madej went off into Woo-Woo Land with a bunch of talk about putting a "synthetic code" inside us composed of "nanolipid particles," which will then reproduce inside us. Which doesn't happen. It just doesn't, sorry. Then we get to the part where "they" (perhaps the same "they" who don't want us to know things, but this is not entirely clear) are using "nanotechnology," something-something "hydrogel" and "on-demand drug delivery systems," followed by "teeny-tiny microscopic computer bytes inside you," biosensors gathering information about "your blood sugar, your insulin, your heart rate, even your thoughts and emotion, your menstrual cycle," and transmitting that data wirelessly to our evil overlords. "We can actually do that." Well, OK.

Then out comes the big gun: "transhumanism." This technology turns us into cyborgs and will challenge the very idea of what it means to be human. Because patented genes are inside us, we can be patented, so someone else owns us: reference to an imaginary Supreme Court decision saying we could be owned by a company that owns a piece of technology they've put inside us—"like a product in a store, like cattle." For the record, this is not even a thing.

Syncytin-1 came up again, but since there is syncytin-1 in some sperm cells too, now we can scare both sexes about this one. In addition, because the gene for syncytin-1 is on the same chromosome as the gene for intelligence, "they" can destroy our intelligence too; the mechanism for this is pretty nebulous, but you may as well go with it, never mind that there is no "gene for intelligence." Perfect. Also HIV—"they" are putting "subunits of the HIV virus into our bodies." Lots of claims that showed up "on Twitter, but not in the "mainstream media" about how the "body will now learn to attack itself," and who doesn't already know Twitter is a more reliable source for scientific information than peer-reviewed research, right?

Convulsions. Loss of the ability to walk. Hydrogel (again!), also "synthetics" and their affinity for the nervous system. People coding (their heart stops) so that "they" have to put life support equipment into vaccination sites. (Right, although I did not note this equipment at the vaccination site I visited twice with the other dupes.) A claim that we've never been able to isolate the SARS-CoV-2 virus. (Also false; it was isolated and grown in tissue culture in January, 2020.) Assertions that heart attacks and deaths have been excluded as reportable side effects of the vaccine. (Also false: For God's sake, they report car accidents as adverse events. Really!)

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 8 of 85

Lots of arguments that this is a new technology, making it suspect—which I think means we should never try new technologies—from a company which has never produced a vaccine—which I think means no new companies should ever be permitted to get into the vaccine game (which sort of negates the Big Pharma issues earlier, but who's keeping score?). Also, the wireless transmissions to "artificial intelligence (AI) interfaces" go both ways, so those transmissions in the reverse direction can rob us of our free will. "They" can now control us; this appears to be "the mark of the beast," well-known in biblical commentary on the vaccines. And some talk about projecting AI's thoughts into someone or other at Benghazi (cannot believe they pulled out that old chestnut) and some man who apparently set himself on fire on the Washington Mall (haven't looked that one up yet).

And you had to know this was coming: 5G technology. Satan's will, not God's will. Depopulation method. The end of humanity—accompanied by tears, which were beautiful and moving. The end of human autonomy. Spiritual warfare may have been mentioned—and the will of God—several times. I lost another couple of IQ points just now, talking about it. (The good news is she seems to think it will take several injections to produce these changes, so it should still be safe to receive a two-dose regimen of vaccine, as I read it.) Also "heart energy" will overcome 5G technology if we will just ignore the evil dictates of the public health folks and hug and kiss everyone. So there's a way out; it just requires spreading a lot more virus. But I'm sure God will provide, and we'll all be fine.

Here's a thing; in this citation (the interview, in case you've forgotten by now—and I'd understand if you have), the author mentions how getting influenza could be fatal after you've received the vaccine, and there is no mention of that particular thing in the interview he linked. There was a suggestion by the fawning interviewer that perhaps having been vaccinated could mean the common cold virus could now kill us "because the virus now has a back door to our immune system," but the good doctor did not confirm that. Oh well, I think it's pretty clear by now that none of this is particularly well tethered to reality.

This takes us two-thirds of the way through page 1 of 2, so I'm going to call it quits tonight. We'll deal with the rest of this thing tomorrow. In the meanwhile, don't believe any flyers left on your doorstep—or showing up online. This is all just too much. I think I'll pour a drink while I wait for the wine donations—please.

Be well. We'll talk again.

## MIDDLE-HIGH SCHOOL SPRING CONCERT

On [GDILIVE.COM](http://GDILIVE.COM)

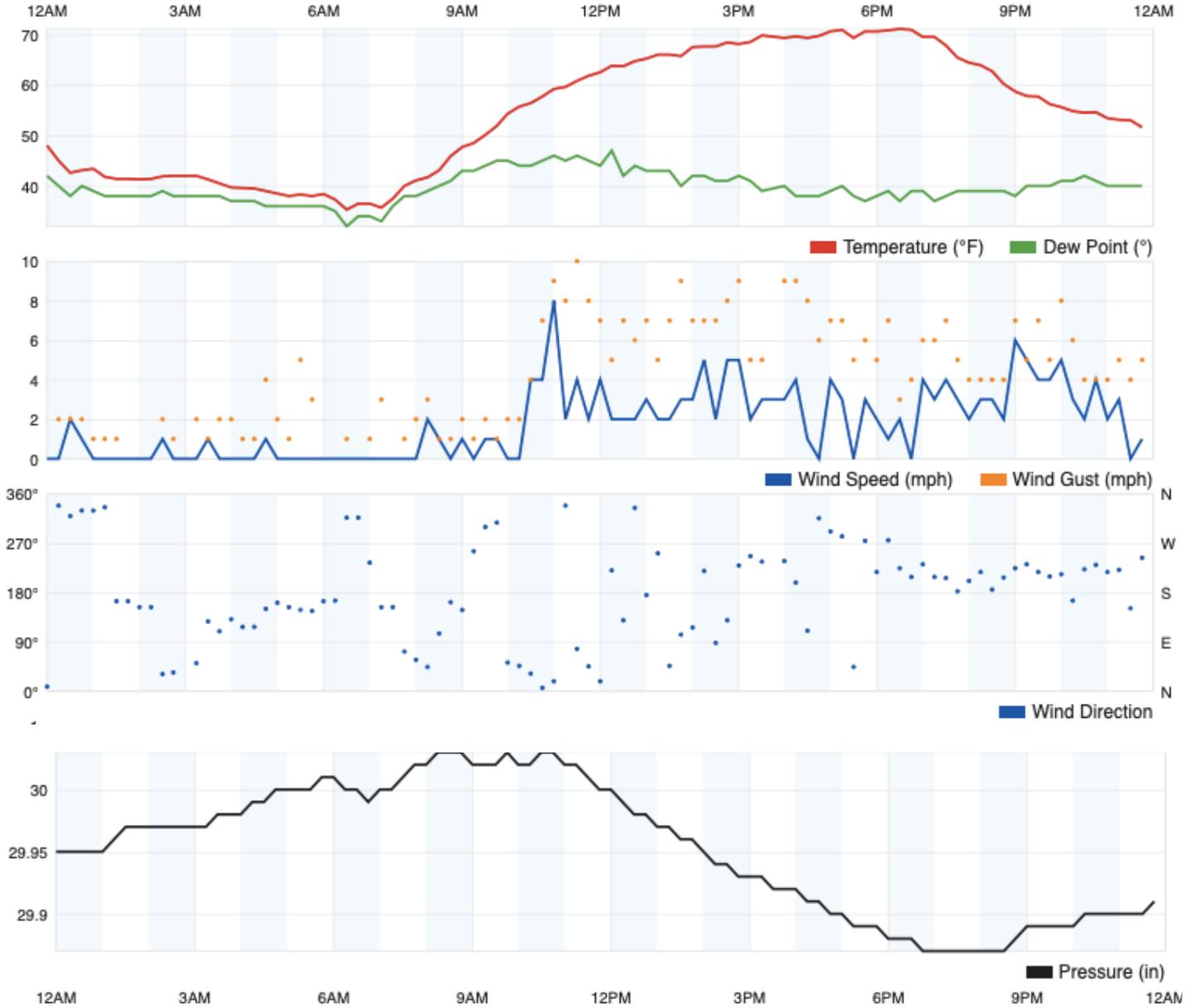
Thursday, April 29, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

Groton Area High School Gym

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 9 of 85

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 10 of 85

Today



Sunny

High: 71 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy

Low: 39 °F

Friday



Mostly Sunny

High: 75 °F

Friday Night



Partly Cloudy

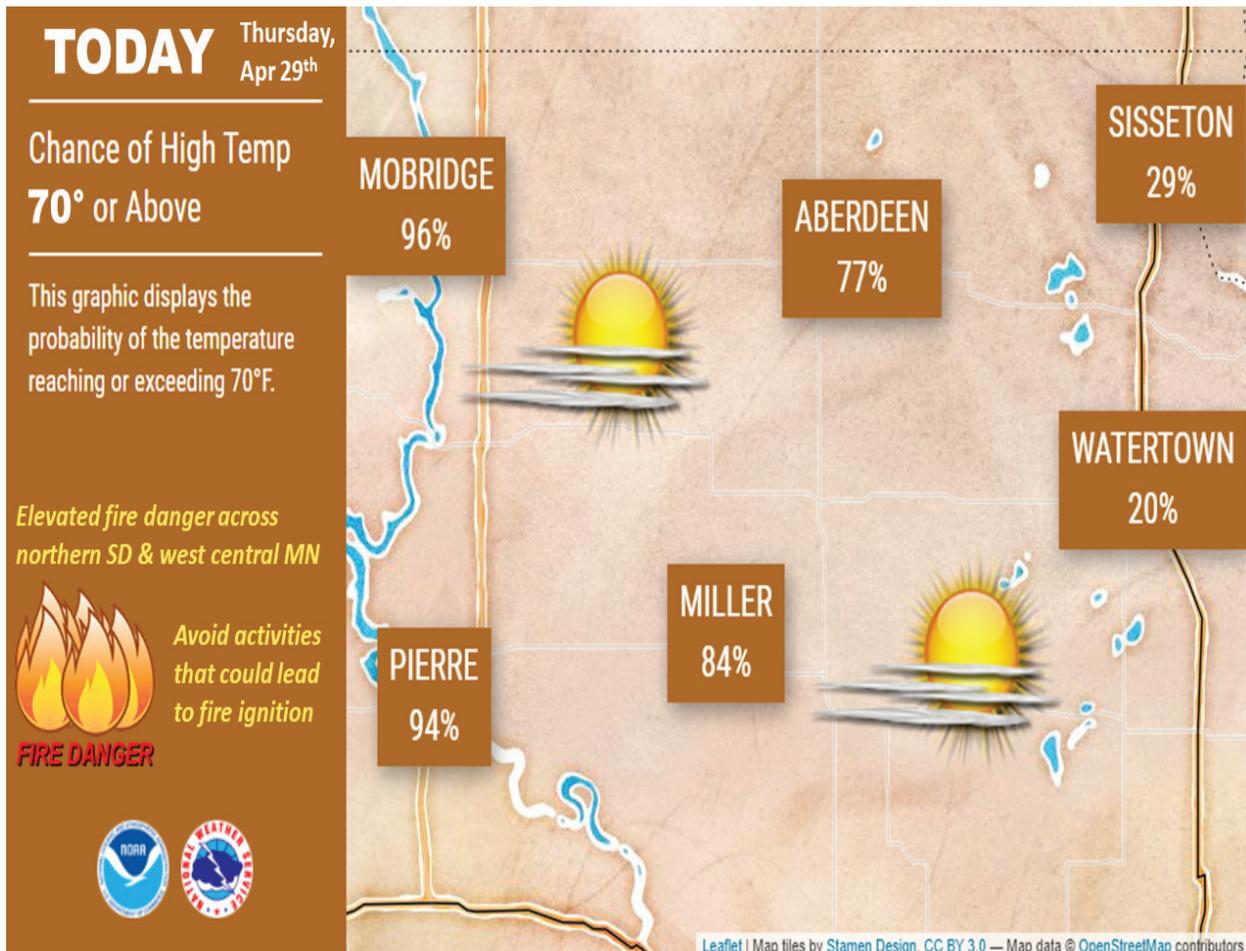
Low: 50 °F

Saturday



Mostly Sunny

High: 83 °F



Mild temperatures today will become much above average on Friday and Saturday. Dry conditions will favor the development and spreading of fires, particularly across north central South Dakota as well. A bit of a cool-down is then anticipated for Sunday and into the new work-week, along with a few chances for rain.

# Broton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 11 of 85

**TOMORROW** Friday, Apr 30<sup>th</sup>

Chance of High Temp  
**80° or Above**

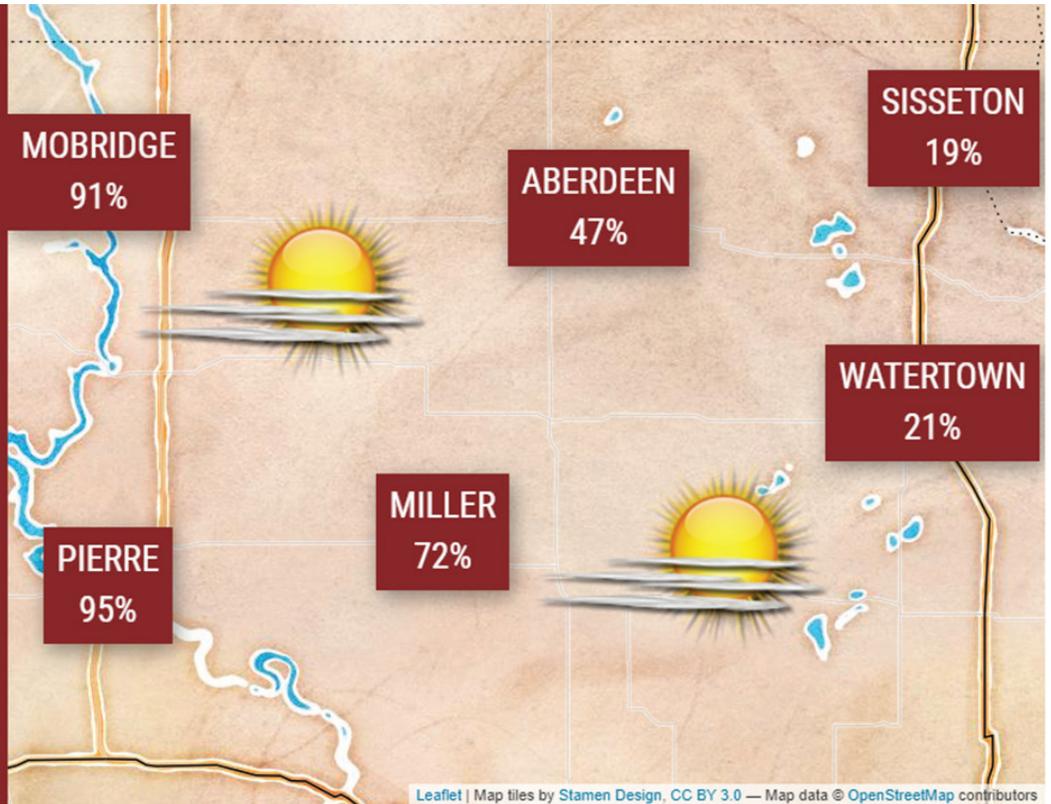
This graphic displays the probability of the temperature reaching or exceeding 80°F.

*A Fire Weather Watch is in place across North Central SD*



**FIRE DANGER**

*Avoid activities that could lead to fire ignition*



Leaflet | Map tiles by Stamen Design, CC BY 3.0 — Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors

Mild temperatures today will become much above average on Friday and Saturday. Dry conditions will favor the development and spreading of fires, particularly across north central South Dakota as well. A bit of a cool-down is then anticipated for Sunday and into the new work-week, along with a few chances for rain.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 12 of 85

## Today in Weather History

April 29, 1942: An estimated F3 tornado moved east through Marshall County, destroying almost every building on a farm northeast of Kidder. Barns were heavily damaged on two other farms. One person was reported killed, with five others injured.

1910: The temperature at Kansas City MO soared to 95 degrees to establish a record for April. Four days earlier the afternoon high in Kansas City was 44 degrees following a record cold morning low of 34 degrees.

1987: A storm off the southeast coast of Massachusetts blanketed southern New England with heavy snow on the 28 through the 29th. Totals of three inches at Boston, 11 inches at Milton, and 17 inches at Worcester Massachusetts were records for so late in the season. Princeton Massachusetts was buried under 25 inches of snow.

1991: Southeast Bangladesh was devastated by a tropical cyclone with sustained winds of approximately 155 mph in the during the late night hours. A 20-foot storm surge inundated the offshore islands south of Chittagong and pushed water from the Bay of Bengal inland for miles. Best estimated put the loss of life from this cyclone between 135,000 and 145,000 people.

1905 - The town of Taylor, in southeastern Texas, was deluged with 2.4 inches of rain in fifteen minutes. (The Weather Channel)

1910 - The temperature at Kansas City, MO, soared to 95 degrees to establish a record for the month of April. Four days earlier the afternoon high in Kansas City was 44 degrees, following a record cold morning low of 34 degrees. (The Weather Channel) (The Kansas City Weather Almanac)

1963 - A tornado, as much as 100 yards in width, touched down south of Shannon, MS. The tornado destroyed twenty-seven homes along its eighteen mile path, killing three persons. Asphalt was torn from Highway 45 and thrown hundreds of yards away. Little rain or snow accompanied the tornado, so it was visible for miles. (The Weather Channel)

1973 - The Mississippi River reached a crest of 43.4 feet, breaking the previous record of 42 feet established in 1785. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A storm off the southeast coast of Massachusetts blanketed southern New England with heavy snow. Totals of three inches at Boston MA, 11 inches at Milton MA, and 17 inches at Worcester MA, were records for so late in the season. Princeton MA was buried under 25 inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced large hail and high winds in central Texas. Baseball size hail was reported at Nixon, and wind gusts to 70 mph were reported at Cotulla. Heavy rain in Maine caused flooding along the Pemigewassett and Ammonoosuc Rivers. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in Arkansas, Louisiana and eastern Texas, with more than 70 reports of large hail and damaging winds. Softball size hail was reported at Palestine TX. Hail as large as tennis balls caused ten million dollars damage around Pine Bluff AR. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A storm system crossing northern New Mexico blanketed parts of the Rocky Mountain Region and the Northern High Plains with heavy snow, and produced blizzard conditions in central Montana. Much of southern Colorado was buried under one to three feet of snow. Pueblo tied an April record with 16.8 inches of snow in 24 hours. Strong canyon winds in New Mexico, enhanced by local showers, gusted to 65 mph at Albuquerque. Afternoon temperatures across the Great Plains Region ranged from the 20s in North Dakota to 107 degrees at Laredo TX. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

# Groton Daily Independent

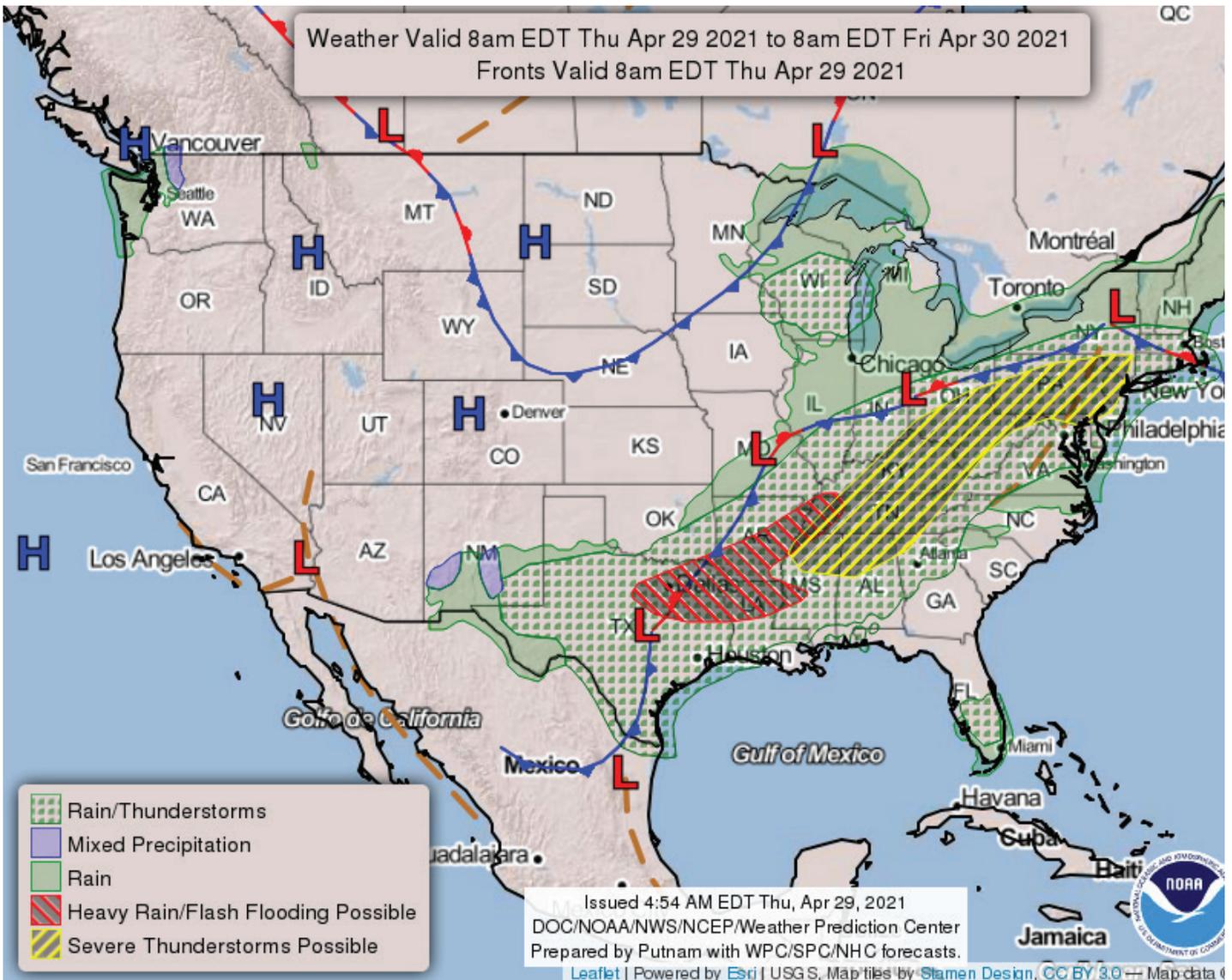
Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 13 of 85

## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 71 °F at 5:53 PM**  
**Low Temp: 35 °F at 6:32 AM**  
**Wind: 11 mph at 4:21 PM**  
**Precip: .00**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 92° in 1934**  
**Record Low: 16° in 1966**  
**Average High: 64°F**  
**Average Low: 38°F**  
**Average Precip in Apr.: 1.68**  
**Precip to date in Apr.: 2.59**  
**Average Precip to date: 3.86**  
**Precip Year to Date: 2.77**  
**Sunset Tonight: 8:38 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:23 a.m.**



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 14 of 85



## THE GREATNESS OF GOD

Scripture contains many words to describe God. They occur throughout the Bible. In Psalm 36 four short sentences contain four words to describe God's greatness: Love, faithfulness, righteousness, and justice. Then, there is one short phrase that tells us how He applies those characteristics that describe Him: He preserves all He has created. Because of His character, God holds all of His creation together. Creation is through Him and because of Him and was designed to honor glorify Him.

What is so interesting here is that within a few verses David moves from the darkness that possesses the human heart to the light that comes from God. It all starts with His love – a love that will never fail and will never end. God's love is revealed in His faithfulness – whatever He said He would do He did and will continue to do, always.

If we were not able to depend on God being faithful at all times and in all situations, His love would be worthless. Imagine how tragic life would be, if, when we needed God's grace or mercy, He was "unavailable" for a day or several weeks. God's love and faithfulness cannot be separated – they belong together as Scripture has proven!

Yet there is more! God is also righteous and just which affects our salvation. It is His righteousness that allows us to "become righteous" – to move from darkness to light – and have favor and fellowship with Him. If He were not just, some of us might not qualify for His salvation. What if we had to meet certain financial requirements that were beyond us? What if we were disqualified if we could not pass a test that was designed for those with a high IQ? What if we were unattractive or shy or depressed or lame? But, "What ifs" do not count. "Whosoever will does!" So, come and trust Him, now!

Prayer: Thank you, Heavenly Father, for Your grace that is well beyond our ability to understand. May we accept it though we do not understand it. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: How precious is your unfailing love, O God! All humanity finds shelter in the shadow of your wings. Psalm 36:7

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 15 of 85

## 2021 Community Events

- Cancelled** Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)  
03/27/2021 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)  
04/10/2021 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm  
04/24/2021 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)  
04/25/2021 Princess Prom (Sunday after GHS Prom)  
05/01/2021 Lions Club Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)  
05/31/2021 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)  
6/7-9/2021 St. John's Lutheran Church VBS  
06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
06/19/2021 Lions Crazy Golf Fest at Olive Grove Golf Course, Noon  
07/04/2021 Firecracker Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
07/11/2021 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 10am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)  
07/22/2021 Pro-Am Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course  
07/30/2021-08/03/2021 State "B" American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton  
08/06/2021 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course  
09/11/2021 Lions Club Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)  
09/12/2021 Sunflower Classic Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
09/18-19 Groton Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport  
10/08/2021 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)  
10/09/2021 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm (Saturday before Columbus Day)  
10/29/2021 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm  
10/31/2021 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)  
11/13/2021 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)  
11/25/2021 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)  
12/11/2021 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-Noon

## News from the Associated Press

### SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) \_ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Wednesday:

Dakota Cash

03-05-17-27-30

(three, five, seventeen, twenty-seven, thirty)

Estimated jackpot: \$151,000

Lotto America

02-33-34-39-46, Star Ball: 10, ASB: 5

(two, thirty-three, thirty-four, thirty-nine, forty-six; Star Ball: ten; ASB: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$5.36 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$319 million

Powerball

16-18-35-39-53, Powerball: 21, Power Play: 3

(sixteen, eighteen, thirty-five, thirty-nine, fifty-three; Powerball: twenty-one; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$116 million

### South Dakota Supreme Court weighs pot legalization battle

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Supreme Court on Wednesday heard final arguments in a legal battle sparked by an attempt by Gov. Kristi Noem's administration to strike down a voter-passed constitutional amendment to legalize marijuana.

The high court will decide whether recreational pot use, medical marijuana and hemp cultivation are enshrined in the state's constitution.

Voters passed the measure — known as Amendment A — in November, but Highway Patrol Superintendent Col. Rick Miller mounted a legal challenge to its constitutionality on Noem's behalf. Pennington County Sheriff Kevin Thom also sued to block legalization.

The issue of legalizing marijuana has created significant divisions among South Dakota Republicans. Some reason they have a duty to honor the will of the voters, but Noem insists legalizing marijuana is a "bad decision."

On Wednesday, lawyers arguing before five Supreme Court justices in Pierre had nothing to say about the benefits or ills of pot, instead focusing on the constitutionality of the amendment passed by 54% of voters. Those arguing against legalization said the new law would violate the state constitution by elevating the agency tasked with regulating recreational pot, the Department of Revenue, to a fourth branch of government, and that the ballot measure violated a rule that constitutional amendments must only address one subject.

"Amendment A will have significant and lasting effects on our constitution if it's allowed to stand," said Lisa Postrollo, a lawyer representing Miller.

A state circuit judge and Noem appointee sided with those arguments and struck the constitutional measure down in February. Advocates for legalization appealed to the Supreme Court.

Brendan Johnson, an attorney representing advocates including South Dakotans for Better Marijuana Laws conceded that the constitutional amendment was lengthy but said that was no reason to throw it out. He argued that the court should be cautious about striking the ballot measure down because it would weigh on future efforts for citizens to change laws at the ballot box.

He warned justices of "the damage that could be done if, for the first time in our state's history, we have

a court that literally throws out 417,000 votes that were cast on a piece of legislation.”

Johnson also argued that Miller and Thom don't have standing as law enforcement officers to challenge the constitutional amendment.

Before the law was overturned by the circuit court, it was set to go into effect July 1. The court could strike down the law entirely, dismiss Noem's challenge, or strike specific sections that it finds in violation of the constitution while keeping other parts intact. It has not given a timeline for when it will make a ruling.

## South Dakota receives \$33,000 in pharmaceutical settlement

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota will receive roughly \$33,000 as part of a settlement with the pharmaceutical distributor Indivior over allegations that it falsely and aggressively marketed the drug Suboxone, a drug approved for opioid addiction recovery, Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg announced Wednesday.

The state will receive the allotment as part of a \$300 million settlement Indivior made with all 50 states, Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico. The payment resolves a series of civil fraud allegations impacting Medicaid and other government healthcare programs. Of South Dakota's portion of the settlement, about \$19,000 will go to the federal government's Medicaid program, and about \$14,000 will go into the state's general fund.

Suboxone is designed to reduce withdrawal symptoms for people recovering from opioid addictions. It contains a powerful and addictive opioid, the attorney general's office said in a statement.

A coalition of state attorneys general sued the pharmaceutical distributor, alleging it had promoted using Suboxone for unapproved purposes, made false claims about the drug and submitted false claims to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to delay generic versions of the drug.

The settlement will be made in a series of payments to be completed in 2027.

## Rapid City woman accused of allowing children to eat edibles

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City woman whose children were hospitalized after allegedly ingesting marijuana edibles she failed to secure is facing two charges, authorities announced Wednesday.

The 36-year-old woman is charged with felony drug possession and contributing to the abuse, neglect or delinquency of the minor, according to the Pennington County Sheriff's Office. She faces up to six years in custody.

Authorities said the children, ages 10 and 11, showed up at school after taking the edibles on April 9. The drugs allegedly impaired their ability to walk and talk and led to hallucinations. A school police officer called for medical support and the children were hospitalized overnight for treatment, the Rapid City Journal reported.

The charges were announced the same day the South Dakota Supreme Court heard arguments about the lawsuit filed by Pennington County Sheriff Kevin Thom and another law enforcement official against Amendment A, which legalized recreational marijuana.

## Editorial Roundup: South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined

Yankton Press & Dakotan. April 27, 2021.

Editorial: Fighting COVID On A Global Scale

Make no mistake: Our ongoing battle with COVID-19 is really a world war.

Vaccination is one of the key weapons in the fight, and South Dakota is doing well in that regard. But the coronavirus respects no borders — not state or municipal boundaries, and not national lines.

So, while South Dakota is doing well and the United States has turned things around after being a COVID train wreck throughout much of 2020, we all remain vulnerable because other parts of the world are facing disasters.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 18 of 85

Just look around. Two weeks ago, Brazil was a nightmare; today, India has collapsed into a catastrophe. And the continent of Africa has made so little headway in vaccinations —less than 2% of adults have had any vaccine at all — making it a prime candidate for a devastating outbreak.

And as long those outbreaks continue somewhere in the world, there is vulnerability everywhere. New infections can lead to new variants that can create new avenues of havoc for the world.

That's why it's important to attack the disease across the globe.

This must become a new priority for America and other nations, such as Great Britain and Israel, that have (momentarily, at least) apparently gotten an upper hand in combating the virus.

America's fortunes in the COVID fight have reversed dramatically. Last summer, we were a disaster, so much so that other nations were sending us aid and supplies to deal with a virus that seemed to run unchecked across this land. For a country like this one to be the object of pity from other nations was truly a dark moment.

But that script has been flipped. The U.S. fast-tracked its vaccine development and has ramped up its output impressively. We're now a leader in vaccine distribution. While cases are still not under the kind of control health experts want to see, we're in a much better place at this moment, and we surely must remain determined to stay that way.

Nevertheless, we're still vulnerable as long as others outside our borders are at risk.

There have been calls for the U.S. to take a more active leadership role in disseminating vaccine to the world. It's understandable that we would prioritize our own people, especially given our experiences in the last year that have seen more than a half-million people killed. Now, we are in a position to address the bigger picture — the world view.

On Monday, the U.S. promised to share up to 60 million doses of the AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine, and efforts are being made to share the other, more expensive vaccines — Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson — on a more global scale.

We cannot simply look at this as an American problem or a Chinese problem or an Indian problem, and we cannot aim for only local solutions. COVID is a plague upon humanity, and we all share the risk. We can only defeat it by fighting and prevailing together.

END

## Oil pipeline disputes raise tensions between U.S. and Canada

By JOHN FLESHER and MATTHEW BROWN undefined

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. (AP) — Months after President Joe Biden snubbed Canadian officials by canceling Keystone XL, an impending showdown over a second crude oil pipeline threatens to further strain ties between the two neighbors that were frayed during the Trump administration.

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a top Biden ally, ordered Canadian energy company Enbridge last fall to shut down its Line 5 — a key piece of a crude delivery network from Alberta's oil fields to refineries in the U.S. Midwest and eastern Canada.

Whitmer's demand pleased environmentalists and tribes who have long considered the pipeline, which reaches 645 miles (1,038 kilometers) across northern Wisconsin and Michigan, ripe for a spill that could devastate two Great Lakes.

A section roughly 4 miles (6.4 kilometers) long crosses the bottom of Michigan's Straits of Mackinac, which connects Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. The area is a popular tourist destination, and several tribes have treaty-protected commercial fishing rights in the straits.

But with the governor's May 12 shutdown deadline approaching, Canadian officials are lining up behind Enbridge as it contests the order in U.S. court and says it won't comply. The Calgary-based company says Whitmer is overstepping her authority and that the 68-year-old pipeline is sound.

"Our government supports the continued safe operation of Enbridge's Line 5," Seamus O'Regan, Canada's minister of natural resources, told The Associated Press in an email. "It is a vital part of Canadian energy security, and I have been very clear that its continued operation is non-negotiable."

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 19 of 85

A Canadian House of Commons committee this month warned of dire consequences from a shutdown: job losses, fuel shortages and traffic nightmares as 23 million gallons (87 million liters) of petroleum liquids transported daily through Line 5 are shifted to trucks and rail cars considered more susceptible to accidents.

The panel urged Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and other Canadian officials to lobby their U.S. counterparts and said that without an agreement, Canada might invoke a 1977 treaty barring either nation from hampering oil and natural gas transmission. O'Regan's office said the matter had been raised at the "highest levels" of federal and state governments.

The dispute comes as both nations hope to reset their relationship after the presidency of Donald Trump, who put tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum and had a turbulent relationship with Trudeau. Biden's first meeting with a foreign leader was a virtual session with Trudeau in February, where they pledged cooperation on climate change and other matters.

Biden's cancellation of Keystone XL, a 1,200-mile (1,931-kilometer) pipeline from Alberta's oil sands, remains a sore point in Canada. Although Trudeau objected to the move, Alberta officials are "extremely disappointed" he isn't taking stronger action, said Sonya Savage, energy minister in the province home to most of Canada's oil production.

Now comes Line 5, which few Americans outside the Great Lakes region may know about. But it's a priority for Canada, the world's fourth-largest producer and third-largest exporter of oil.

"The Canadians are likely to make this their big issue," said Christopher Sands, director of the Canada Institute at the Wilson Center, a global policy think tank in Washington, D.C. "This is one where I don't think (Trudeau) can afford to back down."

While the Keystone project was halted in early construction, Line 5 has transported Canadian oil since 1953. More than half of Ontario's supply passes through it, according to Enbridge. It exits Michigan at the border city of Sarnia, Ontario, and connects with another line that provides two-thirds of crude used in Quebec for gasoline, home heating oil and other products.

"It's an energy lifeline for Canada," said Mike Fernandez, an Enbridge senior vice president.

Enbridge and its supporters in industry and labor say the pipeline also benefits the U.S. Midwest. It carries oil for jet fuel and gasoline, as well as natural gas liquids made into propane.

Critics say most economic benefits go to Canada, while Michigan risks a rupture that could foul hundreds of miles of waters.

"The Canadians are awfully silent about our shared responsibility to protect the Great Lakes, which hold 20% of the world's fresh surface water," said Liz Kirkwood, director of a Michigan group called For Love of Water.

Opposition to oil pipelines in the U.S. has hardened, with fights over Keystone, the controversial Dakota Access Pipeline and Enbridge's Line 3 in Minnesota drawing protesters.

Climate change hovers over the debate as Biden pursues emission reductions. He canceled Keystone on his first day in office. A week later, he temporarily suspended sales of oil and gas leases from federal lands. Environmentalists want a permanent ban, which could make the U.S. more dependent on Canadian crude whether it's delivered by pipeline or not.

"That's the conundrum any administration will find themselves in when their climate goals run headlong into the realities of providing essential energy," said Drue Pearce, deputy administrator of the federal pipeline safety agency under Trump and now with the Holland and Hart law firm.

No leaks have been reported from Line 5's underwater pipes. But a National Wildlife Federation report in 2017 said federal documents showed more than two dozen spills from other sections exceeded 1 million gallons (3.8 million liters).

Enbridge has spent about \$1 million on ads supporting the pipeline, while opponents have fought it with studies, protests and media events.

But lawsuits the company and Michigan have filed against each other may decide the outcome.

Although the federal government regulates oil pipelines, Great Lakes bottomlands are under state jurisdiction. Michigan granted an easement in 1953 to place Line 5's twin pipes beneath the Straits of Mackinac.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 20 of 85

However, Whitmer revoked it Nov. 13, saying Enbridge had violated its safety requirements — including one that prohibits unsupported gaps beneath the pipes.

There may be little Biden can do to satisfy Canada aside from quietly urging Whitmer to relent. That could be difficult given his ties to the governor, whom Biden considered for his running mate last year and appointed a vice-chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee.

White House spokesperson Vedant Patel declined comment.

U.S. pipeline safety falls under the Department of Transportation, whose Biden-appointed secretary, Pete Buttigieg, endorsed a Line 5 shutdown last year while seeking the Democratic presidential nomination. A spokesperson said in an email that the department wasn't involved in the legal fight between Michigan and Enbridge but will inspect Line 5 in coming months.

Whitmer's office did not respond to requests for comment. When announcing her shutdown order, she said Enbridge had "imposed on the people of Michigan an unacceptable risk of a catastrophic oil spill in the Great Lakes that could devastate our economy and way of life."

Enbridge reached a deal in 2018 with Michigan's previous governor, Republican Rick Snyder, to reroute the underwater segment of Line 5 through a new tunnel.

But opponents say the tunnel carries its own environmental risks and the lakes would remain in jeopardy if the pipeline continues operating during years of construction.

Debate over Line 5 and other pipelines illustrates the conflicting priorities for two countries that have pledged to reduce fossil fuel emissions but still burn lots of oil, said Daniel Raimi, a fellow at Resources for the Future, a Washington, D.C., policy institute.

"They don't want to disrupt a crucial piece of infrastructure and cause higher energy prices for consumers," Raimi said. "It's a difficult needle to thread."

## Man charged in fatal stabbing guilty of 2012 bat beating

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A man charged in a fatal stabbing in Rapid City previously spent years behind bars for killing someone with a baseball bat, according to court records.

Antoine Bissonette pleaded not guilty Monday in Pennington County Court to second-degree murder in the death of Andrew Bear Robe on March 23.

He faces a mandatory sentence of life in prison without the chance of parole if he's convicted of murdering Bear Robe, a 44-year-old father from Pine Ridge.

Bissonette, a 40-year-old from Rapid City, was previously sentenced to about five years in federal prison after pleading guilty to first-degree manslaughter for killing Daniel Bad Milk in 2012 in Pine Ridge, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Bissonette, his girlfriend and Bad Milk were drinking and watching movies together on Feb. 11, 2012, at Bissonette's house, according to the factual basis document he signed. After the woman left Bissonette and Bad Milk began to fight.

One of them retrieved a baseball bat which Bissonette used to hit Bad Milk multiple times in the head and body, according to the document.

Bissonette was released from prison by 2016 to begin supervised release but violated his conditions multiple times, court records show. He was most recently released from prison in April 2019 after failing to complete a drug treatment program.

Few circumstances surrounding the March homicide are known since Bissonette's arrest affidavit is sealed and attorneys haven't shared information during court hearings.

## GOP's Sen. Scott suggests Dems use race as political weapon

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Tim Scott accused Democrats on Wednesday of dividing the country and suggested they're wielding race as "a political weapon," using the official Republican response to President

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 21 of 85

Joe Biden's maiden speech to Congress to credit the GOP for leading the country out of its pandemic struggles and toward a hopeful future.

Scott, R-S.C., in his nationally televised rebuttal of Biden's address, belittled the new president's initial priorities — aimed at combating the deadly virus and spurring the economy — as wasteful expansions of big government.

"We should be expanding options and opportunities for all families," said Scott, who preaches a message of optimism while remaining a loyal supporter of former President Donald Trump, "not throwing money at certain issues because Democrats think they know best."

Citing the partisan battle over Biden's \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill, which Congress approved over unanimous GOP opposition, Scott said: "We need policies and progress that bring us closer together. But three months in, the actions of the president and his party are pulling us further apart."

But the Senate's only Black Republican saved some of his sharpest comments for the fraught subject of race. Scott recounted his rise from a low-income family and "the pain" of repeatedly being pulled over by police while driving but said, "Hear me clearly: America is not a racist country."

Asked Thursday about Scott's comment, Vice President Kamala Harris told ABC's "Good Morning America," "No, I don't think America is a racist country but we also do have to speak truth about the history of racism in our country."

She added: "One of the greatest threats to our national security is domestic terrorism manifested by white supremacists. These are issues that we must confront, and it does not help to heal our country, to unify us as a people, to ignore the realities of that"

Biden and other Democrats have cited institutional racism as a major national problem.

While acknowledging that "our healing is not finished," Scott suggested that Democrats and liberals have turned the race issue upside down.

"It's backwards to fight discrimination with different discrimination," he said, without providing examples of what he meant. "And it's wrong to try to use our painful past to dishonestly shut down debates in the present."

He added, "Race is not a political weapon to settle every issue the way one side wants."

Biden's address came three months into a presidency that's seen Republicans repeatedly accuse him of abandoning his campaign pledge to seek bipartisan compromises. While Biden cited a rosy roster of accomplishments and goals in his own speech — "America is on the move again," he said — Scott said it was Republicans who had bolstered the economy and began to tame the pandemic.

"This should be a joyful springtime for our nation," said Scott, citing the Trump administration's role in helping spur vaccine development and beginning a revival of the staggered economy. "This administration inherited a tide that had already turned. The coronavirus is on the run!"

The address also came as Scott, a 10-year veteran of Congress who usually keeps a low profile, has found a spotlight leading his party in a bipartisan effort to overhaul police procedures. That drive was prompted by last May's slaying of George Floyd, a Black man, and energized anew by this month's conviction of a white former Minneapolis police officer for the killing.

"I'm still working. I'm still hopeful," he said of the talks.

Scott criticized many school systems' decisions to halt or limit in-person classes during the pandemic as a safety measure. Those closures, which were recommended by public health officials, have drawn fire from Republicans as an overreaction and become part of the GOP's culture war with Democrats.

"Locking vulnerable kids out of the classroom is locking adults out of their future," Scott said.

Scott cited low unemployment rates for minorities before the pandemic struck last year, calling it "the most inclusive economy in my lifetime." And he praised GOP efforts including tax breaks to encourage business investments in low-income communities.

"Our best future won't come from Washington schemes or socialist dreams," he said, echoing the GOP's oft-repeated theme that Democrats are pushing far-left plans. "It will come from you — the American people."

Scott has long embraced themes of opportunity and a cheerful optimism that were conservative calling

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 22 of 85

cards during the Reagan era. He retold the story of a grandfather who left grade school to pick cotton and led a lifetime of illiteracy, his own childhood living in a single bedroom with his single mother and brother and nearly failing out of high school.

Scott said his family went “from cotton to Congress in one lifetime. So I am more than hopeful — I am confident — that our finest hour is yet to come.”

Those messages could make Scott a positive messenger for the GOP in what could otherwise be a divisive 2022 election campaign, when the party has high hopes of winning control of the House and perhaps the Senate. Scott is strongly favored to be reelected next year.

Over the years, Scott at times called out Trump in measured tones over some of his racially offensive broadsides. Yet he’s remained a strong supporter of the former president and opposed Trump’s removal from office after the House impeached him for inciting the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol.

## India cases set new global record; millions vote in 1 state

By KRUTIKA PATHI and SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — India set another global record in new virus cases Thursday, as millions of people in one state cast votes despite rising infections and the country geared up to open its vaccination rollout to all adults amid snags.

With 379,257 new infections, India now has reported more than 18.3 million cases, second only to the United States. The Health Ministry also reported 3,645 deaths in the last 24 hours, bringing the total to 204,832. Experts believe both figures are an undercount, but it’s unclear by how much.

India has set a daily global record for seven of the past eight days, with a seven-day moving average of nearly 350,000 infections. Daily deaths have nearly tripled in the past three weeks, reflecting the intensity of the latest surge. And the country’s already teetering health system is under immense strain, prompting multiple allies to send help.

A country of nearly 1.4 billion people, India had thought the worst was over when cases ebbed in September. But mass public gatherings such as political rallies and religious events that were allowed to continue, and relaxed attitudes on the risks fed by leaders touting victory over the virus led to what now has become a major humanitarian crisis, health experts say. New variants of the coronavirus have partly led the surge.

Amid the crisis, voting for the eighth and final phase of the West Bengal state elections began Thursday, even as the devastating surge of infections continued to barrel across the country with ferocious speed, filling crematoriums and graveyards.

More than 8 million people are eligible to vote in at least 11,860 polling stations across the state. The Election Commission has said social distancing measures will be in place.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party have faced criticism over the last few weeks for holding huge election rallies in the state, which health experts suggest may have driven the surge there. Other political parties also participated in rallies.

The state recorded more than 17,000 cases in the last 24 hours — its highest number since the pandemic began.

Starting Wednesday, all Indians 18 and older are allowed to register on a government app for vaccinations, but social media were flooded with complaints the app had crashed due to high use, and once it was working again, no appointments were available.

The vaccinations are supposed to start Saturday, but India, one of the world’s biggest producers of vaccines, does not have enough doses for everyone. Even the ongoing effort to inoculate people above 45 is stuttering.

One state, Maharashtra, has already said it won’t be able to start on Saturday.

Satyender Jain, health minister in the capital, New Delhi, also told the Press Trust of India news agency on Thursday that the city doesn’t have enough doses to vaccinate people between 18 and 44.

Since January, nearly 10% of Indians have received one dose, but only around 1.5% have received both

required doses.

On Thursday, Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla told reporters that the country is facing an “unprecedented” surge with over 3 million active cases that have pushed the health system close to collapse, causing acute shortages of oxygen and other hospital supplies.

Help is coming from overseas. “There’s been an outpouring of, let’s say, assistance from various countries,” Shringla said, adding that over 40 nations have pledged to send assistance.

The White House said the U.S. will send more than \$100 million worth of items, including 1,000 oxygen cylinders, 15 million N95 masks and 1 million rapid diagnostic tests. They will begin arriving Thursday, just days after President Joe Biden promised to step up assistance. The U.S. and Britain have already sent a shipment of medical items.

France, Germany, Ireland and Australia have also promised help, and Russia sent two aircraft carrying oxygen generating equipment, Shringla said.

Meanwhile, the U.S. has advised its citizens to leave India. An alert on the U.S. Embassy’s website warned that “access to all types of medical care is becoming severely limited in India due to the surge in COVID-19 cases.”

## Desperate Indians turn to unproven drugs as virus surges

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL and NEHA MEHROTRA Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Ashish Poddar kept an ice pack on hand as he waited outside a New Delhi hospital for a black market dealer to deliver two drugs for his father, who was gasping for breath inside with COVID-19.

But the drugs never arrived, the ice that was intended to keep the medicines cool melted and his father died hours later.

As India faces a devastating surge of new coronavirus infections overwhelming its health care system, people are taking desperate measures to try to keep loved ones alive. In some cases they are turning to unproven medical treatments, in others to the black market for life-saving medications that are in short supply.

Poddar had been told by the private hospital treating his father, Raj Kumar Poddar, that remdesivir, an antiviral, and tocilizumab, a drug that blunts human immune responses, were needed to keep the 68-year-old man alive.

Like most hospitals and pharmacies in the Indian capital, stocks had run out. Desperate, Poddar turned to a dealer who promised the medicines after taking an advance of almost \$1,000.

“It’s nearby” and “coming” read some of the texts that Ashish received as he waited.

“I wish he had at least told me that he isn’t going to come. I could have searched elsewhere,” the grieving son said.

India set another global record in new virus cases Thursday with more than 379,000 new infections, putting even more pressure on the country’s overwhelmed hospitals. The country of nearly 1.4 billion people has now recorded over 18 million cases, behind only the U.S., and over 200,000 deaths — though the true number is believed to be higher.

Death is so omnipresent that burial grounds are running out of space in many cities and glowing funeral pyres blaze through the night.

The few medicines known to help treat COVID-19, such as remdesivir and steroids in hospitalized patients, are scarce. The most basic treatment — oxygen therapy — is also in short supply, leading to unnecessary deaths. Even hospital beds are scarce. There were just 14 free intensive care beds available in New Delhi, a city of 29 million people, on Thursday morning.

India’s latest treatment guidelines mirror those of the World Health Organization and the United States with a key exception: India allows mildly ill patients to be given hydroxychloroquine or ivermectin, drugs used for certain tropical diseases.

There is little evidence they work against COVID-19, and the WHO strongly recommends against hydroxychloroquine’s use for COVID-19 of any severity and against using ivermectin except in studies.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 24 of 85

While India is a leading producer of medicine globally, its regulation of drugs was poor even before the pandemic. And mounting despair is driving people to try anything.

Dr. Amar Jesani, a medical ethics expert, said many prescription drugs can be bought over the counter, including emergency drugs greenlit by Indian authorities for COVID-19.

"Hospitals and doctors are so used to having a 'magic bullet' that will cure you," he said, explaining the use of unproven drugs as COVID-19 cases skyrocket.

When Suman Shrivastava, 57, was infected with the virus, her doctor in Kanpur city in Uttar Pradesh, India's largest state, prescribed ivermectin. When her symptoms worsened, her doctor then asked her to take favipiravir, an antiviral, though it is unproven against COVID-19.

Her nephew, Rajat Shrivastava, said that drug was hard to find but he eventually located it in a pharmacy which was rationing its supplies by giving a single strip daily to each patient. He eventually bought extra doses from an online volunteer on Twitter and now his aunt is doing well.

Dr. Anant Bhan, who researches public health and ethics in the city of Bhopal, warns there are risks in the do-it-yourself approach. Bhan said antivirals and steroids should be taken in a hospital setting due to the risk of side effects. And drugs that are life-saving at one point could be harmful at another, depending on timing and how severe the symptoms are.

"It's scary because these aren't vitamin pills," he said.

Black market prices for remdesivir, which is produced by several Indian companies, have increased up to 20-fold to about \$1,000 for a single vial, said Siddhant Sarang, a volunteer with Yuva Halla Bol, a youth activist group which is helping patients find medicines and hospital beds.

In September, federal data showed that Indian drug makers had made over 2.4 million vials of the drug. But when cases dipped in September, companies destroyed much of their expired stock and production declined.

India was then slow to respond to the uptick of infections in February, and production was only scaled up in March. Earlier this week, Merck announced a deal with five makers of generic drugs in India to produce molnupiravir, an experimental antiviral similar to remdesivir, which is given by IV, but in a more convenient pill form. It's unclear when that might become available.

With demand high, black market dealers are insisting on cash upfront, said Sarang.

"People are going to dealers with 200,000 to 300,000 rupees (\$2,700-\$4,000) in a suitcase," he said.

Authorities have started cracking down on the dealers. In New Delhi, for instance, raids are being carried out on shops or people suspected of hoarding oxygen cylinders and medicines.

Despite all the desperate efforts, medicines that work remain unavailable to many.

Virus-blocking antibody drugs, widely used elsewhere, aren't yet authorized in India. Roche, which works with Regeneron Pharmaceuticals on marketing one such treatment, said Wednesday it is negotiating with India to speed up emergency use. American drug maker Eli Lilly, which makes a similar treatment, said it is in discussions with the Indian government.

Stuti Bhardwaj, 37, went from one pharmacy to another in southern New Delhi this week. Her parents, both in their seventies, were not able to get tests but showed symptoms of COVID-19 and had dangerously low oxygen levels. A doctor advised a host of medications, including hydroxychloroquine.

She eventually found it and bought it, aware it was unlikely to work.

"My parents are dying," Bhardwaj said. "I am desperate."

## Young women, grown up without Taliban, dread their return

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Inside Ms. Sadat's Beauty Salon in Afghanistan's capital, Sultana Karimi leans intently over a customer, meticulously shaping her eyebrows. Make-up and hair styling is the 24-year-old's passion, and she discovered it, along with a newfound confidence, here in the salon.

She and the other young women working or apprenticing in the salon never experienced the rule of the

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 25 of 85

Taliban over Afghanistan.

But they all worry that their dreams will come to an end if the hard-line militants regain any power, even if peacefully as part of a new government.

"With the return of Taliban, society will be transformed and ruined," Karimi said. "Women will be sent into hiding, they'll be forced to wear the burqa to go out of their homes."

She wore a bright yellow blouse that draped off her shoulders as she worked, a style that's a bit daring even in the all-women space of the salon. It would have been totally out of the question under the Taliban, who ruled until the 2001 U.S.-led invasion. In fact, the Taliban banned beauty salons in general, part of a notoriously harsh ideology that often hit women and girls the hardest, including forbidding them education and the right to work or even to travel outside their home unaccompanied by a male relative.

With U.S. troops committed to leaving Afghanistan completely by Sept. 11, women are closely watching the stalemated peace negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government over the post-withdrawal future, said Mahbouba Seraj, a women's rights activist.

The U.S. is pressing for a power-sharing government that includes the Taliban. Seraj said women want written guarantees from the Taliban that they won't reverse the gains made by women in the past 20 years, and they want the international community to hold the insurgent movement to its commitments.

"I am not frustrated that the Americans are leaving ... the time was coming that the Americans would go home," said Seraj, the executive director of Afghan Women's Skill Development.

But she had a message for the U.S. and NATO: "We keep yelling and screaming and saying, for God's sake, at least do something with the Taliban, take some kind of assurance from them ... a mechanism to be put in place" that guarantees women's rights.

Last week the Taliban in a statement outlined the type of government they seek.

It promised that women "can serve their society in the education, business, health and social fields while maintaining correct Islamic hijab." It promised girls would have the right to choose their own husbands, considered deeply unacceptable in many traditional and tribal homes in Afghanistan, where husbands are chosen by their parents.

But the statement offered few details, nor did it guarantee women could participate in politics or have freedom to move unaccompanied by a male relative.

Many worry that the vague terms the Taliban use in their promises, like "correct hijab" or guaranteeing rights "provided under Islamic law" give them wide margin to impose hard-line interpretations.

At the beauty salon, the owner Ms. Sadat told how she was born in Iran to refugee parents. She was forbidden to own a business there, so she returned to a homeland she'd never seen to start her salon 10 years ago.

She asked not to be identified by her full name, fearing that attention could make her a target. She has become more cautious as violence and random bombings have increased in Kabul the past year — an augur of chaos when the Americans fully leave, many fear. She used to drive her own car. Not anymore.

The women building a future working or apprenticing in the salon all dreaded a restored Taliban — "Just the name of the Taliban horrifies us," said one.

They're left gaming out how much compromise of their rights they can endure. Tamila Pazhman said she doesn't want "the old Afghanistan back," but she does want peace.

"If we know we will have peace, we will wear the hijab while we work and study," she said. "But there must be peace."

In their early 20s, they all grew up amid the incremental, but important gains made by women since the Taliban's ouster. Girls are now in school, and women are in Parliament, government and business.

They also know how reversible those gains are in an overwhelmingly male-dominated, deeply conservative society.

"Women in Afghanistan who raise their voices have been oppressed and ignored," Karimi said. "The majority of Afghan women will be silent. They know they will never receive any support."

Afghanistan remains one of the worst countries in the world for women, after only Yemen and Syria, according to an index kept by Georgetown University's Institute for Women, Peace and Security.

In most rural areas, life has changed little in centuries. Women wake at dawn, do much of the heavy labor in the home and in the fields. They wear the traditional coverings that conceal them from head to toe. One in three girls is married before 18, most often in forced marriages, according to U.N. estimates.

Religious conservatives who dominate Parliament have prevented passage of a Protection of Women bill. Afghanistan's broader statistics are also grim, with 54% of its 36 million people living below the poverty level of \$1.90 a day. Runaway government corruption has swallowed up hundreds of millions of dollars, rights workers and watchdogs say.

At a bakery in Kabul's Karte Sakhi neighborhood, 60-year-old Kobra squats in a brick shack blackened by soot in front of a clay oven dug into the floor.

The work is backbreaking, smoke fills her lungs, flames scorch her. She makes about 100 Afghanis a day, the equivalent of \$1.30, after paying for firewood. She is the only wage earner for her sick husband and five children.

Her 13-year-old daughter Zarmeena works by her side, helping bake and sweeping the soot-coated floor. Neighborhood women bring their dough to be baked, and Zarmeena kneads it and puts it into the oven. They yell insults at her if she accidentally drops it into the fire.

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Nearly 3.7 million Afghan children between 7 and 17 are out of school, most of them girls, according to the United Nations Children Education Fund.

Kobra isn't looking forward to a Taliban return. She's Hazara, an largely Shiite ethnic minority that has faced violence from the Taliban and other Sunni groups.

But she also rails against the current government, accusing them of "eating all the money" sent for Afghanistan's poor to feed their own corruption. For months, she has tried to collect a stipend for the poor worth about \$77 but each time she is told her name is not on the list.

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# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 27 of 85

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# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 28 of 85

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## **Biden's declaration: America's democracy 'is rising anew'**

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden declared that "America is rising anew" as he called for an expansion of federal programs to drive the economy past the coronavirus pandemic and broadly extend the social safety net on a scale not seen in decades.

Biden's nationally televised address to Congress, his first, raised the stakes for his ability to sell his plans to voters of both parties, even if Republican lawmakers prove resistant. The Democratic president is following Wednesday night's speech by pushing his plans in person, beginning in Georgia on Thursday and then on to Pennsylvania and Virginia in the days ahead.

In the address, Biden pointed optimistically to the nation's emergence from the coronavirus scourge as a moment for America to prove that its democracy can still work and maintain primacy in the world.

Speaking in highly personal terms while demanding massive structural changes, the president marked his first 100 days in office by proposing a \$1.8 trillion investment in children, families and education to help rebuild an economy devastated by the virus and compete with rising global competitors.

His speech represented both an audacious vision and a considerable gamble. He is governing with the most slender of majorities in Congress, and even some in his own party have blanched at the price tag of his proposals.

At the same time, the speech highlighted Biden's fundamental belief in the power of government as a force for good, even at a time when it is so often the object of scorn.

"I can report to the nation: America is on the move again," he said. "Turning peril into possibility. Crisis into opportunity. Setback into strength."

While the ceremonial setting of the Capitol was the same as usual, the visual images were unlike any previous presidential address. Members of Congress wore masks and were seated apart because of pandemic restrictions. Outside the grounds were still surrounded by fencing after insurrectionists in January protesting Biden's election stormed to the doors of the House chamber where he gave his address.

"America is ready for takeoff. We are working again. Dreaming again. Discovering again. Leading the world again. We have shown each other and the world: There is no quit in America," Biden said.

This year's scene at the front of the House chamber also had a historic look: For the first time, a female vice president, Kamala Harris, was seated behind the chief executive. And she was next to another woman, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

The first ovation came as Biden greeted "Madam Vice President." He added, "No president has ever said those words from this podium, and it's about time."

The chamber was so sparsely populated that individual claps could be heard echoing off the walls.

Yet Biden said, "I have never been more confident or more optimistic about America. We have stared into an abyss of insurrection and autocracy — of pandemic and pain — and 'We the People' did not flinch."

At times, the president plainly made his case for democracy itself.

Biden demanded that the government take care of its own as a powerful symbol to the world of an

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 29 of 85

America willing to forcefully follow its ideals and people. He confronted an issue rarely faced by an American president, namely that in order to compete with autocracies like China, the nation needs "to prove that democracy still works" after his predecessor's baseless claims of election fraud and the ensuing attack on the U.S. Capitol.

"Can our democracy overcome the lies, anger, hate and fears that have pulled us apart?" he asked. "America's adversaries – the autocrats of the world – are betting it can't. They believe we are too full of anger and division and rage. They look at the images of the mob that assaulted this Capitol as proof that the sun is setting on American democracy. They are wrong. And we have to prove them wrong."

Biden repeatedly hammered home that his plans would put Americans back to work, restoring the millions of jobs lost to the virus. He laid out an extensive proposal for universal preschool, two years of free community college, \$225 billion for child care and monthly payments of at least \$250 to parents. His ideas target frailties that were uncovered by the pandemic, and he argues that economic growth will best come from taxing the rich to help the middle class and the poor.

Biden's speech also provided an update on combating the COVID-19 crisis he was elected to tame, showcasing hundreds of millions of vaccinations and relief checks delivered to help offset the devastation wrought by a virus that has killed more than 573,000 people in the United States. He also championed his \$2.3 trillion infrastructure plan, a staggering figure to be financed by higher taxes on corporations.

His appeals were often emotive and personal, talking about Americans needing food and rental assistance. He also spoke to members of Congress as a peer as much as a president, singling out Sen. Mitch McConnell, the Republicans' leader, to praise him and speaking as one at a professional homecoming.

The GOP members in the chamber largely stayed silent, even refusing to clap for seemingly universal goals like reducing childhood poverty. Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina said, in the Republicans' designated response, that Biden was more rhetoric than action.

"Our president seems like a good man," Scott said. "But our nation is starving for more than empty platitudes."

The president spoke against a backdrop of the weakening but still lethal pandemic, staggering unemployment and a roiling debate about police violence against Blacks. He also used his address to touch on the broader national reckoning over race in America, urging legislation be passed by the anniversary of George Floyd's death next month, and to call on Congress to act on the thorny issues of prescription drug pricing, gun control and modernizing the nation's immigration system.

In his first three months in office, Biden has signed a \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill — passed without a single GOP vote — and has shepherded direct payments of \$1,400 per person to more than 160 million households. Hundreds of billions of dollars in aid will soon arrive for state and local governments, enough money that overall U.S. growth this year could eclipse 6% — a level not seen since 1984. Administration officials are betting that it will be enough to bring back all 8.4 million jobs lost to the pandemic by next year.

A significant amount proposed just Wednesday would ensure that eligible families receive at least \$250 monthly per child through 2025, extending the enhanced tax credit that was part of Biden's COVID-19 aid. There would be more than \$400 billion for subsidized child care and free preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds.

Another combined \$425 billion would go to permanently reduce health insurance premiums for people who receive coverage through the Affordable Care Act, as well a national paid family and medical leave program. Further spending would be directed toward Pell Grants, historically Black and tribal institutions and to allow people to attend community college tuition-free for two years.

Funding all of this would be a series of tax increases on the wealthy that would raise about \$1.5 trillion over a decade. Republican lawmakers in Congress so far have balked at the price tags of Biden's plans, complicating the chances of passage in a deeply divided Washington.

## 'Clean out our insides': Ethiopia detains Tigrayans amid war

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Ethiopia has swept up thousands of ethnic Tigrayans into detention centers

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 30 of 85

across the country on accusations that they are traitors, often holding them for months and without charges, the AP has found.

The detentions, mainly but not exclusively of military personnel, are an apparent attempt to purge state institutions of the Tigrayans who once dominated them, as the government enters its sixth month of fighting in the Tigray region. Detainees, families and visitors spoke of hundreds or even more than 1,000 people in at least nine individual locations, including military bases and an agricultural college.

The government of Nobel Peace Prize winner Abiy Ahmed acknowledges that it has locked up a small number of high-level military officials from the Tigrayan minority. But the AP is reporting for the first time that the detentions are far more sweeping in scope and more arbitrary, extending even to priests and office workers, sometimes with ethnic profiling as the sole reason.

A military detainee told the AP he is being held with more than 400 other Tigrayans, and lawyers are not allowed to contact them. Even families can't visit. The AP is not using his name for his safety but has seen his military ID.

"They can do what they want," he said on a smuggled phone. "They might kill us....We are in their hands, and we have no choice but to pray."

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Many of the military personnel were not combatants but held jobs such as teachers and nurses, according to interviews with 15 detainees and relatives, along with a lawyer and a camp visitor. Civilian employees of state-owned companies also have been held. The arbitrary locking up of non-combatants is against international law, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, which has met with family members of detainees but declined to answer questions.

Conditions vary, but some detainees are given just one meal a day and crowded dozens to a room in sweltering metal shelters, at a time when COVID-19 infections are rapidly rising in Ethiopia. Families worry that needed medications are withheld. Detainees and families the AP tracked down did not directly witness beatings or other such physical abuse, but almost all asked not to be identified out of fear for their lives.

Once detained, the Tigrayans often end up in Ethiopia's opaque military justice system. That means they can lose the right to private lawyers and face judges who one lawyer said tend to hand out the maximum penalty. With fewer means to challenge their detention, detainees say they feel helpless, their fate in the hands of the people who accuse them of treason.

One Tigrayan living in the United States said she could understand war between soldiers but objected to the detention of two cousins with non-combat roles in communications and peacekeeping. One hasn't been seen or heard from since November.

"Is the danger in their blood? In their DNA?" she asked. "I thought they were Ethiopians."

The mass detentions and house arrests are an extension of the war in the Tigray region marked by massacres, gang rapes, expulsions and forced starvation, which witnesses call a systematic effort to destroy the Tigrayan minority of more than 6 million. The detentions are all the more striking because Abiy was once praised for releasing thousands of political prisoners in a country long known for locking up people deemed a threat.

Tigrayans are further targeted by state media reports amplifying the government narrative of pursuing Tigray "criminals" and their supporters. Family members of detainees are sometimes stripped of their jobs, kicked out of military housing and subjected to frozen bank accounts.

Tigray leaders were prominent in Ethiopia's repressive government for nearly three decades and are blamed by Abiy and others for fostering sometimes deadly ethnic politics, but they were sidelined when he took office in 2018. After national elections were delayed last year, they held their own vote in Tigray and called Abiy's government illegitimate. Ethiopia then accused Tigray fighters of attacking a military base and launched an offensive, unleashing a war that has killed thousands.

Ethiopia's government is "only after the top leadership" of Tigray's former rulers, the minister for public

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 31 of 85

diplomacy at the country's embassy in Britain, Mekonnen Amare, told the AP. "So there is no such thing as mass detention or mass abuse of rights."

But in a leaked video posted online earlier in the war and verified by the AP, a senior military official said of Tigrayans, "We had to clean out our insides. ... Even if there may be good people among them, we can't differentiate the good from the bad. To save the country, we made it so they were excluded from doing work." Now the security forces were "completely Ethiopian," Brig. Gen. Tesfaye Ayalew said in what appeared to be an internal briefing.

Ethiopia's attorney general's office, which has said it would set up a hotline to report ethnic profiling, did not respond to questions from the AP, and neither did a military spokesman. The U.S. State Department said it could not confirm reports of people detained in camps, but noted that it has paused most security assistance to Ethiopia because of concerns over the Tigray crisis.

Another Tigrayan who spoke to the AP from custody, his voice hushed on a borrowed phone, said he is being held without charges along with more than 30 pilots, technicians and other military personnel. He said families at times have no idea where relatives are, and his own mother still thinks he's working, just far away. He despairs of justice in military court.

"If peace comes, maybe they'll release us," he said. "If not, we don't have any future. I fear even they may kill us." Then he hurriedly ended the call.

Estimates of the number of detainees and camps vary. More than 17,000 Tigrayans were in the military alone when the war began and have been detained, according to an estimate given to a researcher by Mulugeta Gebrehiwot Berhe, a former senior Ethiopian official and Tigrayan who founded the Institute for Peace and Security Studies at Addis Ababa University.

Along with the at least nine centers cited by detainees, families and visitors, the AP obtained three separate lists that allege several others across the country. One detainee who escaped a center in Mirab Abaya in southern Ethiopia estimated that more than 1,500 people were held there alone.

A man who visited two other centers said detainees had counted 110 people in one, mostly military commanders, and 270 in the other, many of them commandos and air force officers. Some had served in the military for more than 30 years with no history of misconduct, he said.

The visitor described 40 to 50 people living in a room made of metal sheets. The detainees told him they were not allowed to speak in groups or have family visits or phone calls, and they didn't get enough food.

"The area is very hot, extremely hot....they don't look good," said the visitor, whom the AP is not identifying further to preserve his access to the centers. He said detainees alleged that people are held in at least 20 places across the country.

"It's scary, you know?" he said. "These people were serving their country as military personnel but were attacked by their own government....They have been identified as treasonous by the community, so they're seriously worried about their families."

Their families also are worried about them. A man in the capital, Addis Ababa, wept as he described not seeing or speaking to his brother, a human resources staffer with the military, for three months. His brother's family has been evicted from military housing, he said, sharing photos of their items strewn outdoors.

"He was serving his country honestly," the man said. "The situation is not good, not only for me but for all the Tigrayan people."

Another detainee had been serving in a neighboring country on a peacekeeping mission when he was called home to Ethiopia and seized, his son said. He was freed on bail, and the AP has seen the federal court document for his release. But then he was sent to a military camp, accused of creating instability although he wasn't in the country.

"I spoke with him yesterday. He sounded stressed," his son said. "People with the military gave him the phone in secret. He's a proud person. It's unsettling to hear him like that."

His father has lost about 10 kilograms (22 pounds) because of the lack of proper food, he said.

The transfer of people into the military system after being released on bail in the federal courts is il-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 32 of 85

legal, said a lawyer in the capital, Tadele Gebremedhin, who has worked on more than 75 cases involving detained Tigrayans from the military and federal police. He said detainees at one center he visited on the outskirts of the capital sleep about 25 to a room, get food once a day and are denied family visits.

"They are innocent," the lawyer said. "The only thing is, they're Tigrayans."

Civilians have been held, too. One employee with state-owned Ethiopian Airlines said he fled the country after being released on bail.

"We need you very badly today," he recalled federal police saying as they took him from his home without explanation. He said he saw almost 100 high-ranking military officials during his two months in detention, from late November to late January.

Dozens of Tigrayan priests and deacons were detained in the capital, most for a month, according to Lisanewerk Desta, who leads the library and museum department of the Ethiopia Orthodox Church. He also said he has spoken with a detainee at a center near Harar who estimated that more than 2,000 military personnel were held there.

"I don't have words. How to explain this kind of hatred?" he asked.

Beyond the camps, an unknown number of Tigrayans are under house arrest. A man described how one parent, a nurse in the military, has been barred from work since the war began and is under a curfew.

The United Nations human rights office said it was aware of reports of arbitrary detention of Tigrayans but did not have reliable estimates "given the lack of transparency."

The government-created Ethiopian Human Rights Commission did not answer questions, instead sharing recent statements on Tigrayan detainees and ethnic profiling. In a statement this week, the commission said the denial of fair trials, family visits and medical treatment is "still rife" at several detention centers, and detainees are often unable to tell families where they are.

The commission spoke earlier this year with 21 detainees at a federal police center in the capital, with some describing "lengthy pre-trial detention periods and being subjected to insults, threats, beatings and to physical injuries from shots fired at the time of their capture." However, the commission said detainees were in good health and the conditions of detention met acceptable standards.

Tigrayans dispute that. In neighboring South Sudan, more than a dozen members of the United Nations peacekeeping mission refused to board a flight home in February when their stay ended.

For detainees, it is unclear what happens next. Two people told the AP that a campaign to "re-educate" them has begun, including lectures promoting Abiy's political party. One person said their cousin had gone through the training, and another said their relative had been told it would start soon.

The risk for the government is that the detentions could turn Tigrayans who once swore their loyalty into active opponents.

Teklebrhan Weldeselassie, an air force pilot, said he and colleagues were accused of being in contact with Tigray's now-fugitive leaders. He escaped house arrest and fled Ethiopia, but he said colleagues have told him they are among an estimated 1,000 Tigrayans detained near the air force headquarters in Debre Zeit.

Once shocked by being suspected as a traitor, he is so horrified by Ethiopia's treatment of Tigrayans that he now says he would consider taking up arms.

"Before, I didn't plan to fight on the side of Tigray," Teklebrhan said. "At this time, if I get a chance, yeah, of course I would defend my people."

India's deepening water crisis at the heart of farm protests

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL AP Science Writer

RANSIH KALAN. India (AP) — Every year, Swarn Singh sows rice in his fields, knowing that the thirsty crop is draining northern India's Punjab of its groundwater. But Singh says he has no choice, adding, "We'd rather plant crops that need less water."

The 32-year-old farmer and school teacher lives in Ransih Kalan village in the state's Moga district, where green fields surrounding its wide roads and large houses belie the reality that the region is among India's

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 33 of 85

most parched and its once-prosperous agricultural system is now broken.

India's water crisis looms over an agrarian crisis that has been brewing for decades. At its heart is a conundrum: the government has been subsidizing the cultivation of rice in northern India, but such water-intensive crops have dramatically lowered the groundwater table.

Every third house in Ransih Kalan — a community of nearly 3,000, less than 100 kilometers (62 miles) from India's border with Pakistan — bears flags supporting thousands of farmers hunkered down outside New Delhi since November to protest three laws Prime Minister Narendra Modi says will modernize agriculture.

Singh says his village's farmers agree changes are needed but fear these laws will only make matters worse, leaving them at the mercy of big corporations. The laws don't address the region's water crisis. But Singh said that if guaranteed prices for all crops were to become a legal right, farmers would shift away from thirsty crops.

Home to a fifth of the world's population, India has only 4% of the world's water. But the country is the largest extractor of groundwater in the world, with 90% used for agriculture.

Nowhere is the water shortage more pronounced than in Punjab, where India's government encouraged cultivation of wheat and rice in the 1960s and has since been buying the staples at fixed prices to shore up national reserves.

Wheat was a traditional crop, along with mung beans or peanuts, said Singh's father, Bhupinder Singh, 62. But he and experts say a pound of rice needs up to 500 gallons (2,273 liters) of water — and irrigation canals couldn't supply enough as more farmers switched to the grain.

Farmers turned to well water. When the government started providing free electricity to run well pumps in 1997, Punjab rice raising rocketed — from 500 square kilometers (193 square miles) in 1975 to 31,000 square kilometers (11,969 square miles).

But groundwater levels plummeted as underground pumps proliferated, with over 1.2 million by 2012. And a 2017 federal report warned that the state of 27 million people would exhaust its groundwater by 2039.

"It's becoming a desert," said Kirpal Singh Aulakh, an agricultural scientist and former vice chancellor of Punjab Agricultural University.

The looming calamity isn't news to the Singhs. They had to spend \$6,600 to install a pump for a nearly 200-foot (60-meter) borehole. And successive years of planting the same crops leached their village's soil of nutrients, forcing them to rely on expensive fertilizers.

Rising costs have forced the family into debt, and the certainty of selling to their crops to the government is their only way of staying afloat. "All of Punjab is trapped," the son said.

Protesting farmers fear the new laws signal that the government wants to reduce its role in agriculture and that guaranteed prices for their crops will end.

The government does fix prices for crops other than wheat and rice, including corn. But Aulakh said these products aren't purchased for federal reserves and traders in the private market pay much lower prices for them, resulting in farmers feeling "cheated."

Aulakh, who has sat on government committees that discussed crop diversification in Punjab, said farmers would switch to more suitable crops if they knew they'd be compensated by the government. "We can't blame the farmers," he said.

India's agricultural and water ministries did not respond to emailed requests for comment.

More than 86% of India's farmers work on less than 2 hectares (4.9 acres). So the falling groundwater table means these small farmers spend increasingly more money to pump water for their crops and this is widening inequity, said Balsher Singh Sidhu, a University of British Columbia doctoral student studying climate change impacts on agriculture.

Sidhu compared the available groundwater to a bank account where withdrawals far exceed deposits. "Today everyone has access to water, but we can't say the same about tomorrow," he said.

Climate change has made the monsoon rains -- a lifeline for over half of India's cultivated area -- unpredictable and left farmers even more reliant on groundwater. Rice requires standing water in fields. But hotter summers are increasing the amount lost due to evaporation.

Rice farmer Mahinder Singh, 73, said he tried planting corn once but private buyers paid him only a frac-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 34 of 85

tion of the prices set by the government. "We will die of hunger," if the water runs out, he added.

India's food reserves are overflowing, leading to waste, but malnutrition is intensifying and experts fear future water shortages could make it worse.

"The richer people can afford to (buy) fruits and vegetables," said Upmanu Lall, director of the Columbia Water Center at Columbia University. "Poor people do not, other than what they can scavenge."

Residents of Ransih Kalan have begun taking steps to conserve water. Villagers have installed a sewage treatment plant, and the treated water is used for irrigation. They've also built plants to harvest rainwater and divert it into a man-made lake. In the middle is a 10-foot tall (3 meters) statue of a dinosaur.

It's a reminder, says Preet Inderpal Singh, the 30-year-old village headman, "That if people don't save every drop of water, people would become extinct, like dinosaurs."

## AP FACT CHECK: Biden skews record on migrants; GOP on virus

By ELLIOT SPAGAT and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Taking a swipe at his predecessor, President Joe Biden gave a distorted account of the historical forces driving migrants to the U.S. border, glossing over the multitudes who were desperate to escape poverty in their homelands when he was vice president.

In his speech to Congress on Wednesday night, Biden also made his spending plans sound more broadly supported in Washington than they are.

The Republican response to Biden's speech departed from reality particularly on the subject of the pandemic. Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina tried to give the Trump administration credit for turning the tide on the coronavirus in what was actually the deadliest phase.

A look at some of the claims:

### IMMIGRATION

**BIDEN:** "If you believe in a pathway to citizenship, pass (immigration legislation) so over 11 million undocumented folks, the vast majority who are here overstaying visas, pass it."

**THE FACTS:** He's making an unsubstantiated claim.

There is no official count of how many people entered the country legally and overstayed visas. The government estimates that 11.4 million were living in the country illegally as of January 2018 but doesn't distinguish between how many entered legally and stayed after their visas expired and how many arrived illegally.

Robert Warren of the Center for Migration Studies of New York, a former director of the Immigration and Naturalization Service's statistics division who has studied visa overstays for decades, has done the most recent work on the issue. He estimated that, as of 2018, 46% of people in the country illegally overstayed visas — not a majority, let alone a "vast majority."

**BIDEN:** "When I was vice president, the president asked me to focus on providing help needed to address the root causes of migration. And it helped keep people in their own countries instead of being forced to leave. The plan was working, but the last administration decided it was not worth it. I'm restoring the program and I asked Vice President Harris to lead our diplomatic effort to take care of this."

**THE FACTS:** That's wrong.

Biden led Obama's efforts to address a spike in migration from Central America, but poverty and violence have been endemic for decades. Hundreds of millions of dollars of U.S. aid have gone to Central America annually, even during Donald Trump's presidency, but migration from Mexico and Central America has continued unabated with periodic spikes.

In March, the number of unaccompanied children encountered by U.S. border authorities reached nearly 19,000, the highest number on record in the third major surge of families and children from Central America since 2014 under both Democratic and Republican administrations.

Biden championed aid during what Obama called "a humanitarian crisis" of Central American children at the border in 2014. But while assistance fell under Trump, hundreds of millions of dollars have flowed in

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 35 of 85

every year. Biden has proposed \$861 million in Central American aid next year as a first installment on a \$4 billion plan, compared with annual outlays of between \$506 million and \$750 million over the previous six years.

## SPENDING

BIDEN, on his economic proposals: "There's a broad consensus of economists — left, right, center — and they agree that what I'm proposing will help create millions of jobs and generate historic economic growth."

THE FACTS: He's glossing over the naysayers. Some economists, also bridging the ideological spectrum, say he's spending too much or in the wrong way. Biden's pandemic relief plan did enjoy some bipartisan support, even getting a general seal of approval from Kevin Hassett, who was Trump's chief economist. But his policies have also drawn bipartisan criticism.

For one, Larry Summers, who was Barack Obama's top economist and Bill Clinton's treasury secretary, warned that Biden's relief package risks rates of inflation not seen in a generation.

Biden's latest proposals on infrastructure and families would require substantial tax increases on corporations and wealthy investors — leading to criticism by many CEOs and more conservative economists that growth could be compromised. Biden's economics team says the resulting programs and infrastructure would boost growth.

The plan to increase capital gains taxes drew the scorn of Douglas Holtz-Eakin, a former director of the Congressional Budget Office and Republican adviser. He said the White House is wrong to focus on the sliver of people being taxed and what matters is how much of the economy would be taxed.

"The wealth taxes are a draconian tax on the annual return to that capital," he said. "What matters is the amount of economic activity that is taxed, not the number of people."

BIDEN: "We kept our commitment, Democrats and Republicans, sending \$1,400 rescue checks to 85% of all American households."

THE FACTS: Republicans made no such commitment.

Republicans in both the U.S. Senate and House opposed the bill containing the \$1,400 stimulus checks, known as the American Rescue Plan, portraying it as too big and too bloated.

All but one Democrat supported the legislation.

While no Republicans voted for this year's coronavirus bill, they supported sending checks to Americans in previous rounds of relief legislation. A relief law passed with overwhelming bipartisan support in December, when Trump was still president, provided \$600 checks to many Americans.

Some Republicans have boasted to their constituents about programs created by the coronavirus bill despite voting against it.

## DRUG PRICES

BIDEN, arguing that Congress should authorize Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices. "And by the way, that won't just help people on Medicare — it will lower prescription drug costs for everyone."

THE FACTS: That may be a bit of wishful thinking.

Under House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's bill, private insurers that cover working-age Americans and their families would indeed be able to get the same discounts as Medicare. But while Pelosi should be able to drive her legislation through the House, the situation in the Senate is different.

If just a few Democratic senators have qualms about her expansive approach, Biden may have to settle for less. So there's no guarantee that a final bill would lower prescription drug costs for everyone.

## REPUBLICAN RESPONSE

SOUTH CAROLINA SEN. TIM SCOTT: "This administration inherited a tide that had already turned. The coronavirus is on the run! Thanks to Operation Warp Speed and the Trump administration, our country is flooded with safe and effective vaccines."

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 36 of 85

THE FACTS: That's a real stretch.

Biden took over in the midst of the winter wave of COVID-19, the worst to hit the nation. It's true that cases and deaths had begun to decline from their peak in the second week of January, but the tide had far from turned. Daily cases were averaging more than three times higher than they are now.

And while the Trump administration shepherded the delivery of two highly effective vaccines, the supply of doses was short of meeting demand and several state governors were complaining about jumbled signals from Trump's team.

Trump was focused on his campaign to overturn the election results and did not devote much public attention to the pandemic as his term came to an end.

SCOTT: "Just before COVID, we had the most inclusive economy in my lifetime. The lowest unemployment rates ever recorded for African Americans, Hispanics and Asians. And a 70-year low nearly for women. Wages were growing faster at the bottom than at the top — the bottom 25% saw their wages go up faster than the top 25%. That happened because Republicans focused on expanding opportunity for all Americans."

THE FACTS: His statistics are selectively misleading.

Nothing is false on its face in terms of numbers. Yet the gains reflected the longest expansion in U.S. history — something that started during Obama's administration and simply continued under Trump without much change in growth patterns.

The labor force participation for women was below its 2001 peak, so the unemployment rate claims by Scott tell an incomplete story. The Black and Hispanic unemployment rates were lower because the total unemployment rate was lower. Yet both still lagged those of white workers by a large degree.

Scott also neglects to credit the Federal Reserve, which kept interest rates near historic lows to support growth and keep the recovery from the Great Recession going.

## **Biden speech takeaways: Government is good, and so are jobs**

By ZEKE MILLER and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden returned to the U.S. Capitol, his home for more than three decades, and used his first address to Congress to make the case that the era of big government is back.

Biden said the U.S. is "on the move again" after struggling through a devastating pandemic that killed more than 570,000 Americans, disrupted the economy and shook daily life. And he pitched an expansive — and expensive — vision to rebuild the nation's roads, bridges, water pipes and other infrastructure, bolster public education and extend a wide swath of other benefits.

Takeaways from the president's address Wednesday night:

BIDEN'S FOUR-LETTER WORD: JOBS

Biden uttered the word "jobs" a whopping 43 times.

It's perhaps no surprise for an administration that has made beating back the pandemic and getting Americans back to work the central guideposts for success.

Biden noted that the economy has gained some 1.3 million new jobs in the first few months of his administration — more than any in the first 100 days of any presidency. But he quickly pivoted to the need to pass his American Jobs Plan if the country is going to sustain momentum and get back to the historic low levels of unemployment before the pandemic.

He also aimed to frame his push for the U.S. to meet its international obligations to slow the impact of climate change as, ultimately, a jobs plan.

"For too long, we have failed to use the most important word when it comes to meeting the climate crisis," Biden said. "Jobs. Jobs. For me, when I think about climate change, I think jobs."

WHO TURNED THE TIDE?

Biden said "America's house was on fire" when he took office, citing the devastating COVID-19 pandemic, its damaging economic impact and the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 37 of 85

"Now — after just 100 days — I can report to the nation: America is on the move again," Biden said, adding that the U.S. is now "turning peril into possibility. Crisis into opportunity. Setback into strength."

It's a tried and true strategy by the president to take credit for the more hopeful moment, as the coronavirus vaccines have provided a path out of the pandemic.

Republicans, meanwhile, made it clear they see things differently, with Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C., implicitly crediting former President Donald Trump for Biden's good fortune.

"This administration inherited a tide that had already turned," he said in the official GOP response to Biden's address.

From polling, it's clear Biden's view is winning the day — at least so far — with more Americans approving of his job performance than ever did of Trump, with strong marks even from Republicans for handling the pandemic.

## MAKING THE CASE FOR BIG GOVERNMENT

In the past, presidents from both parties used similar speeches to talk about the limits of government. Biden went in the opposite direction, offering a resounding embrace of the role Washington can play in improving lives.

The president ticked off details of some of his plan for \$1.8 trillion in spending to expand preschool, create a national family and medical leave program, distribute child care subsidies and more.

The plan comes on top of his proposal for \$2.3 trillion in spending to rebuild roads and bridges, expand broadband access and launch other infrastructure projects.

Republicans have shown little interest in Biden's spending plan. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell has argued that Biden's plans are a "Trojan horse" that will lead to middle-class tax hikes.

But Biden and his aides say all of this new spending is a wise investment in Americans — and doable at a time of low interest rates. Much of it can be paid through raising taxes on the wealthy and would go a long way toward addressing the frailties of life for the middle class and working poor exposed by the pandemic, Biden argues.

"I'm not out to punish anyone," Biden said. "But I will not add to the tax burden of the middle class of this country."

While achieving bipartisan backing for the proposals is a long shot, Biden seems to be betting he can win support across the electorate.

He even made a thinly veiled pitch to blue-collar and non-college-educated white men who voted for Trump in November, noting that 90% of the infrastructure jobs that will be created by his spending plans don't require a college degree and 75% don't require an associate's degree.

"The Americans Jobs Plan is a blue-collar blueprint to build America," Biden said. "And it recognizes something I've always said: Wall Street didn't build this country. The middle class built this country. And unions built the middle class."

## 'REAL' RACIAL JUSTICE

A week after former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin was convicted in the killing of George Floyd, and as the nation continues to grapple with a disproportionate number of Black men being killed by police, Biden called on Congress to meet the moment.

"We have all seen the knee of injustice on the neck of Black America," Biden said, referencing Floyd's death under Chauvin's knee. "Now is our opportunity to make real progress."

Biden, who won the presidency with strong support from Black voters, called on Congress to send him a police reform bill named after Floyd by the anniversary of his death, May 25. But he also went further, saying he aimed to root out systemic racism in housing, education and public health.

"We have a giant opportunity to bend the arc of the moral universe toward justice," said Biden. "Real justice."

## PRESSING GOP ON GUNS, IMMIGRATION AND VOTING RIGHTS

Biden was elected on the promise of delivering action on gun control, immigration reform and voting rights protections, but even he seemed muted about the prospects for action on these priorities.

Biden spoke in emotional terms about gun violence and appealed to Republicans who have expressed

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 38 of 85

support for providing a path to citizenship for people brought to the U.S. illegally as children.

"The country supports it," Biden said repeatedly. "Congress should act."

The issues were too important to the Democratic base to leave out. But they face stiff opposition among the GOP in the Senate, where 10 Republicans would have to join with Democrats to overcome a filibuster.

'WE HAVE TO PROVE DEMOCRACY STILL WORKS'

Biden said that while the nation's democracy survived the deadly Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol meant to block the certification of his election, leaders in Washington must do more to boost the resilience of the nation's system of government.

Biden argued that the nation's adversaries "look at the images of the mob that assaulted this Capitol as proof that the sun is setting on American democracy."

"We have to prove them wrong," he said. "We have to prove democracy still works. That our government still works — and can deliver for the people."

It was a familiar refrain for Biden, who has sounded an alarm about the nation's divisions for years, but the urgency spiked after Jan 6.

Still, the appeal for unity appeared unlikely to sway many minds in Congress. Republicans have already lined up in opposition to Biden's agenda, and the push for a bipartisan commission to probe the insurrection has struggled to gain support.

TRUMP WHO?

Biden campaigned on a promise to substantively and stylistically move the country past Trump, and in keeping with that tone, he made no direct mention of the 45th president.

Instead, he spoke only of the "last administration," blaming Trump and his team for abandoning an effort made by his old boss — Barack Obama — to financially assist the Northern Triangle nations in Central America. Migrants are now fleeing from those countries — El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras — and arriving at the U.S. border.

In some ways, the absence of talk about Trump, who still falsely claims the election was stolen from him, isn't surprising. Biden grumbled at a CNN town hall in February that he's "tired of talking about Trump" and he wants to make the next four years about the American people.

His omission made clear he's determined to move on.

## Analysis: Biden pitches big government as antidote to crises

By JULIE PACE AP Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON (AP) — Forty years ago, a newly elected American president declared government the source of many of the nation's problems, reshaping the parameters of U.S. politics for decades to come. On Wednesday night, President Joe Biden unabashedly embraced government as the solution.

In an address to a joint session of Congress and the nation, Biden offered up government as both an organizing principle for the nation's democracy and an engine for economic growth and social well-being. He issued a pointed rejoinder to the fiscal philosophy espoused by Ronald Reagan in the 1980s, arguing that "trickle-down economics has never worked," and offered in its place an eye-popping \$4 trillion in new government spending to bolster infrastructure and remake a social safety net that buckled for many Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We have to prove democracy still works, that our government still works and can deliver for our people," Biden declared.

One hundred days into his presidency, Biden is riding a wave of early momentum after securing passage of a \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief fund and surging coronavirus vaccine supplies across the country. But his ability to enact the next phases of his domestic agenda is deeply uncertain given his narrow majorities in Congress, near-universal opposition thus far from Republicans and wariness from some moderate Democrats.

Yet Biden, to the surprise of some lawmakers in both parties, has not responded to those political realities by curtailing or moderating his asks of Congress. While he made overtures to Republicans in his address

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 39 of 85

Wednesday, particularly for partnership on infrastructure spending, he also made clear that he was willing to press forward without them, confident that a once-in-a-generation influx of government spending will yield results he can sell to the public in next year's midterm elections and perhaps in the 2024 campaign, if he seeks a second term.

Biden's posture has been cheered by many Democrats who are eager to move past the political constructs erected during the Reagan era, which left the party caught between arguing for more investments for lower- and middle-class Americans and wary of being branded as tax-and-spend liberals.

As he sought reelection in 1996, Democratic President Bill Clinton stated in his own address to Congress that the "era of big government is over," though he also said Americans should not be "left to fend for themselves." The next Democratic president, Barack Obama, muscled through his signature health care law and a stimulus plan to pull the economy out of recession, but faced fierce political blowback that cost him his congressional majorities and quickly curtailed many of his other domestic policy ambitions.

But the Democratic Party as a whole has grown more comfortable in recent years with more liberal policies, pushed along in part by a younger, more diverse array of politicians who argue that persistent inequality, particularly for minorities, requires broader overhauls of the nation's domestic policies. The inequities exposed by the pandemic, with Black and Hispanic Americans disproportionately impacted both by the COVID-19 virus and the economic fallout, hastened those arguments.

And while Biden — a white, 78-year-old career politician with a moderate record — may not have been the first choice of his party's left flank, his closing arguments of the 2020 campaign evoked the ideals of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's expansive progressive agenda and the notion of what government can accomplish in a crisis.

He harkened back to Roosevelt again Wednesday night, recalling that in another era where the nation's democracy was tested, "Roosevelt reminded us, in America: We do our part."

Biden's advisers say his decades of Washington experience — he was a young senator during Reagan's presidency and went on to serve as Obama's vice president — have cemented his belief that this is another such moment in history that cries out for the type of federal government interventions that may not have been palatable for his most recent predecessors.

"This country has been ravaged by social injustices, and in the past year, by the pandemic," said Maria Cardona, a Democratic strategist who worked in the Clinton administration. "Neither was incremental in the ways they ravaged our communities. So the response can't be incremental."

There are some indications that Americans back Biden's aggressive approach. According to The Associated Press' VoteCast survey of the electorate, 57% of voters in the 2020 presidential election said the government should be doing more to solve problems, while 41% said it was doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals.

Those who backed a broader government role in addressing the nation's challenges overwhelmingly voted for Biden. But the AP VoteCast survey also showed that 28% of voters who supported former President Donald Trump were in favor of a more active federal government.

Biden appealed directly to those voters in Wednesday's address, particularly those he said "feel left behind and forgotten in an economy that's rapidly changing." He promised them well-paying jobs that don't require a college education.

So far, Republican lawmakers are unmoved by such promises. No GOP lawmakers voted for Biden's pandemic relief package earlier this year and most are skeptical of his proposed \$2.3 trillion infrastructure proposal, to be financed by higher taxes on corporations. The president upped the ante even more Wednesday night, unveiling a \$1.8 trillion family plan for universal preschool, two years of free community college, \$225 billion for child care and monthly payments of at least \$250 to parents.

After Biden's address, Utah Sen. Mitt Romney — one of the more centrist Republicans the White House has been courting — bristled at the totality of the president's asks.

"Six trillion and counting," he said. "He would like Republicans to vote for his plan. But in terms of meeting in the middle, that hasn't been something the administration has shown."

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 40 of 85

## **Biden's declaration: America's democracy 'is rising anew'**

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden declared Wednesday night that “America is rising anew” as he called for an expansion of federal programs to drive the economy past the pandemic and broadly extend the social safety net on a scale not seen in decades.

In his first address to Congress, he pointed optimistically to the nation's emergence from the coronavirus scourge as a moment for America to prove that its democracy can still work and maintain primacy in the world.

Speaking in highly personal terms while demanding massive structural changes, the president marked his first 100 days in office by proposing a \$1.8 trillion investment in children, families and education to help rebuild an economy devastated by the virus and compete with rising global competitors.

His speech represented both an audacious vision and a considerable gamble. He is governing with the most slender of majorities in Congress, and even some in his own party have blanched at the price tag of his proposals.

At the same time, the speech highlighted Biden's fundamental belief in the power of government as a force for good, even at a time when it is so often the object of scorn.

“I can report to the nation: America is on the move again,” he said. “Turning peril into possibility. Crisis into opportunity. Setback into strength.”

While the ceremonial setting of the Capitol was the same as usual, the visual images were unlike any previous presidential address. Members of Congress wore masks and were seated apart because of pandemic restrictions. Outside the grounds were still surrounded by fencing after insurrectionists in January protesting Biden's election stormed to the doors of the House chamber where he gave his address.

The nationally televised ritual raised the stakes for his ability to sell his plans to voters of both parties, even if Republican lawmakers prove resistant. The president is following the speech by hitting the road to push his plans, beginning in Georgia on Thursday and then on to Pennsylvania and Virginia in the days ahead.

“America is ready for takeoff. We are working again. Dreaming again. Discovering again. Leading the world again. We have shown each other and the world: There is no quit in America,” Biden said.

This year's scene at the front of the House chamber also had a historic look: For the first time, a female vice president, Kamala Harris, was seated behind the chief executive. And she was next to another woman, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

The first ovation came as Biden greeted “Madam Vice President.” He added, “No president has ever said those words from this podium, and it's about time.”

The chamber was so sparsely populated that individual claps could be heard echoing off the walls.

Yet Biden said, “I have never been more confident or more optimistic about America. We have stared into an abyss of insurrection and autocracy — of pandemic and pain — and ‘We the People’ did not flinch.”

At times, the president plainly made his case for democracy itself.

Biden demanded that the government take care of its own as a powerful symbol to the world of an America willing to forcefully follow its ideals and people. He confronted an issue rarely faced by an American president, namely that in order to compete with autocracies like China, the nation needs “to prove that democracy still works” after his predecessor's baseless claims of election fraud and the ensuing attack on the U.S. Capitol.

“Can our democracy overcome the lies, anger, hate and fears that have pulled us apart?” he asked. “America's adversaries — the autocrats of the world — are betting it can't. They believe we are too full of anger and division and rage. They look at the images of the mob that assaulted this Capitol as proof that the sun is setting on American democracy. They are wrong. And we have to prove them wrong.”

Biden repeatedly hammered home that his plans would put Americans back to work, restoring the millions of jobs lost to the virus. He laid out an extensive proposal for universal preschool, two years of free community college, \$225 billion for child care and monthly payments of at least \$250 to parents. His ideas target frailties that were uncovered by the pandemic, and he argues that economic growth will best come

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 41 of 85

from taxing the rich to help the middle class and the poor.

Biden's speech also provided an update on combating the COVID-19 crisis he was elected to tame, showcasing hundreds of millions of vaccinations and relief checks delivered to help offset the devastation wrought by a virus that has killed more than 573,000 people in the United States. He also championed his \$2.3 trillion infrastructure plan, a staggering figure to be financed by higher taxes on corporations.

His appeals were often emotive and personal, talking about Americans needing food and rental assistance. He also spoke to members of Congress as a peer as much as a president, singling out Sen. Mitch McConnell, the Republicans' leader, to praise him and speaking as one at a professional homecoming.

The GOP members in the chamber largely stayed silent, even refusing to clap for seemingly universal goals like reducing childhood poverty. Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina said, in the Republicans' designated response, that Biden was more rhetoric than action.

"Our president seems like a good man," Scott said. "But our nation is starving for more than empty platitudes."

The president spoke against a backdrop of the weakening but still lethal pandemic, staggering unemployment and a roiling debate about police violence against Blacks. He also used his address to touch on the broader national reckoning over race in America, urging legislation be passed by the anniversary of George Floyd's death next month, and to call on Congress to act on the thorny issues of prescription drug pricing, gun control and modernizing the nation's immigration system.

In his first three months in office, Biden has signed a \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill — passed without a single GOP vote — and has shepherded direct payments of \$1,400 per person to more than 160 million households. Hundreds of billions of dollars in aid will soon arrive for state and local governments, enough money that overall U.S. growth this year could eclipse 6% — a level not seen since 1984. Administration officials are betting that it will be enough to bring back all 8.4 million jobs lost to the pandemic by next year.

A significant amount proposed just Wednesday would ensure that eligible families receive at least \$250 monthly per child through 2025, extending the enhanced tax credit that was part of Biden's COVID-19 aid. There would be more than \$400 billion for subsidized child care and free preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds.

Another combined \$425 billion would go to permanently reduce health insurance premiums for people who receive coverage through the Affordable Care Act, as well a national paid family and medical leave program. Further spending would be directed toward Pell Grants, historically Black and tribal institutions and to allow people to attend community college tuition-free for two years.

Funding all of this would be a series of tax increases on the wealthy that would raise about \$1.5 trillion over a decade. Republican lawmakers in Congress so far have balked at the price tags of Biden's plans, complicating the chances of passage in a deeply divided Washington.

## The Latest: In GOP response, Scott says US isn't racist

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Latest on President Joe Biden's first joint address to Congress (all times local): 11 p.m.

South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott has used the Republican response to President Joe Biden's address to Congress to vow that "America is not a racist country."

Scott, the only Black Republican senator, seized on Biden's calls earlier in the evening that passage of major police reform could help stamp out institutional racism nationwide. Scott countered that "today, kids are being taught the color of their skin defines them again. If they look a certain way, they're the oppressor."

He said Biden and other top Democrats have begun crying racism too frequently when it comes to unrelated policy disputes, saying "race is not a political weapon to settle every issue." He bristled at Democratic suggestions that voting rights restrictions passed by GOP-controlled legislatures around the country were meant to keep minority Americans from casting ballots.

Scott argued that the economy under Republican President Donald Trump boomed, helping to lower unemployment dramatically for Black and Hispanic Americans before the coronavirus pandemic struck.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 42 of 85

Scott also chided congressional Democrats for opposing legislation he personally championed on police reform, arguing that, going forward, Americans of all races should unite since they "are all in this together."

## HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN'S JOINT ADDRESS TO CONGRESS:

President Joe Biden used his first joint address to Congress to declare the nation is "turning peril into possibility, crisis into opportunity." He celebrated progress against the coronavirus and urged a \$1.8 trillion investment in children, families and education that would fundamentally transform roles the government plays in American life.

Read more:

- Biden speech takeaways: Government is good, and so are jobs
- AP FACT CHECK: Claims from Biden's joint address to Congress
- 'Congress should act,' Biden tells lawmakers near and far
- A closer look at Biden's \$1.8 trillion plan for families and education
- South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, in Republican response, seeks to credit GOP for 'joyful springtime'
- First lady holds virtual reception for guests not at speech
- Harris, Pelosi to making history seated behind Biden at speech

## HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON:

10:50 p.m.

Republican Sen. Tim Scott says President Joe Biden is failing to fulfill his promise to bring the country closer together and is even pulling the country further apart.

Scott gave the GOP's response to Biden's address to Congress on Wednesday night. He says public schools should have opened months ago and have been shown to be safe for children during the coronavirus pandemic. He calls the last few months "the clearest case I've seen for school choice in our lifetimes."

Scott says infrastructure is another issue that should unite the country. He says Republicans support investments in roads, bridges, airports and broadband, but Democrats want what he describes as a "partisan wish list" that goes beyond that. He says "they won't even build bridges to build bridges." Biden has appealed to Republicans to present him with a legitimate counteroffer to his plan.

Scott also talked about Georgia's new voting law, calling opposition to it "misplaced outrage" that is not about the country's racial past but about "rigging elections in the future." Democratic advocates have said the law makes it harder for people to vote, particularly people of color.

10:40 p.m.

President Joe Biden abandoned the COVID-19-safe elbow bumps as he left the House of Representatives after his first speech to Congress on Wednesday night.

Biden opted for fist bumps, back slaps, handshakes, and even some hand-holding as members of Congress approached him.

The longtime senator took his time leaving the chamber, and was standing in the aisle talking to lawmakers when House Speaker Nancy Pelosi gavelled the session closed.

He chatted with senior Democratic leaders, including the head of the House Financial Services Committee, Democratic Rep. Maxine Waters of California, and Democratic Rep. Rosa DeLauro, who leads the House Appropriations Committee. Biden held DeLauro's hands as they spoke.

Biden engaged some Republicans, shaking hands with Ohio Sen. Rob Portman and grabbing his arm as they talked. The president appeared in no hurry to leave and spoke with most anyone who approached him, even taking one person's card.

He finally left the chamber at 10:21 p.m., 10 minutes after ending his speech.

10:30 p.m.

President Joe Biden has ended his first address to a joint session of Congress by reaching to evoke the

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 43 of 85

sweep of history. He says the notion of "we the people" is actually "the government, you and I."

Biden mentioned President Franklin D. Roosevelt by name as he argued for passage of a \$1.8 trillion spending plan that would greatly expand the government's role in the lives of everyday Americans.

But as Biden wrapped up his prime-time speech, he also spoke of the mob that on Jan. 6 overran the Capitol building where he gave his address Wednesday night.

Biden took a swipe at conspiracy theorists who have criticized the concept of a "deep state," and the president said the government was about all Americans.

He told the nation: "We have stared into an abyss of insurrection and autocracy, of pandemic and pain, and 'We the people' did not flinch."

He concluded by saying that as the country begins to confront a new chapter against the pandemic, "There is not a single thing, nothing, nothing beyond our capacity. We can do whatever we set our minds to it as long as we do it together."

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10:25 p.m.

President Joe Biden says 12 years of education is no longer enough to compete in the 21st century. But he's also saying a college degree is unnecessary for nearly 90% of the jobs that would be created through his proposal to boost the country's roads, bridges and other public works.

Biden is using his first speech to Congress to promote his \$2.3 trillion infrastructure plan and his newly announced \$1.8 trillion proposal that includes universal preschool, two years of free community college and \$225 billion for child care.

Republicans are seeking a narrower, less costly infrastructure plan. Biden is selling his plan as a massive job creator. He calls it a "blue-collar blueprint to build America."

When it comes to education, Biden said the "world is catching up." He's looking to provide for two years of universal preschool for every 3- and 4- year-old in America. On top of that, his plan would add two years of free community college.

He says his administration would also increase investments in Pell grants and in historically Black colleges and universities.

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10:20 p.m.

President Joe Biden wants bipartisan action in Congress on fighting gun violence.

During his address to Congress on Wednesday night, the president said "this is not a Democrat or Republican issue" but "it's an American issue."

Biden outlined a number of what he called "reasonable reforms." Examples include universal background checks, and banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.

He said such restrictions "have overwhelming support from the American people."

Biden also had a message for gun rights advocates who say that those kind of restrictions would impinge upon their constitutional rights: "We're not changing the Constitution, we're being reasonable."

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10:10 p.m.

President Joe Biden says the United States has "to come together to rebuild trust between law enforcement and the people they serve."

Biden says in his first address to Congress as president that he wants lawmakers to pass police overhaul legislation by the anniversary of the death of George Floyd. Floyd died on May 25, 2020, after a police officer pinned his knee to Floyd's neck.

Floyd's death sparked national demonstrations against police brutality and institutional racism.

Biden mentioned the legislation in his speech and said "the country supports this reform and Congress should act." The House has passed the sweeping overhaul of policing and law enforcement, but it has yet to clear the Senate.

The president says that "we have a real chance to root out systemic racism."

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 44 of 85

10 p.m.

President Joe Biden is stressing the need for global engagement and cooperation on everything from the COVID-19 pandemic to climate change. It's a sharp contrast from President Donald Trump's "America First" policy.

Biden says in a prime-time address to Congress that "the comment I hear most often" in his conversations with world leaders is: "We see that America is back — but for how long?"

Biden says that "we have to show not just that we are back, but that we are here to stay."

Under Trump, the United States pursued a policy of unilateralism and withdrew from a number of international alliances and diplomatic relationships.

Biden pledged as part of its diplomatic efforts that the U.S. will eventually "become an arsenal of vaccines for other countries — just as America was the arsenal of democracy in World War II."

9:55 p.m.

President Joe Biden says he's "not looking to punish anybody" but does plan to raise taxes on the wealthiest Americans.

Biden wasn't shy about saying during a joint address to Congress that he'll pay for his \$1.8 trillion spending package by raising taxes on the rich. He attacked the Republican-backed, 2017 tax cuts, saying they created large deficits while most benefiting the richest Americans.

Biden says his plan will most help the American middle class. He's also pledging not to raise taxes on the middle class. He says most Americans have already "paid enough."

But the president also says that the huge increase in spending he's backing will require more money coming into the government, and he says it should come from CEOs and the rich.

9:35 p.m.

President Joe Biden is making a direct appeal to blue-collar workers as he pitches his massive spending package during his joint address to Congress on Wednesday night.

Biden is telling Americans that his infrastructure proposal will help "millions of people get back to their jobs and their careers." Biden is emphasizing blue-collar roles as he outlines the plan, saying it will create jobs in everything from modernizing America's roads, bridges and highways to replacing the nation's lead pipes.

Biden says his plan will provide opportunities for engineers, construction workers, electrical workers and farmers. He promises the plan will create "jobs Americans can raise their families on."

That appeal to blue-collar workers has shaped Biden's entire political career. Biden made a pitch to moderate, rural white voters as a centerpiece of his 2020 campaign.

9:30 p.m.

President Biden is marking his first 100 days in office by highlighting passage of the \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief legislation known as the American Rescue Plan and he's noting that his administration has provided more than 220 million COVID-19 vaccine shots.

Biden says he inherited a nation in crisis and now he can report that "America is on the move again."

In his first address to Congress as president, Biden says the United States is already seeing the results of "one of the most consequential rescue packages in American history." He's emphasizing that the package included \$1,400 checks to 85% of U.S. households. And he says more than 160 million checks are already out the door.

As to the vaccine, he says it is available in nearly 40,000 pharmacies and more than 700 community health centers.

Now, 90% of Americans live within 5 miles of a vaccination site, and Biden's message is, "Go get vaccinated America."

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 45 of 85

Biden is also emphasizing that the economy is on the mend under his watch.

9:25 p.m.

It was an unusual scene when President Joe Biden arrived in the House of Representatives for his first speech to Congress on Wednesday night. There were only about 200 lawmakers in attendance in the large chamber. They were spaced part and favored elbow bumps over the usual back slaps because of COVID-19 protocols.

There wasn't the usual roar of applause or crush of center-aisle lawmakers shaking hands with the president. Biden's arrival was a more subdued affair.

Still, the president did greet lawmakers when he walked down the center aisle, even if he had to wave at some of them from afar. He fist-bumped Chief Justice John Roberts. And Biden hugged his former presidential rival for the Democratic nomination, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders.

Some members of Congress violated some of the evening's strict health protocols, by shaking hands and sitting right next to each other to chat.

Biden served decades in the Senate, and when he reached the rostrum, he smiled and greeted House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and said, "It's good to be back."

9:05 p.m.

President Joe Biden is marking his 100th day in office with a prime-time address to Congress and he's declaring that the United States is "turning peril into possibility."

Biden is using his nationally televised speech to promote a \$1.8 trillion spending package. He says it will fundamentally transform and expand government's role in the lives of everyday Americans.

If Congress approves the plan, it would provide universal preschool, two years of free community college, \$225 billion for child care and monthly payments of at least \$250 to parents.

The president is also presenting a vision for post-pandemic life nationwide. He's working to showcase the hundreds of millions of vaccinations and relief checks his administration has delivered, even as the coronavirus remains dangerous and deadly. The pandemic has claimed the lives of more than 574,000 Americans.

8:55 p.m.

Vice President Kamala Harris and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi are making history as the first women to share center stage in Congress during a presidential address.

Harris and Pelosi are seated behind President Joe Biden on Wednesday night for his joint address to Congress. When they greeted each other before Biden's arrival, Harris and Pelosi clasped hands before giving each other a COVID-19-friendlier elbow bump.

Pelosi has sat at the rostrum in the House chamber before but always next to a male vice president: Dick Cheney, Biden and Mike Pence. Harris is the first female vice president in U.S. history.

Women's advocates have said seeing Harris and Pelosi seated together behind Biden will be a "beautiful moment." But they noted that electing a woman to sit in the Oval Office remains to be achieved, along with the addition of an equal rights amendment to the Constitution.

8:45 p.m.

Security is tight and crowd is thin at the Capitol under strict coronavirus restrictions for President Joe Biden's address to Congress.

The first address by a president to Congress is usually an electrifying evening. But this time it's a more subdued affair.

A few dozen lawmakers milled about the House chamber not long before Biden's speech, and a reduced crowd of about 200 is expected. That's compares with an audience of 1,600 members of Congress, officials and guests who typically gather for the event.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 46 of 85

Face masks are mandatory in the House chamber. Place cards marked the seats, with just one or two lawmakers per row. Some are sitting high in the visitors' galleries. No guests were invited.

National Guard troops protecting the Capitol since the Jan. 6 insurrection are stationed in and around the building

5:30 p.m.

The White House says President Joe Biden's speech to Congress will call on lawmakers to lower prescription drug costs by acting this year to empower Medicare to negotiate prices.

A White House official confirmed Biden's plan on condition of anonymity in advance of the president's speech to a joint session of Congress on Wednesday night.

Medicare's prescription drug benefit is delivered through private insurers, and the program is currently barred by law from negotiating prices directly with pharmaceutical companies.

As a candidate, Biden promised to change that, but he has yet to submit legislation to Congress. The official says Biden remains committed to working for reduced prescription drug prices.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is moving ahead with her plan to use expected savings from lower spending on drugs to expand Medicare benefits, capping prescription drug bills for seniors.

But Republicans are solidly opposed to Medicare negotiations, and some Senate Democrats have qualms. It's unclear if Pelosi's approach can get through the Senate.

— Associated Press writer Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar

5:20 p.m.

In his first address to Congress, President Joe Biden will declare that the nation is "turning peril into possibility, crisis into opportunity."

The White House released brief excerpts of Biden's Wednesday night speech, which comes on the eve of his 100th day in office.

Biden is to say that he inherited the White House amid "the worst pandemic in a century. The worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. The worst attack on our democracy since the Civil War."

Biden will add: "Now — after just 100 days — I can report to the nation: America is on the move again. Turning peril into possibility. Crisis into opportunity. Setback into strength."

Biden plans to use the address to unveil his push for a \$1.8 trillion investment in children, families and education that would fundamentally transform the roles the government plays in American life. He is also expected to address his \$2.3 trillion infrastructure proposal, as well as call on Congress to pass gun control legislation and reforms to the nation's immigration system.

## **EXPLAINER: Is it legal to shoot suspects in the back?**

By MICHAEL TARM AP LEGAL AFFAIRS WRITER

Seconds after Anthony Alvarez was shot from behind by a Chicago police officer, the fatally wounded 22-year-old looked over at the officer and asked: "Why you shooting me?" The officer answered, "You had a gun."

The dramatic exchange captured on video released Wednesday encapsulated a broader issue about whether the shooting of suspects in the back as they are running away is ever justified.

State laws and Supreme Court precedent permits it under certain circumstances, though the fact a fleeing suspect has a gun doesn't automatically make such a shooting legal.

Here's a look at the laws and how they might be relevant to the March 31 killing of Alvarez.

**ARE THERE DISPUTED FACTS?**

From the multiple videos released by Chicago's independent police review board, there's no disputing Alvarez had a gun. It's clearly visible.

The officer and a partner had just chased Alvarez down an alley when, after they emerged onto a residential sidewalk, the officer yelled at Alvarez: "Drop the gun!" The officer then shot at Alvarez, who

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 47 of 85

crumpled to the ground.

A police report identified the officer as Evan Solano, 29. The officer had recognized Alvarez from another incident the day before during which Alvarez fled, and he started chasing Alvarez on foot on March 31, the head of Chicago's police union, John Catanzara, has said.

From the videos, it seemed clear Alvarez had his back turned to the officer at the moment the six-year veteran of the force fired. As Alvarez's knees buckle after he was shot, his gun flies out of his hand and lands several feet away.

What's not clear is whether Alvarez might have been starting to turn as he was shot. Catanzara claimed Alvarez was turning in the direction of the officer.

## WHAT ARE THE RELEVANT LAWS?

For decades, officers were authorized to shoot suspects in the back to keep them from evading arrest. The killing of 15-year-old Edward Garner in 1974 changed that.

The case involved Memphis police officer Elton Hyman responding to a report of a prowler when he saw Garner running from a burglarized home. Hyman later told investigators he didn't think Garner was armed but shot him in the back of the head anyway to stop him from getting away. The shooting was deemed justified.

Garner's case led to a landmark Supreme Court decision in 1985, in which the high court said shooting fleeing suspects who are not an imminent threat is unconstitutional. The court said officers can use lethal force to stop a fleeing suspect only if they have reasonable grounds to think the suspect poses a danger to police or bystanders.

## CAN AN OFFICER SHOOT ANY FLEEING SUSPECT WITH A GUN?

No, explained Chicago-based civil rights attorney Andrew M. Stroth, who has represented many families whose relatives were shot by police.

"An officer has to be presented with an imminent threat of bodily harm or injury to himself or a third party," Stroth said. "The presence of a weapon alone is not justification for an officer to shoot a suspect in the back or anywhere else."

Other Supreme Court rulings since the Garner case have established that the presence of a gun does not necessarily give an officer the right to open fire.

"You cannot use your bullets from a service revolver to catch an alleged suspect who is not posing a danger," Stroth said.

He blamed the city of Chicago for not implementing a clear foot-pursuit policy for so many shooting deaths of fleeing suspects. He said in both the Alvarez shooting and in a police shooting of 13-year-old Adam Toledo on March 29, pursuing officers needlessly put themselves in positions with no cover.

"If they are chasing someone with a gun, they are creating a danger... where they think they have to use lethal force," he said. "That's bad for the officers and bad for everyone involved."

## COULD OFFICER SOLANO BE CHARGED CRIMINALLY?

From the surprise on Alvarez's face after he was shot and in asking Officer Solano about why he fired, it seems clear Alvarez did not see himself as a threat.

But for the purposes of assessing criminal liability, Alvarez's intentions aren't relevant. The decisive question is whether Solano perceived he was in danger.

The Supreme Court made an officer's perception of danger central to the legality of a shooting in its *Graham v. Connor* ruling in the 1989. The ruling said an officer's fear in the heat of the moment, not just the actual threat, was key. The court said that the reasonableness of an officer's use of force should be judged "from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight."

That ruling meant that officers who shoot a fleeing suspect in the back can't be charged if they credibly perceived the suspect was about to turn and shoot them, even if it became clear later that their perception was mistaken.

Charges against officers have been rare historically, no matter the circumstances. That's one reason

the conviction of Derek Chauvin last week for killing George Floyd was considered a civil rights milestone. But charges against officers who kill fleeing suspects who had guns or other weapons on them at the time are virtually unheard of, said Stroth.

He said it was highly unlikely Solano would face charges. By current legal standards, he said, it would be hard to argue that Solano was unjustified in opening fire.

## US indicts 3 on hate crime charges in death of Ahmaud Arbery

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department brought federal hate crimes charges Wednesday in the death of Ahmaud Arbery, charging a father and son who armed themselves, chased and fatally shot the 25-year-old Black man after spotting him running in their Georgia neighborhood.

Travis McMichael and his father, Gregory, were charged along with a third man, William "Roddie" Bryan, with one count of interference with civil rights and attempted kidnapping. The McMichaels are also charged with using, carrying and brandishing a firearm during a crime of violence.

The case is the most significant civil rights prosecution undertaken to date by the Biden administration Justice Department and comes as federal officials have moved quickly to open sweeping investigations into troubled police departments as civil rights takes center stage among the department's priorities.

The indictment charges that the McMichaels "armed themselves with firearms, got into a truck and chased Arbery through the public streets of the neighborhood while yelling at Arbery, using their truck to cut off his route and threatening him with firearms." It also alleges that Bryan got into a truck and then chased Arbery, using the vehicle to block his path.

Arbery, 25, was killed on Feb. 23, 2020, by three close-range shotgun blasts after the McMichaels pursued him in a pickup truck as he was running through their neighborhood. Arbery had been dead for more than two months when a cellphone video of the shooting was leaked online and a national outcry erupted.

The Georgia Bureau of Investigation took over the case the next day and swiftly arrested Travis McMichael, who fired the shots, his father, and Bryan, a neighbor who joined the pursuit and took the video. The three men remain jailed on state murder charges and are due back in court in May.

S. Lee Merritt, an attorney for Arbery's mother, Wanda Cooper-Jones, applauded the hate crimes charges Wednesday, tweeting that the federal case would "serve as a fail-safe to the state prosecution."

"Hate claimed Ahmaud's life," Merritt tweeted. "Our justice system must combat intolerance."

The McMichaels' lawyers have said they pursued Arbery, suspecting he was a burglar, after security cameras had previously recorded him entering a home under construction. They say Travis McMichael shot Arbery while fearing for his life as they grappled over a shotgun.

Local prosecutors have said Arbery stole nothing and was merely out jogging when the McMichaels and Bryan chased him.

The Justice Department alleges that the men "used force and threats of force to intimidate and interfere with Arbery's right to use a public street because of his race."

In pretrial court hearings in Georgia, prosecutors have presented evidence that racism may have played a role in the man's death.

Last June, an agent with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation testified Bryan told investigators that Travis McMichael uttered a racist slur right after the shooting as he stood over Arbery, who was bleeding on the ground.

"Mr. Bryan said that after the shooting took place before police arrival, while Mr. Arbery was on the ground, that he heard Travis McMichael make the statement, 'f---ing n---er,'" GBI agent Richard Dial testified.

Travis McMichael's attorneys have denied that he made the remark.

During a bond hearing in November, prosecutors introduced evidence that Travis McMichael had used racist slurs in a text message and on social media.

At the time Arbery was killed, Georgia was one of just four U.S. states without a hate crimes law. Amid the outcry over his death, Georgia lawmakers quickly passed a law allowing for an additional penalty for

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 49 of 85

certain crimes found to be motivated by a victim's race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender, or mental or physical disability.

The men charged with murdering Arbery won't face hate crime penalties at the state level because the law was changed after the killing.

Georgia Attorney General Chris Carr said the state case remained a priority, and he commended "this positive development and the continued push to get answers for Ahmaud's family, community and our state."

Attorneys for Travis McMichael said they were disappointed "that the Justice Department bought the false narrative that the media and state prosecutors have promulgated."

"There is absolutely nothing in the indictment that identifies how this is a federal hate crime and it ignores without apology that Georgia law allows a citizen to detain a person who was committing burglaries until police arrive," attorneys Bob Rubin and Jason Sheffield said.

Gregory McMichael's attorneys, Frank and Laura Hogue, did not immediately respond Wednesday to an email seeking comment.

Bryan's attorney, Kevin Gough, said he was disappointed by federal prosecutors' decision to seek an indictment against Bryan.

"Roddie Bryan has committed no crime," Gough said in a statement. "We look forward to a fair and speedy trial, and to the day when Mr. Bryan is released and reunited with his family."

## Harris, Pelosi make history seated behind Biden at speech

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi made history Wednesday as the first women — one of them Black and Indian American — to share the stage in Congress during a presidential address.

President Joe Biden noted the historic development at the very opening of his address. After taking the podium, Biden greeted the two women standing behind him with a "Madam Speaker" and "Madam Vice President."

He then declared, "No president has ever said those words — and it's about time."

Biden delivered his first prime-time speech to a joint session of Congress on Wednesday night flanked by Pelosi and Harris, two California Democrats.

The two began the night with another historic moment: An elbow-bump hello, a pandemic spin on the traditional handshake. Pelosi and Harris stood side by side behind the dais in the House chamber, chatting with each other and occasionally waving to lawmakers as the group waited for Biden to arrive.

"It's pretty exciting. And it's wonderful to make history. It's about time," Pelosi said hours before the speech during an interview on MSNBC.

Pelosi already knows what it feels like to sit on the rostrum in the House chamber and introduce a president for their speeches. She has sat there for several addresses by Presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump.

Women's advocates said seeing Harris and Pelosi seated together behind Biden will be a "beautiful moment." But they noted that electing a woman to sit in the Oval Office remains to be achieved, along with the addition of an equal rights amendment to the Constitution.

Biden helped usher the moment along by pledging to pick a woman for his running mate and selecting Harris, then a U.S. senator from California.

"This is a great start and we have to continue to move forward to give women their equal due," said Christian Nunes, president of the National Organization for Women.

Pelosi made history by becoming the first female House speaker during Republican Bush's presidency. He acknowledged the moment by noting during his address to Congress after Pelosi's election that he had the privilege of being the first president to open with the words "madam speaker."

Pelosi, 81, reclaimed the powerful leadership post during Republican Trump's presidency and sat behind

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 50 of 85

him during his final two speeches to Congress, famously ripping up her copy of Trump's remarks in 2020 as cameras continued to roll after he was finished addressing lawmakers.

Harris, 56, made history last year when she became the first woman and first Black and Indian American person elected vice president. In her role as president of the Senate, she joins Pelosi to preside over the joint session of Congress.

Debbie Walsh, director of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University, said Wednesday night will show men, women, boys and girls that women can attain and hold high-level positions and that they are as entitled to them as men are.

Walsh also noted Biden's promise to put a woman on his ticket, and pointed as well to the diversity of his Cabinet. She said Biden was likely to begin the speech by turning around to face Pelosi and Harris and feeling proud — not just personally, "but I also think proud for the country and proud for his party and I think he will clearly see the historic implications of this and the role that he played in making that happen."

"For all of us who care about women's public leadership, we still look forward to the day when the person standing at the podium, in front, is a woman," Walsh added. "But for now this is a particularly gratifying moment."

Harris' office declined comment Wednesday on her historic role in the president's address, preferring to let the moment speak for itself.

Apart from the speech Wednesday, Harris and Pelosi have notched another first in U.S. and women's history. They are first and second, respectively, in the line of presidential succession.

## Feds raid Giuliani's home, office, escalating criminal probe

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, MICHAEL BALSAMO and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Federal agents raided Rudy Giuliani's Manhattan home and office Wednesday, seizing computers and cellphones in a major escalation of the Justice Department's investigation into the business dealings of former President Donald Trump's personal lawyer.

Giuliani, the 76-year-old former New York City mayor once celebrated for his leadership after 9/11, has been under federal scrutiny for several years over his ties to Ukraine. The dual searches sent the strongest signal yet that he could eventually face federal charges.

Agents searched Giuliani's Madison Avenue apartment and Park Avenue office, people familiar with the investigation told The Associated Press. The warrants, which required approval from the top levels of the Justice Department, signify that prosecutors believe they have probable cause that Giuliani committed a federal crime — though they do not guarantee that charges will materialize.

A third search warrant was served on a phone belonging to Washington lawyer Victoria Toensing, a former federal prosecutor and close ally of Giuliani and Trump. Her law firm issued a statement saying she was informed that she is not a target of the investigation.

The full scope of the investigation is unclear, but it at least partly involves Giuliani's dealings in Ukraine, law enforcement officials have told the AP.

The people discussing the searches and Wednesday's developments could not do so publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity. News of the search was first reported by The New York Times.

In a statement issued through his lawyer, Giuliani accused federal authorities of a "corrupt double standard," invoking allegations he's pushed against prominent Democrats, and said that the Justice Department was "running rough shod over the constitutional rights of anyone involved in, or legally defending, former President Donald J. Trump."

"Mr. Giuliani respects the law, and he can demonstrate that his conduct as a lawyer and a citizen was absolutely legal and ethical," the statement said.

Bernie Kerik, who served as New York City's police commissioner during the Sept. 11 attacks and is a longtime Giuliani friend, said the former mayor called him as agents were searching his home on Wednesday morning. Kerik, who was pardoned by Trump for felony convictions that put him behind bars for three years, declined to describe his friend's mood or reaction, but expressed alarm at the raid, saying agents

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 51 of 85

"shouldn't have been there in the first place."

"I think it's extremely concerning," he said.

Giuliani's son, Andrew Giuliani, told reporters the raids were "disgusting" and "absolutely absurd."

A Justice Department spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The U.S. Attorney's office in Manhattan and the FBI's New York office declined to comment.

The federal probe into Giuliani's Ukraine dealings stalled last year because of a dispute over investigative tactics as Trump unsuccessfully sought a second term. Giuliani subsequently took on a leading role in disputing the election results on the Republican's behalf.

Wednesday's raids came months after Trump left office and lost his ability to pardon allies for federal crimes. The former president himself no longer enjoys the legal protections the Oval Office once provided him — though there is no indication Trump is eyed in this probe.

Trump's spokesman did not immediately respond to questions about Wednesday's events.

Many people in Trump's orbit have been ensnared in previous federal investigations, including special counsel Robert Mueller's probe of Russian election interference. Some, like former Gen. Michael Flynn, Roger Stone and Paul Manafort, were pardoned. While there were discussions about a pre-emptive pardon for Giuliani, it did not materialize.

Trump, his aides and many prominent backers were silent on the action Wednesday, with no widespread denunciations or "witchhunt" claims. Trump, who remains barred from Twitter, issued a statement on an Arizona election recount, but steered clear of defending his longtime lawyer, whose loyalty he had long professed to admire.

Giuliani was central to the then-president's efforts to dig up dirt against Democratic rival Joe Biden and to press Ukraine for an investigation into Biden and his son, Hunter — who himself now faces a criminal tax probe by the Justice Department.

Giuliani also sought to undermine former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch, who was pushed out on Trump's orders, and met several times with a Ukrainian lawmaker who released edited recordings of Biden in an effort to smear him before the election.

Giuliani's lawyer, Robert Costello, said the warrants involved an allegation that Giuliani failed to register as a foreign agent and that investigative documents mentioned John Solomon, a former columnist and frequent Fox News commentator with close ties to Giuliani, who pushed baseless or unsubstantiated allegations involving Ukraine and Biden during the 2020 election.

Phone records published by House Democrats in 2019 in the wake of Trump's first impeachment trial showed frequent contacts involving Giuliani, Solomon and Lev Parnas, a Giuliani associate who is under indictment on charges of using foreign money to make illegal campaign contributions.

Contacted Wednesday, Solomon said it was news to him that the Justice Department was interested in any communications he had with Giuliani, though he said it was not entirely surprising given the issues raised in the impeachment trial.

"He was someone that tried to pass information to me. I didn't use most of it," Solomon said of Giuliani. "If they want to look at that, there's not going to be anything surprising in it."

Everything was sitting "in plain view," Solomon said. He said he believed his reporting had "stood the test of time" and maintained that he was "unaware of a single factual error" in any of his stories.

Solomon's former employer, The Hill newspaper, published a review last year of some of his columns and determined they were lacking in context and missing key disclosures. Solomon previously worked for The Associated Press, departing the news organization in 2006.

The federal Foreign Agents Registration Act requires people who lobby on behalf of a foreign government or entity to register with the Justice Department. The once-obscure law, aimed at improving transparency, has received a burst of attention in recent years — particularly during Mueller's probe, which revealed an array of foreign influence operations in the U.S.

Federal prosecutors in the Manhattan office Giuliani himself once led — springing to prominence in the 1980s with high-profile prosecutions of Mafia figures — had pushed last year for a search warrant for records. Those included some of Giuliani's communications, but officials in the Trump-era Justice Depart-

ment would not sign off on the request, according to multiple people who insisted on anonymity to speak about the ongoing investigation with which they were familiar.

Officials in the then-deputy attorney general's office raised concerns about both the scope of the request, which they thought would contain communications that could be covered by legal privilege between Giuliani and Trump, and the method of obtaining the records, three of the people said.

The issue was widely expected to be revisited by the Justice Department once Attorney General Merrick Garland assumed office, given the need for the department's upper echelons to sign off on warrants served on lawyers. Garland was confirmed last month, and Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco was confirmed to her position and sworn in last week.

## India grieves 200,000 dead with many more probably uncounted

By SHEIKH SAALIQ, KRUTIKA PATHI and ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Three days after his coronavirus symptoms appeared, Rajendra Karan struggled to breathe. Instead of waiting for an ambulance, his son drove him to a government hospital in Lucknow, the capital of India's largest state.

But the hospital wouldn't let him in without a registration slip from the district's chief medical officer. By the time the son got it, his father had died in the car, just outside the hospital doors.

"My father would have been alive today if the hospital had just admitted him instead of waiting for a piece of paper," Rohitas Karan said.

Stories of deaths tangled in bureaucracy and breakdowns have become dismally common in India, where deaths on Wednesday officially surged past 200,000. But the true death toll is believed to be far higher.

In India, mortality data was poor even before the pandemic, with most people dying at home and their deaths often going unregistered. The practice is particularly prevalent in rural areas, where the virus is now spreading fast.

This is partly why this nation of nearly 1.4 billion has recorded fewer deaths than Brazil and Mexico, which have smaller populations and fewer confirmed COVID-19 cases.

While determining exact numbers in a pandemic is difficult, experts say an overreliance on official data that didn't reflect the true extent of infections contributed to authorities being blindsided by a huge surge in recent weeks.

"People who could have been saved are dying now," said Gautam Menon, a professor of physics and biology at Ashoka University. Menon said there has been "serious undercounting" of deaths in many states.

India had thought the worst was over when cases ebbed in September. But infections began increasing in February, and on Wednesday, 362,757 new confirmed cases, a global record, pushed the country's total past 17.9 million, second only to the U.S.

Local media have reported discrepancies between official state tallies of the dead and actual numbers of bodies in crematoriums and burial grounds. Many crematoriums have spilled over into parking lots and other empty spaces as blazing funeral pyres light up the night sky.

India's daily deaths, which have nearly tripled in the past three weeks, also reflect a shattered and underfunded health care system. Hospitals are scrambling for more oxygen, beds, ventilators and ambulances, while families marshal their own resources in the absence of a functioning system.

Jitender Singh Shunty runs an ambulance service in New Delhi transporting COVID-19 victims' bodies to a temporary crematorium in a parking lot. He said those who die at home are generally unaccounted for in state tallies, while the number of bodies has increased from 10 to nearly 50 daily.

"When I go home, my clothes smell of burnt flesh. I have never seen so many dead bodies in my life," Shunty said.

Burial grounds are also filling up fast. The capital's largest Muslim graveyard is running out of space, said Mohammad Shameem, the head gravedigger, noting he was now burying nearly 40 bodies a day.

In southern Telangana state too, doctors and activists are contesting the official death counts.

On April 23, the state said 33 people had died of COVID-19. But between 80 to 100 people died in just two hospitals in the state's capital, Hyderabad, the day before. It is unclear whether all were due to the

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 53 of 85

virus, but experts say COVID-19 deaths across India aren't being listed as such.

Instead, many are attributed to underlying conditions despite national guidelines asking states to record all suspected COVID-19 deaths, even if the patient wasn't tested for the virus.

For instance, New Delhi officially recorded 4,000 COVID-19 deaths by Aug. 31, but this didn't include suspected deaths, according to data accessed by The Associated Press under a right-to-information request. Fatalities have since more than tripled to over 14,500. Officials didn't respond to queries on whether suspected deaths are now being included.

In Lucknow, officials said 39 people died of the virus in the city on Tuesday. But Suresh Chandra, who operates its Bhisakhund electric crematorium, said his team had cremated 58 COVID-19 bodies by Tuesday evening, and 28 more were cremated at a nearby crematorium the same day.

Ajay Dwivedi, a government official in Lucknow, acknowledged more bodies were being cremated but said they included corpses from other districts.

Last year, the Indian government used low death and case counts to declare victory against the coronavirus. In October, a month after cases started to ebb, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India was saving more lives than richer countries. In January he boasted at the World Economic Forum that India's success was incomparable.

At the heart of these statements was dubious data that shaped policy decisions.

Information about where people were getting infected and dying could have helped India better prepare for the current surge, said Dr. Prabhat Jha, an epidemiologist at the University of Toronto who has studied deaths in India.

Accurate data would have allowed experts to map the virus more clearly, identifying hotspots, driving vaccinations and strengthening public health resources, he said.

"You can't walk out of a pandemic without data," he said.

But even when reliable data is available, it hasn't always been heeded. With infections already rising in March, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan declared India was nearing the "endgame." When daily cases were in the hundreds of thousands, Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party and other political parties were holding massive election rallies, drawing thousands of maskless supporters.

The government also allowed a Hindu festival drawing hundreds of thousands to the banks of the Ganges River to go ahead despite warnings from experts that a devastating surge was starting.

Many were already convinced COVID-19 wasn't very lethal since the death toll seemed low.

India's health ministry did not respond to queries from AP, and ministers from Modi's party deflected questions about death counts.

Manohar Lal Khattar, chief minister of Haryana state, told reporters Monday that the dead will never come back and that "there was no point in a debate over the number of deaths."

The Indian Medical Association in February said 734 doctors had died of COVID-19 since the pandemic began. Days later, India's health ministry put the number at 313.

"This is criminal," said Dr. Harjit Singh Bhatti, president of the Progressive Medicos and Scientists Forum. "The government lied about the deaths of health workers first, and now they are lying about deaths of ordinary citizens."

## 114-year-old Nebraska woman becomes oldest living American

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A 114-year-old Nebraska woman who has taken the title of America's oldest living person says what she wants most is to eat with her friend after a year of pandemic restrictions.

Thelma Sutcliffe, of Omaha, became the nation's oldest living person and seventh-oldest in the world on April 17 when Hester Ford, a 115-year-old woman, died in North Carolina, according to the Gerontology Research Group.

The Omaha World-Herald reports that Sutcliffe was born on Oct. 1, 1906. Her longtime friend, Luella "Lou" Mason, said she is happy that the senior living center where Sutcliffe lives is locked down, but "Thelma is as determined as ever to do what she wants to do."

Until visitors are allowed in the dining room, Thelma is taking all her meals in her room. Mason, who has Sutcliffe's power of attorney, calls the senior living center 24 hours ahead of time to schedule visits.

"She asks me every time I visit, 'Are you going to eat with me today?'" Mason recalled. "It breaks my heart that I can't."

Sutcliffe's hearing and sight are fading, Mason said, but her mind is still "very sharp."

Sutcliffe received her COVID shots at the earliest opportunity, but testing for the coronavirus was a nonstarter.

Mason said Sutcliffe looked at the swab and said, "You're not going to be sticking that thing up my nose. You can tell Lou to stick it up hers."

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## Judge won't release videos of deputies shooting Black man

By BEN FINLEY and JONATHAN DREW Associated Press

ELIZABETH CITY, N.C. (AP) — A judge refused Wednesday to release body camera video showing North Carolina deputies shooting and killing a Black man, ruling that making the video public at this stage could jeopardize the investigation into Andrew Brown Jr.'s death.

However, the judge did order authorities to allow Brown's family to privately view five videos from body cameras and one from a dashboard camera within 10 days, with some portions blurred or redacted. Family members had previously been allowed to view only a 20-second clip from a single body camera.

Judge Jeffery Foster said he believed the videos contained information that could harm the ongoing investigation or threaten the safety of people seen in the footage. He said the video must remain out of public view for at least 30 days, but he would consider releasing it after that point if investigations are complete.

"The release at this time would create a serious threat to the fair, impartial and orderly administration of justice," Foster said.

While one attorney for Brown's family, Wayne Kendall, initially said it was a "partial victory" for the family to view more video, the legal team later issued a statement condemning the decision not to make the video public.

"In this modern civil rights crisis where we see Black people killed by the police everywhere we look, video evidence is the key to discerning the truth and getting well-deserved justice for victims of senseless

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 55 of 85

murders," said the statement signed by the legal team, including Ben Crump and Harry Daniels.

The decision came shortly after a North Carolina prosecutor said that Brown had hit law enforcement officers with his car before they opened fire last week.

District Attorney Andrew Womble, who viewed the body camera videos, told the judge that he disagreed with a characterization by an attorney for Brown's family that Brown did not try to drive away until deputies opened fire. Womble said the video shows that Brown's car made "contact" with law enforcement twice before shots could be heard on the video.

"As it backs up, it does make contact with law enforcement officers," he said, adding that the car stops again. "The next movement of the car is forward. It is in the direction of law enforcement and makes contact with law enforcement. It is then and only then that you hear shots."

Womble said that officers shouted commands and tried to open a car door before any shots were fired.

None of the deputies were injured, according to previous statements by the Pasquotank County sheriff, Tommy Wooten II.

Womble argued that video of the shooting should be kept from the public while state investigators pursue their probe. He said the video should not be released until a trial in the shooting or, alternatively, if a completed investigation results in no charges.

One of the Brown family lawyers, Chantel Cherry-Lassiter, who viewed the 20-second video, said Monday that shots were heard from the instant the clip started with Brown's car in his driveway and his hands on the steering wheel. She said he did not try to back away until after deputies ran up to his car and began shooting, and he did not pose a threat to deputies, explaining: "He finally decides to try to get away and he backs out, not toward officers at all."

In response to Womble's remarks in court, she defended her description of the footage.

"At no time have I given any misrepresentations. I still stand by what I saw in that clip," she said, adding that she watched the clip "over and over," taking notes.

The judge denied formal requests by a media coalition including The Associated Press and by the sheriff to release the video. Under a 2016 state law, authorities can show body camera video privately to family members of a victim but must receive a judge's approval to make it public.

"Accountability is important," Mike Tadych, a lawyer for the media coalition, said in court. "But in order to hold public officials accountable, we have to see what's going on."

Tadych said later in an email that he and his colleagues will decide the best route for an appeal once they receive the judge's written order.

The FBI on Tuesday announced a civil rights investigation into Brown's death, and Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper, who has also called for a swift release of the video, urged that a special prosecutor be appointed to take the state's case over from Womble. However, under state law, the district attorney would have to agree to let another prosecutor step in. Womble indicated in a statement Tuesday that he will not do so.

The State Bureau of Investigation began a probe of the shooting shortly after it happened. It has said that it would turn its findings over to Womble, as is standard under state laws and procedures.

Brown was shot April 21 by deputies serving drug-related search and arrest warrants at his house in the North Carolina town of Elizabeth City, about 160 miles northeast of Raleigh. On Tuesday, Brown's family released an independent autopsy showing he was shot five times, including in the back of the head. The state's autopsy has not been released yet.

## Police: 4 people killed in German hospital, woman detained

BERLIN (AP) — Four people were found dead at a hospital in the eastern city of Potsdam late Wednesday and a woman was detained, police said.

A spokesman for Brandenburg state police said officers were called to the Oberlin Clinic shortly before 9 p.m. They found the four dead people and a fifth person who was seriously injured, he said.

"The victims showed signs of significant external violence," police spokesman Thorsten Herbst told The Associated Press.

Herbst said the detained woman was "urgently suspected" of the killings, but declined to immediately provide further details.

Local newspaper Potsdamer Neueste Nachrichten reported the victims were patients at the clinic and the detained woman was an employee.

Potsdam is on the southwestern edge of the German capital, Berlin.

## **Al Schmitt, Grammy winning engineer and producer, dead at 91**

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Twenty-time Grammy winner Al Schmitt, whose extraordinary career as a recording engineer and producer included albums by Bob Dylan, Ray Charles, Frank Sinatra and many other of the top performers of the past 60 years, has died at age 91.

Schmitt's family announced on Facebook that he died Monday, without identifying a specific cause. Schmitt lived in the Los Angeles area. A relative, who did not want to be identified, confirmed Schmitt's death to The Associated Press.

"The world has lost a much loved and respected extraordinary individual, who led an extraordinary life," the Facebook posting reads in part. "The most honored and awarded recording producer/engineer of all time, his parting words at any speaking engagement were, 'Please be kind to all living things.'"

He won his first Grammy in 1963, then collected 19 more competitive awards and the honorary Recording Academy Trustees Award, in 2006. Schmitt worked on more than 150 gold records, in a wide range of styles. He engineered Henry Mancini's "Moon River" and Sam Cooke's "Another Saturday Night," Steely Dan's "Aja" and Madonna's "This Used to be My Playground." He engineered Natalie Cole's blockbuster "Unforgettable" album and Barbra Streisand's "The Way We Were." He produced "Volunteers" and several other Jefferson Airplane albums, helped produce Neil Young's "On the Beach" and more recently Dylan's "Shadows in the Night" and Paul McCartney's "Kisses on the Bottom."

Brian Wilson, whose album of Gershwin songs was remixed by Schmitt, was among those Wednesday offering tributes, tweeting "Al was an industry giant and a great engineer who worked with some of the greatest artists ever, and I'm honored to have worked with him on my Gershwin album." Michael Bubl , Journey's Steve Perry and Michael Bolton also praised him.

Schmitt's other credits included Sinatra's final studio recordings, "Duets" and "Duets II," and Charles' final album, "Genius Loves Company," which won Grammys in 2003 for best album and for best record, the Charles-Norah Jones duet "Here We Go Again." Years earlier, he engineered the duet album "Ray Charles and Betty Carter," a personal favorite despite Charles' struggles with heroin addiction.

"At that point, Ray was having a major drug problem," he told Billboard in 2018. "So every time (there was) a 10-minute break, they would take him off into the bathroom, and God knows what happened, what went on. It was sad to see that, but when he opened his mouth and sang, and (with) Betty, I mean, I got goosebumps. It was just unbelievable."

Schmitt was married twice, and had five children, eight grandchildren, and five great grandchildren.

Born in Brooklyn, he was the nephew of recording engineer Harry Smith and as a boy would take the subway into Manhattan and head for his uncle's studio, where anyone from Sinatra to Art Tatum might be in session. After serving in the Navy, he found work through his uncle at Apex Studios, where one of his first assignments was recording Duke Ellington. He would also soon befriend Tom Dowd, who as an engineer for Atlantic Records later worked on classic songs by Aretha Franklin, Eric Clapton and many others.

"Al was an obvious music enthusiast," Dowd told Billboard in 2002. "He liked a lot of records and a lot of artists — not just popular artists but the 'bubbling under' artists too-and was sensitive to music, whether it was jazz or gospel or blues or pop.

"He had quick hands and quick ears. They ran through the song once, maybe twice, and he had it down in his mind and in his hands and was able to fly with it right away. His endeavor, at the outset, was to capture what the artists and musicians were doing. He has an unlimited horizon."

He moved to Los Angeles in the late 1950s and became a staff engineer for RCA Records. Schmitt received

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 57 of 85

his first Grammy for engineering Mancini's "Hatari" and was still winning them in his 80s, including one for McCartney's "Kisses On the Bottom" and another for a concert version of McCartney's record, "Live Kisses."

His memoir "Al Schmitt On the Record," published in 2018, included tributes from Dylan, Young ("Al is the master," he wrote, "I love it when he gets pissed off"), Streisand and the Airplane's Jorma Kaukonen, who remembered Schmitt's skill and patience with "this bunch of musical anarchists."

Schmitt had his own stories to tell. He became close to Cooke and dined with him just hours before the singer was shot and killed in 1964 at a Los Angeles motel. He remembered Natalie Cole crying in the studio while making "Unforgettable" as she worked on "duets" with her father, the late Nat "King Cole," whose vocals were joined to hers thanks in part to the studio tricks of Schmitt.

He learned to work with, and work around, the musicians, whether the Airplane's indulgence of drugs and sonic effects or Sinatra's request that he sing in front of the studio band and not in the recording booth, despite such enticements as cigarettes and a bottle of Jack Daniels. He got to work with the singer through his friendship with "Duets" producer Phil Ramone.

"I did an interview with a magazine where they asked me if I had any regrets in my career," he wrote in his memoir. "I answered that I had one regret: that I hadn't worked with Frank Sinatra. Three weeks later, I got the call from Phil Ramone.

"That happened with Paul McCartney, too; somebody asked me who I hadn't worked with that I'd like to, I said, 'Paul,' and shortly after that it happened — I did a record with Paul! Bob Dylan, too; I've pretty much gotten my bucket list done now."

## Senate votes to reinstate methane rules loosened by Trump

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congressional Democrats are moving to reinstate regulations designed to limit climate-warming greenhouse gas emissions from oil and gas fields, as part of a broader effort by the Biden administration to tackle climate change.

The Senate approved a resolution Wednesday that would undo an environmental rollback by President Donald Trump that relaxed requirements of a 2016 Obama administration rule targeting methane emissions from oil and gas drilling.

The resolution was approved, 52-42. Three Republican senators — Susan Collins of Maine, Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and Rob Portman of Ohio — joined 49 Democrats to approve the measure, which only needed a simple majority under Senate rules. Five Republicans and one Democrat did not vote.

The legislation now goes to the Democratic-controlled House, where it is expected to win approval.

The Environmental Protection Agency approved the looser methane rule last year. The agency's former administrator, Andrew Wheeler, declared the change would "strengthen and promote American energy" while saving companies tens of millions of dollars a year in compliance requirements.

Democrats and environmentalists called it one of the Trump administration's most egregious actions to deregulate U.S. businesses. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming, packing a stronger punch in the short term than even carbon dioxide.

Preventing methane leaks at oil and gas sites "is a huge part of how we prevent a 1.5 degree (Celsius) rise in global temperatures," a key aim of the climate movement, said Sen. Martin Heinrich, D-N.M.

Heinrich, a member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, co-sponsored the resolution under the Congressional Review Act, which allows Congress to overturn certain regulations that have been in place for a short time. The Trump rule was finalized last September.

Heinrich called the resolution "a no-brainer," saying that preventing leaks of methane — a type of natural gas — will save companies money, put people to work and help prevent global warming.

"I'm surprised and a little disappointed this is not broadly bipartisan," Heinrich said, noting that many energy companies, including Shell Oil Co., Occidental Petroleum and Cheniere Energy Inc., support reinstatement of the Obama-era rule.

"It's sort of inertia and dogma at this point" for Republicans to oppose tighter restrictions on methane

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 58 of 85

emissions, he said in an interview.

Collins, who joined with Democrats to block a GOP-led effort to overturn a similar Obama-era methane rule in 2017, said the move to undo the Trump-era rule would "protect public health and the environment by restoring the tougher standards at EPA that significantly decreased methane emissions."

Graham, who also voted with Democrats in 2017, called methane leaks "unnecessary emissions," adding that if energy companies "can do something about it, they'll need to do it."

Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, R-W.Va., said Democrats appear intent on demonizing natural gas even though increased natural gas production — spurred by the fracking boom — "actually helped lead to significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions" over the past decade.

Capito, the top Republican on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, said President Joe Biden "managed to kill thousands of jobs and paralyze America's energy industry with executive orders" soon after taking office, including withdrawal of a permit for the Keystone XL oil pipeline. Another order, freezing new oil and gas leases on federal lands and waters, "is an economic, energy and national security disaster rolled into one," she said.

The order "moves America from energy independence back to relying on foreign adversaries for energy — countries that have much laxer environmental standards," Capito said. She called the leasing pause part of a looming war against natural gas, a fossil fuel that contributes to global warming, although at a lower rate than coal or oil.

"The forces against natural gas are growing," she said, adding that many Democrats and environmentalists also oppose coal "or any other energy source that's not blessed by the Green New Deal."

Democrats disputed that notion. The Green New Deal — a sweeping but nonbinding proposal to shift the U.S. economy away from fossil fuels such as oil and coal and replace them with renewable sources such as wind and solar power — has not been approved in either the House or the Senate.

David Doniger, a climate and clean-energy expert at the Natural Resources Defense Council, said natural gas has "significant leakage" at every stage in the production process, from drilling to movement through pipelines.

Doniger called the Trump administration's rollback "a free pass for America's oil and gas companies to keep leaking," adding, "If you are looking for fast relief from the worst effects of global warming, then methane control is high on your list."

Repealing the Trump rule not only is beneficial in itself, Doniger said, but it also will send a strong signal that "America is back on course" in the fight against climate change, "and this Congress wants to get action done on climate."

Heinrich and other Democrats said the methane vote is the first of many steps Congress will take to address climate change.

"Under this Democratic majority, the Senate will be a place where we take decisive, ambitious and effective action against climate change," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.

The U.S. needs to "build credibility on the world stage" on climate change following "four years of inaction and hostility to climate policy" under Trump, Heinrich said.

"It's a great opportunity to build momentum" as Congress considers Biden's \$2.3 trillion infrastructure plan, he said. The plan includes spending for 500,000 charging stations for electric vehicles; significant expansion of solar and wind power; and development of technology to capture and store carbon pollution from coal-fired power plants.

Congressional approval of the methane rule will help Biden at a U.N. conference on climate change, scheduled for November in Glasgow, Scotland, Democrats said. The votes would tell other countries that, "we're not just rejoining (the Paris climate accord) but we will lead the world on climate," Heinrich said.

## US eyes major rollback in Iran sanctions to revive nuke deal

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration is considering a near wholesale rollback of some of

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 59 of 85

the most stringent Trump-era sanctions imposed on Iran in a bid to get the Islamic Republic to return to compliance with a landmark 2015 nuclear accord, according to current and former U.S. officials and others familiar with the matter.

As indirect talks continue this week in Vienna to explore the possibility of reviving the nuclear deal, American officials have become increasingly expansive about what they might be prepared to offer Iran, which has been driving a hard line on sanctions relief, demanding that all U.S. penalties be removed, according to these people.)

American officials have refused to discuss which sanctions are being considered for removal. But they have said they are open to lifting any sanctions that are inconsistent with the nuclear deal or that deny Iran the relief it would be entitled to should it return to compliance with the accord. Because of the complex nature of the sanctions architecture, that could include non-nuclear sanctions, such as those tied to terrorism, missile development and human rights.

Biden administration officials say this is necessary because of what they describe as a deliberate attempt by the Trump administration to stymie any return to the deal. Under the 2015 agreement, the United States was required to lift sanctions tied to Iran's nuclear program, but not non-nuclear sanctions.

Administration officials deny they will remove all non-nuclear sanctions, but have declined to identify those which they believe Trump improperly imposed on terrorism and other grounds.

"Any return to the JCPOA would require sanctions relief, but we are considering removing only those sanctions that are inconsistent with the JCPOA," said State Department spokesman Ned Price. "Even if we rejoin the JCPOA — which remains a hypothetical — we would retain and continue to implement sanctions on Iran for activities not covered by the JCPOA, including Iran's missile proliferation, support for terrorism, and human rights abuses."

When President Donald Trump re-imposed sanctions after withdrawing from the deal in 2018, he not only put the nuclear sanctions back in but also added layers of terrorism and other sanctions on many of the same entities. In addition, the Trump administration imposed an array of new sanctions on previously unsanctioned entities.

This has put the current administration in an awkward position: Iran is demanding the removal of all sanctions. If the U.S. doesn't lift at least some of them, Iran says it won't agree to halt its nuclear activities barred by the deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA.

But if the Biden administration makes concessions that go beyond the nuclear-specific sanctions, Republican critics and others, including Israel and Gulf Arab states, are likely to seize on them as proof that the administration is caving to Iran. Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has led the charge among Trump alumni to denounce any easing of sanctions.

Former Trump administration officials say all the sanctions are legitimate. Gabriel Noronha, a former State Department senior adviser on Iran, said all the Trump-era sanctions had been approved by career Justice Department lawyers and would have been rejected if they weren't legitimate.

But a senior State Department official involved in the negotiations said officials now "have to go through every sanction to look at whether they were legitimately or not legitimately imposed."

The official, who like the others spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private talks, also said the U.S. would be prepared to lift sanctions that would otherwise deny Iran the benefits of the deal. Those sanctions could include restrictions on Iran's ability to access the international financial system, including dealing in dollar-based transactions.

"There are sanctions that are inconsistent with the JCPOA and as we have said, if Iran resumes its compliance with the nuclear deal ... we would be prepared to lift those sanctions that are inconsistent with the JCPOA," Price said last week. He declined to elaborate on what might be "inconsistent" with the deal.

Those comments suggest that sanctions imposed on Iran's Central Bank, its national oil and shipping companies, its manufacturing, construction and financial sectors are on the block. Deal critics briefed on aspects of the Vienna negotiations say they suspect that is indeed the case.

That's because the bank, oil, shipping and other sanctions, all ostensibly imposed by the Trump administration for terrorism, ballistic missile and human rights concerns, also affect nuclear sanctions relief.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 60 of 85

Current officials say no decisions have yet been made and nothing will be agreed in Vienna until everything regarding sanctions relief and Iran's return to compliance with the nuclear deal has been settled.

But critics of the nuclear deal fear the administration will go beyond even what has been suggested by the administration's oblique comments. They suspect that sanctions on people, companies, government agencies or other entities identified for nuclear sanctions relief in the 2015 deal will be cleared; even if they were subsequently penalized on other grounds.

"The administration is looking to allow tens of billions of dollars into the coffers of the regime even if it means lifting sanctions on major entities blacklisted for terrorism and missile proliferation," said Mark Dubowitz, a prominent Iran deal critic and CEO of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

"They're even looking to give the regime indirect access to the U.S. dollar through the U.S. financial system so that international companies can clear transactions with Iran through the U.S. dollar," said Dubowitz, who is frequently criticized for his hard-line stance on Iran but has also been asked for his views on sanctions by the administration.

The Obama administration grappled with much the same issue after the conclusion of the nuclear deal in 2015. It took the position that some sanctions previously imposed by it and former President George W. Bush's administration for terrorism reasons should actually be classified as nuclear sanctions and therefore lifted under the deal.

Still, many countries and international companies were hesitant to jump into the Iranian market for fear that the sanctions relief was not clear-cut and that a future U.S. president could re-impose the sanctions. Now, that that has happened, and even before an agreement has been concluded in Vienna, that concern has resurfaced.

Already, Republicans in Congress and opponents of the Iranian government are stepping up efforts to codify Trump's hard-line stance on Iran with new legislation. Although a law to bar a return to the nuclear deal is unlikely to pass, there is wide bipartisan support for resolutions encouraging the administration to take a tougher line on Iran.

Such a resolution was introduced on Wednesday with more than 220 Democratic and Republican co-sponsors. In it, they call for the administration to recognize "the rights of the Iranian people and their struggle to establish a democratic, secular, and non-nuclear Republic of Iran while holding the ruling regime accountable for its destructive behavior."

## Apple profit soars in latest quarter on higher iPhone sales

The Associated Press undefined

Demand for the iPhone and other Apple products drove profits to more than double in the January-March period as the tech giant continued to capitalize on smartphone addiction.

Profits came to \$23.6 billion, or \$1.40 per share, while revenue climbed 54% to \$89.6 billion in the fiscal second quarter, the company said Wednesday. Analysts polled by FactSet expected 99 cents per share on \$77.1 billion in sales.

The iPhone, Apple's crown jewel, hadn't sold quite as well as usual over the past few years as people held on to their current phones for longer. But the release of four iPhone 12 models last fall has unleashed purchases, and iPhone sales rose 66% to \$47.9 billion on top of a holiday-season quarter when iPhone sales jumped 17%.

Some analysts believe the popularity of the iPhone 12 could lead to the device's biggest sales year since 2014, when the iPhone 6 came out. It was a big hit because Apple enlarged the device's screen.

The iPhone 12 is the first model that can connect to 5G wireless networks that promise higher speeds but are still being built out. Apple is trying to goose sales even more during the current quarter with a new purple iPhone 12.

Apple's other products and services — it has music and TV streaming services, just announced a new key- and backpack-tracking device called AirTags, and computers and tablets — are also growing. Mac sales soared 70% to \$9.1 billion, a revenue record for the company, and iPad sales climbed 79% to \$7.8 billion. CEO Tim Cook, on a call with investment analysts, noted the importance of the company's comput-

ers and tablets during the pandemic as students and workers toiled virtually at home.

The company's steadily expanding services division generated revenue of \$16.9 billion during the quarter, up 27%. That division includes 15% to 30% commissions that Apple collects from most paid transactions completed with iPhone apps. Regulators in different countries are scrutinizing how Apple extracts payments through the App Store.

The issue will be the focal point of a federal court trial scheduled to start May 3. Epic Games, the maker of the popular video game Fortnite, will try to prove its contention that Apple has turned its app store into a weapon for shaking down smaller companies to boost its own already huge profits.

Apple insists its fees are reasonable in light of its massive investment in the iPhone and that its "walled garden" approach helps protect the security of its customers and their devices.

The company also said it would increase spending on stock buybacks by \$90 billion and raised its dividend by 7%.

Apple CFO Luca Maestri said on the call that the company was not providing a revenue forecast given continued uncertainty in the world economy, but said that revenue in the current quarter would grow by "double digits" from the year before. Supply constraints resulting from a shortage of computer chips would lower revenue by \$3 billion to \$4 billion in the June quarter, primarily affecting the Mac and iPad, he said.

Chips that power a wide range of devices are in short supply, contributing to the iPhone 12's delayed release last year. Apple is "executing extremely well" despite those supply constraints, CFRA analyst Angelo Zino wrote in a research note.

Apple shares rose 1.8% in aftermarket trading Wednesday.

## Columbus mayor requests federal probe of police force

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and ANDREW WELSH-HUGGINS Report for America/Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — While Ohio's capital city has made significant progress enacting changes to its police department, the city needs additional help because of "fierce opposition" to reform within the agency, city leaders said Wednesday as they requested a Justice Department investigation following a series of police killings of Black people and other controversies.

The request by Mayor Andrew Ginther and City Attorney Zach Klein — both Democrats — capped several painful months for the city, culminating most recently with the April 20 fatal shooting of 16-year-old Ma'Khia Bryant as she swung a knife at a woman. Bryant was Black and the rookie officer who shot her was white.

Criticism has included not just fatal police shootings but also the department's reaction to last summer's protests over racial injustice and police brutality following the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin. A report commissioned by city council and released earlier this week criticized both the police department and city leaders, saying Columbus was unprepared for the size and energy of the protests.

"This is not about one particular officer, policy, or incident; rather, this is about reforming the entire institution of policing in Columbus," Ginther and Klein said in Wednesday's letter. "Simply put: We need to change the culture of the Columbus Division of Police."

It's not unusual for mayors or local law enforcement leaders to ask the Justice Department to review an agency's record. Those requests sometimes are made when city officials anticipate a federal probe is looming regardless of their wishes.

When the Justice Department does launch such a review, city officials can do little to stop it, so they generally welcome the investigations, at least in public. The mayors of Minneapolis and Louisville, Kentucky, quickly endorsed the reviews the Justice Department recently announced of those cities' police departments following the killings of Floyd and Breonna Taylor.

It's likely that the recent police killings in Columbus combined with the mayor's push for changes would make the city's request appealing to the Justice Department, said Ayesha Hardaway, a Case Western Reserve University criminal law professor.

"I imagine that Columbus will be considered a good opportunity to make lasting change," said Hardaway,

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 62 of 85

who has worked with Cleveland's police department in the wake of Justice Department involvement after the 2014 shooting of 12-year-old Tamir Rice.

A message was left with the Justice Department seeking comment.

The request by Columbus leaders came the same day that the attorney representing the family of Bryant requested a federal investigation into her death and the state's foster care system.

Columbus remains an outlier among other American cities under Justice Department scrutiny, with multiple initiatives launched over the last few years to address complaints about the police department, pushed by Ginther and the city's all-Democratic city council.

In 2016, shortly after Ginther took office, the city spent millions of dollars to buy police body cameras for the first time and is now in the process of spending millions more to upgrade them. The city recently created its first-ever civilian review board in a 2020 voter-approved measure pushed by Ginther and the city council.

Despite these efforts, "the City has been met with fierce opposition from leadership within the Columbus Division of Police," Wednesday's letter said, which also suggested the Justice Department could use court-ordered measures to force the local police union to comply with changes.

Columbus officers "are always willing to work with any entity to improve policing in the communities they protect and serve," Jeff Simpson, executive vice president of the local union, said in a statement. "Politicians constantly vilifying officers breeds contempt for authority, emboldens the criminal element and has led to a mass exodus of law enforcement officers from the profession."

Even with its initiatives, Columbus — the country's 14th largest city — has recorded a number of contested police shootings.

The most recent cases include Bryant, the April 12 killing of 27-year-old Miles Jackson in a hospital ER room, and 47-year-old Andre Hill. The white police officer who fatally shot Hill Dec. 22 has pleaded not guilty to a number of charges made against him by the state's attorney general's office.

The case of Casey Goodson Jr., a 23-year-old Black man who was fatally shot by Franklin County Sheriff's deputy in early December in Columbus, has widened criticism of policing in the city to include the county sheriff's office.

In January, interim Columbus Chief Thomas Quinlan was forced out after Ginther said he'd lost confidence in the chief's ability to make needed changes to the department.

Before the recent police shootings, the city was sued over the 2016 shooting of Henry Green, a Black man, by two undercover white police officers working in an anti-crime summer initiative.

Later in the same year, a white officer fatally shot 13-year-old Tyre King, who was Black, during a robbery investigation. In 2017, a video showed a Columbus officer restraining a Black man lying on the ground and preparing to handcuff him when an officer — Zachary Rosen — who was also involved in the Green shooting arrived and appeared to kick the man in the head.

The city fired Rosen, but an arbitrator ordered him reinstated, angering many in the community while underscoring the challenge that police union contracts can pose for cities trying to hold officers accountable.

Records show that Black residents, about 28% of the Columbus population, accounted for about half of all use-of-force incidents from 2015 through 2019.

The agency — like many big-city departments — is juggling calls for internal change even as it battles street violence. Columbus saw a record 174 homicides in 2020 and has recorded 62 so far this year, a figure not reached until early July of last year.

Federal involvement in the Columbus police department over allegations of officer misconduct isn't new.

In 1999, the Justice Department sued the city, accusing officers of routinely violating people's civil rights through illegal searches, false arrests and excessive force. A year later, the government added a racial profiling complaint, alleging that from 1994 to 1999, Black people in Columbus were almost three times as likely as whites to be the subject of traffic stops in which one or more tickets were issued.

A federal judge in 2002 dismissed the lawsuit after the city, which had fought it, made changes on the use of police force and handling of complaints against officers.

In Wednesday's letter, Ginther pledged to give the Justice Department the city's full cooperation if the

agency agrees to take on the review.

"We want to be partners with the DOJ to bring about meaningful, sustainable and significant reforms," he wrote. "Not only is the elected leadership in the City of Columbus aligned with this request, but the residents of Columbus unquestionably share the same goal."

## **Video: Chicago man had gun, back turned when police shot him**

By DON BABWIN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — A 22-year-old Chicago man who was fleeing from police had his back turned and appeared to be holding a gun when an officer fatally shot him last month, according to a video released Wednesday in what has become an all too familiar occurrence for the city's embattled police department.

Nearly two weeks after releasing video of the fatal police shooting of 13-year-old Adam Toledo, the city's independent police review board released footage and other investigation materials pertaining to the March 31 killing of Anthony Alvarez. Unlike in the Toledo case, the board recommended that the officer who shot Alvarez be stripped of his police powers until its investigation is finished — a rare move this early in one of its investigations.

As she did before the Toledo footage was made public, Mayor Lori Lightfoot called on the public to remain calm and allow the review board — the Civilian Office of Police Accountability — to complete its investigation into the killing of Alvarez, who, like Toledo, was Latino. The head of the Chicago police union did the same, pleading in a video statement for the public to keep an open mind when watching the footage.

And even as Police Superintendent David Brown declined to discuss the details of the Alvarez shooting, his department, as it did after the Toledo shooting, released a compilation video, complete with arrows that make it easier to see the gun Alvarez was holding.

In one of the non-compilation clips posted on the review board's website, an officer's body camera shows him chasing Alvarez. When Alvarez reaches a lawn in front of a house, the officer can be heard shouting, "Drop the gun! Drop the gun!" before he opens fire. Alvarez appears to drop a gun after five shots ring out and he falls to the ground.

As Alvarez lays there, he asks, "Why you shooting me?" to which the officer responds, "You had a gun." The officer later tells other officers that Alvarez was armed and points to a gun on the ground.

In the roughly 15 seconds in which Alvarez remains lucid after being shot and with blood quickly soaking his clothes, he can be heard saying "I'm gonna die" as he struggles to look at his cellphone. And as in the Toledo shooting, officers rush to treat Alvarez's wounds, telling him, "I'm trying to help you. Stay with me dude."

Alvarez's family, who saw the video Tuesday, said they were still waiting for answers to some basic questions, including what their loved one could have done to justify a foot chase that ended in his death.

"I can't believe he is gone. I just want some answers; why did they do this to Anthony?" Alvarez's father, Oscar Martinez, said in a statement released Wednesday through the family's lawyers.

Although city and police officials didn't release details about the officer who shot Alvarez, a police report that COPA posted along with the video identified him as 29-year-old Evan Solano, a six-year veteran of the force.

Solano has been named in four complaints since 2017, according to data collected by the Invisible Institute, a Chicago-based group that tracks police misconduct. Two of the complaints involved allegations of improper searches. No outcomes of the complaints were listed. Solano also has filed 11 tactical response reports dating back to 2017. Of them, seven were for incidents involving people who were described as white Hispanic. In two of the 11, the subjects were armed. And in two, the subjects were listed as injured.

While the officer in the shooting of Toledo was put on paid administrative leave, as routinely happens after police shootings, COPA made a point of recommending that Solano "be relieved of police powers during the pendency of this investigation." COPA spokesman Ephraim Eaddy wouldn't explain why the office recommended that Solano be stripped of his police powers already, but he conceded that it rarely makes such a recommendation so early in an investigation.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 64 of 85

As with the Toledo shooting, whether Solano is charged with a crime is up to the Cook County state's attorney's office, which gets COPA's report once the review board's investigation is completed.

Police and city officials haven't said why officers were pursuing Alvarez, but during a news conference before the video was released, Lightfoot referred to a traffic offense.

"We can't live in a world where a minor traffic offense results in someone being shot and killed," Lightfoot said of Alvarez, who put aside a promising soccer career to take a job at a suburban meat factory to support his family, including his 2-year-old daughter, according to his father. "That's not acceptable to me and it shouldn't be acceptable to anyone."

The head of the police union, John Catanzara, said in his video statement that the foot chase that led to Alvarez's death stemmed from an incident the day before in which Alvarez fled from police in a vehicle. The officer who shot Alvarez spotted him the next day and chased him on foot.

Catanzara also predicted that there would be an outcry and "spin" over the shooting because Alvarez, whom he didn't identify by name, was shot in the back.

"There is nothing wrong with this shooting just because the bullet struck the offender from behind," Catanzara said in a video recorded statement.

"It is important for the public to look at this with an open mind," he said.

He said the officer clearly saw Alvarez holding the weapon, and that when he was shot, Alvarez was turning toward the officer.

"The officer fears (he) would turn and fire because that's the motion he was making," Catanzara said.

The release of the Alvarez video followed a pattern for a police department that has been dogged for decades by its reputation for brutality, misconduct and racism. And it comes as videos of police confrontations are putting departments around the country under heavy scrutiny, from the footage that helped lead to a murder conviction in the death of George Floyd to the footage of the police killing of Daunte Wright near Minneapolis. Its release also coincided with a North Carolina judge declining to order the immediate release of body camera footage of the fatal police shooting of Andrew Brown Jr.

Earlier this month, COPA released footage of the March 29 shooting of Toledo. It showed a white officer shoot Toledo as he turned toward the officer raising his empty hands less than a second after the teen tossed aside or dropped a handgun.

As she did before the release of the Toledo footage, Lightfoot released a statement in conjunction with attorneys for Alvarez's family Wednesday that had essentially the same message.

"The parties are acutely aware of the range of emotions that will accompany the release of these materials and we collectively issue this statement and ask that those who wish to express themselves do so peacefully and with respect for our communities and the residents of Chicago," the joint statement said.

Although protests after the release of the Toledo footage were peaceful, the police department on Wednesday followed the same playbook it used earlier this month by canceling days off for hundreds of officers in case any protests turn to unrest.

Lightfoot announced earlier this month that the police department would implement a new foot pursuit policy for its officers. The U.S. Department of Justice recommended that the department adopt such a policy four years ago as part of its broader critique of Chicago's policing practices.

Brown said at a news conference Wednesday that because COPA's investigation is ongoing, he couldn't discuss any details of the officers' interaction with Alvarez, including why they stopped and chased him.

"I have to stay non-opinionated on facts until I get that complete investigation," Brown said. "It's really important for the independence and I think the transparency for the public. You wouldn't want the police department swaying evidence before it's completed."

But Brown said he hopes an updated policy on foot chases could be rolled out "within the next few weeks."

"All that's happening concurrently because it's actually very timely given the current circumstances of ... shootings as a result of foot pursuits," he said.

**Fed keeps key rate near zero, sees inflation as 'transitory'**

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 65 of 85

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. economy is quickly strengthening, inflation is showing signs of picking up and the nation is making progress toward defeating the viral pandemic.

But on Wednesday, Chair Jerome Powell made clear that the Federal Reserve isn't even close to beginning a pullback in its ultra-low interest rate policies.

In a statement after its latest policy meeting, the Fed said it would keep its benchmark short-term rate near zero, where it's been pinned since the pandemic erupted nearly a year ago. The goal is to help keep loan rates down, for individuals and businesses, to encourage borrowing and spending. The Fed also said it would keep buying \$120 billion in bonds each month to try to keep longer-term borrowing rates low, too.

At a news conference, Powell stressed that the Fed would need to see more evidence of sustained and substantial improvements in the job market and the overall economy before it would consider reducing its bond purchases. In the past, Powell has said that the Fed's eventual pullback in its economic support would start with a reduction in its bond buying and only after that in a potential rate hike.

"We're just going to need to see more data," Powell said. "It's not more complicated than that."

Paul Ashworth, an economist at Capital Economics, noted that "although it took a more upbeat tone on the economic outlook and acknowledged that inflation has risen, the Fed offered no hints that it was considering slowing the pace of its asset purchases, let alone thinking about raising interest rates."

Powell did highlight the economy's improvement in recent months but said much more progress was necessary.

"Since the beginning of the year, indicators of economic activity and employment have strengthened," the chairman said. "Household spending on goods has risen robustly."

He also highlighted the striking progress the nation has made against the pandemic — a key point given that the chairman has often said that the economic recovery depends on the virus being brought under control.

"Continued vaccinations," Powell said, "should allow for a return to more normal economic conditions later this year."

The U.S. economy has been posting unexpectedly strong gains in recent weeks, with barometers of hiring, spending and manufacturing all surging. Most economists say they detect the early stages of what could be a robust and sustained recovery, with coronavirus case counts declining, vaccinations rising and Americans spending their stimulus-boosted savings.

In March, employers added nearly 1 million jobs — an unheard-of figure before the pandemic. And in April, consumer confidence jumped to its highest level since the pandemic flattened the economy in March of last year.

The quickening pace of growth, on top of additional large spending packages proposed by President Joe Biden, have raised fears among some analysts that inflation, long quiescent, could rise uncomfortably fast. Raw materials and parts, from lumber to copper to semiconductors, have spiked in price as demand has outstripped the ability of suppliers and shippers to keep up.

Some companies have recently said they plan to raise prices to offset the cost of more expensive supplies. They include the consumer products giants Procter & Gamble and 3M as well as Honeywell, which makes industrial and consumer goods.

Powell, however, downplayed concerns that these trends could trigger sustained high inflation. He said he expects supply bottlenecks to cause only temporary price increases.

"An episode of one-time price increases as the economy reopens is not likely to lead to persistent year-over-year inflation into the future," he said.

Clogged supply chains won't affect Fed policy, Powell said, because "they're temporary and expected to resolve themselves."

Under a new framework the Fed adopted last summer, it will no longer raise rates in anticipation of high inflation, which had been its policy for decades. Powell and other Fed officials have made clear they want to see inflation actually exceed their 2% annual inflation target — and not just briefly — before they'd consider raising rates.

They've set that goal so that inflation would average 2% over time, to offset the fact that it has been stuck below 2% for nearly the entire past decade. Fed policymakers favor price gains at that level as a cushion against deflation — a prolonged drop in prices and wages that typically makes people and companies reluctant to spend.

One reason Powell has said he thinks the inflation pressures building in the U.S. economy will prove temporary is that, for now, most Americans don't expect prices to rise much in the long run.

At his news conference, Powell was asked how the Fed would respond if inflation expectations were to increase before the economy had achieved something approximating full employment.

"For inflation to move up in a persistent way that moves inflation expectations up," the chairman said, "that would take some time, and you would think it would be quite likely we would be in very strong labor markets for that to be happening."

Once expectations for inflation do rise, they can be self-fulfilling: Workers start demanding higher pay to offset expected price gains, and retailers begin raising prices to offset increased wages and supply costs. This can set off a wage-price spiral, something the United States last experienced in the late 1960s and 1970s.

Apart from inflation, the Fed's new framework includes a sweeping definition of maximum employment that includes fully recovering the jobs lost to the pandemic, including among many people of color and low-income workers, before it even considers a rate hike. Powell has also indicated that the Fed would like the roughly 4 million Americans who stopped looking for work after being laid off in the past year to be hired before it considers tightening rates.

## Supreme Court affirms block of key PolyMet mine permit

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The Minnesota Supreme Court on Wednesday affirmed a lower court's reversal of a critical mining permit for the proposed PolyMet copper-nickel mine in northeastern Minnesota, handing environmentalists a victory in the long-running battle over the \$1 billion project, though the company also declared a win.

The court said the state Department of Natural Resources should have set a fixed period for the permit to mine, rather than leaving it open-ended. It ordered the agency to determine and set an appropriate term.

"In layman's terms, the PolyMet permit to mine just went boom. It was overturned and it starts over. What that means is the DNR is going to start from scratch," said Paula Maccabee, an attorney for Water-Legacy, one of the groups fighting the project.

The court also ordered the DNR to conduct a trial-like proceeding known as a "contested case hearing" to gather more evidence on whether a bentonite clay lining for the mine's waste basin would prevent acid mine drainage and keep pollution contained. The justices said there is no evidence in the record that it would be effective.

PolyMet also framed the decision as a "big win," because the Supreme Court overturned a Court of Appeals' order for an open-ended contested case hearing, instead limiting it to the specific issues of the liner. The high court ruled that the DNR generally has broad discretion to decide whether a contested case hearing is useful in a permit decision.

"A careful review of the Minnesota Supreme Court's opinion shows that the Court decided the vast majority of issues in PolyMet's favor — including the most significant legal issue concerning the DNR's discretion to determine whether a contested case hearing will aid the agency," the company said. "The claims of a 'win' by opponents of our project simply do not withstand scrutiny."

Maccabee said the ruling on the contested case hearing, which was narrower than opponents had sought, was "not trivial" because it would force the DNR to better deal with long-term water pollution concerns. She said opponents would try to raise broader environmental issues during the hearing.

"Today, the Supreme Court hit the reset button on PolyMet," Kathryn Hoffman, CEO of the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, said in a statement. "Now it's up to Governor (Tim) Walz and his

agencies to make better decisions and protect Minnesotans and the water they depend on.”

The DNR said in a statement that it’s reviewing the decision, but noted that the court backed the DNR’s position on some legal and procedural issues,

The Supreme Court disagreed with parts of the appeals court’s January 2020 decision. The justices said the DNR did not abuse its discretion by declining to hold a contested case hearing on the entire project because it had “substantial evidence” to support its conclusions when it awarded the permit to mine.

PolyMet and the DNR argued that there was no need for a broad contested case hearing because the project has already undergone 11 years of thorough, public environmental reviews.

The Supreme Court also said the lower court erred when it reversed two separate dam safety permits, saying those permits were not governed by the same statutory standards as the permit to mine.

PolyMet, whose largest shareholder is the Swiss commodities giant Glencore, hopes to build the first copper-nickel mine in Minnesota. The open pit mine would be near the Iron Range town of Babbitt with the processing plant a few miles away near Hoyt Lakes. The company says the mine would create hundreds of jobs while supplying metals that the U.S. economy needs.

PolyMet thought it had secured its final state and federal permits in late 2018 and early 2019, including the permit to mine and the two dam safety permits. But several permits remain suspended or under review amid ongoing court challenges. In a separate decision that marked a win for PolyMet, the state Supreme Court in February reversed the appeals court’s rejection of a critical air emissions permit.

## **In new Electoral College map, shifting battleground dynamics**

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The 2020 census is shifting states’ clout in presidential politics. And while the changes won’t upend the parties’ basic strategies for securing the votes needed to win the White House, they do hint at new paths emerging.

The 2020 census population counts announced this week will result in 13 states seeing a change in their number of votes in the Electoral College, the body that formally elects the president. The overall pattern was clear: Rust Belt and upper Midwestern states will hand some of their votes to Sun Belt and Western states in 2024 and 2028.

Democratic bastions California and New York also lost electoral votes along with a swath of the Great Lakes region. Beneficiaries include Texas, Florida, North Carolina, Oregon, Colorado and Montana.

The changes wouldn’t have done much to President Joe Biden’s Electoral College majority in 2020. If Biden ran under the new count he’d have defeated then-President Donald Trump by 68 electoral votes, rather than a 74-vote margin.

But the new numbers show a clear transition afoot. Gone are the days when Republicans held a near-absolute advantage across the southern half of the United States, forcing Democrats to secure victories in the “Blue Wall” throughout the industrial north.

Instead, the two regions are now parallel battlegrounds.

“It’s almost like two trains passing in the night -- the Sun Belt trending Democratic and the demographics of the Rust Belt going more Republican,” said Democratic pollster Zac McCrary. “But these things don’t happen overnight, so in 2024 we’re going to see a very competitive Rust Belt and a very competitive Sun Belt -- and you could see more splits between the two parties in both regions.”

For Democrats, that offers more paths to the required 270 electoral votes than when they depended on a solid band of states from Pennsylvania to Minnesota. Now, they can lose Ohio, which has shifted from perennial battleground to a clear GOP lean, and try to win the White House with former GOP bedrocks like Georgia or North Carolina.

The last two elections showed the evolving balancing act for both parties, with Biden in 2020 and Trump in 2016 each winning states worth a combined 306 electoral votes.

Biden did it with close wins in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, while adding razor-thin margins in Georgia and Arizona to flip those Sun Belt states to Democrats for the first time in decades. Trump had

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 68 of 85

won all five states four years earlier, with his razor-thin margins coming in the upper Midwest and wider margins in Arizona and Georgia.

But Biden's winning map would be worth just 303 electoral votes in 2024, mostly because of California and states across the upper Midwest losing representation. Trump's winning map from four years earlier would inch up to 307 electoral votes, with his diminished Rust Belt totals shored up by gains in Texas, Florida and North Carolina -- three growing Sun Belt states that still tilt Republican in presidential politics.

Subtle differences in demographics and voting patterns explain the two regions' different long-term course. In both, metro areas skew Democratic while smaller towns and rural areas lean heavily Republican. But many Sun Belt metro areas -- Houston, Dallas, Phoenix, Atlanta, Charlotte -- are growing at faster rates than cities like Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago and Milwaukee.

Meanwhile, the decades-long drift of small-town white voters away from Democrats had essentially run its course in the Sun Belt by the 2020 presidential cycle. But it's still continuing across the Rust Belt.

That means the GOP has room to grow in the upper Midwest because new Democratic voters in metro areas don't necessarily outnumber Republican gains beyond cities. The Sun Belt offers Democrats the reverse: metro-area residents of all races and ethnicities chip away at the GOP advantage beyond cities.

Presidential math turns on how those trends play out alongside each other.

McCrary, the Democratic pollster, contemplated "a new Blue Wall" that adds North Carolina, Florida and Texas to Arizona and Georgia. Indeed, Texas and Florida's electoral votes, added to California, New York and Illinois, would get a Democratic nominee almost two-thirds of the way to the 270-vote threshold, even after those old Democratic bastions lose ground in the electoral ground.

Yet, Republicans note, Texas and Florida are still theirs to lose. Texas' partisan gap narrowed over the last decade, but Trump outpaced Biden by 5.5 percentage points. Florida is perpetually close, but Republicans have won four out of the last six presidential contests there and dominated other statewide races over the same period.

Brock McCleary, a longtime Republican pollster, said the GOP's rebranding to "working-class identity" is necessary for Republicans to build a new "Red Wall" in the upper Midwest and stay competitive long-term in the Sun Belt, where it takes "multi-racial coalitions" even for Republicans to win.

"Big-tent populism," McCleary said, is an especially good fit in the upper Midwest, as evidenced by Trump twice managing wide margins in Ohio and Iowa, states once considered coin flips.

Republicans also are boosted by an Electoral College system that elevates GOP voting power in less-urbanized states. That helped Trump and George W. Bush win the presidency despite losing the popular vote.

In 2020, Biden got 81 million votes nationally, more than any candidate in history, and led Trump by about 7 million votes. While it was enough to flip five states, including the key Midwestern battlegrounds Trump had stripped from Democrats in 2016, Biden had little margin for error: His combined margin in Georgia, Arizona and Wisconsin was less than 43,000 votes.

Had Trump prevailed in those three states again, he'd be in his second term and Biden would have joined Hillary Clinton in 2016 and Al Gore in 2000 as Democrats who got the most votes but lost the White House.

"The reality is that in a 50-50 presidential election nationally, Republicans have the (Electoral College) advantage," McCrary said. "And unfortunately for Democrats, that stays true even a few points beyond 50-50."

## Girl Scout cookies take flight in Virginia drone deliveries

By MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writer

Missing out on Thin Mints in the pandemic? A Google affiliate is using drones to deliver Girl Scout cookies to people's doorsteps in a Virginia community.

The town of Christiansburg has been a testing ground for commercial delivery drones operated by Wing, a subsidiary of Google's corporate parent Alphabet.

Now the company is adding the iconic boxed cookies to the more mundane drugstore offerings, FedEx

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 69 of 85

packages and locally-made pastries, tacos and cold brew coffees it's been hauling to a thinly populated area of residential subdivisions since 2019.

Wing said it began talking to local Girl Scout troops because they've been having a harder time selling cookies during the pandemic, when fewer people are out and about. The organization jumped on the new twist to its skills-building mission.

"I'm excited that I get to be a part of history," said 11-year-old Gracie Walker, of the Girl Scouts of Virginia Skyline Troop 224. "People are going to realize and be, like, 'Hey, this is better for the environment and I can just walk outside in my pajamas and get cookies.'"

It's the latest attempt to build public enthusiasm for futuristic drone delivery as Wing competes against Amazon, Walmart, UPS and others to overcome the many technical and regulatory challenges of flying packages over neighborhoods.

Federal officials started rolling out new rules in mid-April that will allow operators to fly small drones over people and at night, potentially giving a boost to commercial use of the machines. Most drones will need to be equipped so they can be identified remotely by law enforcement officials.

The 10-pound Wing drone that made the first deliveries in Christiansburg in fall 2019 is already an artifact held at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum. Whether it will go down in history as a revolutionary innovation or a utopian flop remains to be seen.

Amazon has also been working on drone delivery for years. In 2013, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos said in a TV interview that drones would be flying to customer's homes within five years, but that deadline has long since passed. The company did win government approval to deliver packages by drones last August, but Amazon said it was still testing them and hasn't started delivering goods to shoppers yet.

David Vos, an aerospace engineer who led Google's Wing project until 2016, said he has been surprised that drone delivery ventures haven't taken off more quickly.

"I thought it was completely doable to be up and going by 2021," Vos said. While he still thinks drone technology is getting closer to delivering the size, weight and power needed to transport goods safely in populated places, Vos said the tech industry also needs a cultural shift.

In particular, he said, it needs to bring on people from the traditional aviation industry who have experience building "safety-critical systems" that meet strict performance standards.

Wing's drones are able to navigate autonomously — without a human pilot controlling them remotely — and are powered by two forward propellers on their wings and 12 smaller vertical propellers. When a drone reaches its destination, it hovers above the front lawn as a tether releases to drop the package.

"It was so smooth and it didn't shake," said Walker, who, before her troop added drones to its sales strategy, would don a mask and set up a cookie booth outside a home improvement store. "They look like a helicopter but also a plane."

There's not much evidence that consumers have been clamoring for drone delivery, and many have expressed privacy, safety or nuisance concerns when asked to imagine the noisy machines over their homes. Wing has objected to some of the FAA's new drone rules on privacy grounds, saying the remote ID requirement could allow observers to snoop on delivery routes online.

But in a small survey of Christiansburg residents by researchers at nearby Virginia Tech that Wing helped fund, most townspeople appeared to be content with the drones.

"One of the reasons is because Virginia Tech is here and there's an engineering culture of trying new things," said Lee Vinsel, an assistant professor of science, technology and society who conducted the Virginia Tech survey. "And the suburban setup is easiest for drone delivery."

That might not be the case for much denser places, he added. "Manhattan would be tough."

## 'Fetal heartbeat' in abortion laws taps emotion, not science

By JULIE CARR SMYTH and KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Dr. Michael Cackovic has treated his share of pregnant women. So when Republican lawmakers across the U.S. began passing bans on abortion at what they term "the first detect-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 70 of 85

able fetal heartbeat," he was exasperated.

That's because at the point where advanced technology can detect that first flutter, as early as six weeks, the embryo isn't yet a fetus and it doesn't have a heart. An embryo is termed a fetus beginning in the 11th week of pregnancy, medical experts say.

"You cannot hear this 'flutter,' it is only seen on ultrasound," said Cackovic, a maternal fetal medicine specialist at Ohio State University's Wexner Medical Center, where some 5,300 babies are born each year.

Yet bans pegged to the "fetal heartbeat" concept have been signed into law in 13 states, including Cackovic's home state of Ohio. None has taken effect, with all but the most recently enacted being struck down or temporarily blocked by the courts. Now, one of the most restrictive, signed by Tennessee's Republican Gov. Bill Lee last year, goes before the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on Thursday.

Proponents of these so-called "heartbeat bills" are hoping for a legal challenge to eventually reach the U.S. Supreme Court, where they look for the conservative coalition assembled under President Donald Trump to end the constitutional right to abortion protected under the high court's landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling.

The notion that abortion as early as six weeks into pregnancy "stops a beating heart" helped propel the measures to rise above persistent constitutional concerns in the states that have backed them.

The concept's originator, Ohio anti-abortion activist Janet Folger Porter, spoke openly about her strategy in an email to supporters last year — deftly side-stepping whether the packaging of the bill was medically true.

"The slogan, 'Abortion stops a beating heart,' has long been an effective way to highlight the injustice and inhumanity of abortion," Porter wrote of the state's law, the Ohio Heartbeat Protection Act.

And, she found, hearts were easy to market.

During the decade-long battle to pass Ohio's law, Porter punctuated her lobbying efforts with heart-shaped balloons and teddy bears. She urged supporters to "take heart" when faced with obstacles — and beseeched lawmakers to "have a heart" and vote "yes" despite their constitutional concerns.

Then Republican Gov. John Kasich twice vetoed the Ohio "heartbeat bill," citing constitutional issues. His GOP successor, Gov. Mike DeWine, signed it in 2019 amid a flurry of similar bills that year.

For now, abortion remains legal in all 50 states, though 43 have some form of restriction on the procedure after a fetus becomes viable outside the womb, generally between 24 and 28 weeks.

John Culhane, a law professor at Widener University who co-directs its Family Health Law and Policy Institute, said the anti-abortion lobby's marketing of "heartbeat bill" legislation is "all an attempt to make a fetus into a person."

"The 'heartbeat,' it literally tugs at the heartstrings, it makes you feel like, 'Why would you do this?' Never mind that there's not a heart" yet in the embryo, he said.

However, attorneys are quick to point out that medical inaccuracy is not a legal argument.

"Legislatures are free to define things any way they want and give it the force of law," said Andrew Kopelman, a law professor at Northwestern University. "The reality of medical science is not a constraint on what a legislature can do. What is a constraint on what a legislature can do are the constitutional rights of women."

In the war of words over abortion, however, battles have erupted before over politically charged, inaccurate or vague terminology used in abortion laws.

"Dismemberment abortion" is a term abortion opponents use to describe dilation and evacuation, a common second trimester abortion method. They use "partial-birth abortion" to describe what is medically called intact dilation and extraction.

Abortion rights groups dub heartbeat laws "six-week abortion bans," though the bills don't mention such a duration.

"It is very common to use non-medical language to publicly talk about a medical procedure," said David Cohen, professor of law at Drexel University's Kline School of Law.

"The law needs precision in order to know exactly what is being regulated," Cohen said. "So in medicine

it would be by using medical terminology.”

Cackovic, the fetal medicine specialist, said the current “heartbeat laws,” are based only on “our amazing technological advances” that allow detection of the earliest signs of embryonic cardiac activity, “and nothing else.”

A pioneering 2013 University of Leeds study, for example, found that while four clearly defined chambers appear in the human heart from the eighth week of pregnancy, they remain “a disorganized jumble of tissue” until around the 20th week, much later than previously expected.

Abortion opponents don’t see it that way, viewing the use of antiseptic medical terms to describe what happens in pregnancy as a political tactic of its own.

The hosts of CareCast, a podcast sponsored by the anti-abortion nonprofit Care Net, called out news outlets last year for using terms such as “pulsing” or “fetal cardiac activity” rather than “heartbeat,” accusing them of employing “euphemisms” and “verbal gymnastics” in order to dehumanize the unborn.

“They are literally inventing new ways of talking about a heartbeat so that they can try to avoid giving any sort of human attributes to the fetus,” said Vincent DiCaro, the group’s chief outreach officer. President and CEO Roland Warren asserted that abortion rights groups use medical terms so they can “maximize the atrocity” against human life. He equated it to the Nazis’ dehumanization of the Jews.

Culhane said vague or imprecise language could be a powerful argument against “heartbeat laws” in the courts — should the battle ever advance beyond the laws’ impacts on a woman’s constitutional right to abortion.

“These days, courts are really vigilant about looking at statutes to make sure that they provide notice about what conduct exactly is prohibited,” the Widener University law professor said.

“Because we don’t want people to have to guess and then find that they’re on the wrong side of the law.”

## **Wary Supreme Court weighs student’s Snapchat profanity case**

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A wary Supreme Court on Wednesday weighed whether public schools can discipline students for things they say off campus, worrying about overly restricting speech on the one hand and leaving educators powerless to deal with bullying on the other.

The justices, hearing arguments in the case of a 14-year-old high school freshman’s Snapchat F-bombs, struggled to fit the need to protect students’ political and religious expression with the ability of schools to get at disruptive, even potentially dangerous, speech that occurs outside the school setting.

In one of many examples members of the court offered, Justice Elena Kagan described boys who keep a sexually charged online ranking of girls based on their looks. “You can’t put people in jail for commenting on people’s appearance, but shouldn’t a school be able to deal with it?” Kagan asked.

The court tested out possible outcomes in the case of the student’s profanity-laced social media rant, which Justice Brett Kavanaugh described as her blowing off steam just like “millions of kids” do.

Kavanaugh is one of several justices who have children in high school, or recently did. The court heard just under two hours of arguments by telephone because of the coronavirus pandemic, well beyond the allotted 60 minutes.

The current dispute stems from *Tinker v. Des Moines*, the Vietnam-era case of a high school in Des Moines, Iowa, that suspended students who wore armbands to protest the war. In a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court sided with the students, declaring students don’t “shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.”

The court also held then that schools retained the authority to restrict speech that would disrupt the school environment.

At the center of this case is Brandi Levy of Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania.

Levy and a friend were at a convenience store when she used Snapchat to express her frustration at being kept on her high school’s junior varsity cheerleading squad for another year.

“F—— school f—— softball f—— cheer f—— everything,” Levy wrote, in a post that also con-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 72 of 85

tained a photo in which she and a classmate raised their middle fingers. A second post questioned how an incoming freshman could have made the varsity.

The posts were brought to the attention of the team's coaches, who suspended Levy from the cheerleading team for a year. Levy's parents responded with a federal lawsuit, claiming the suspension violated their daughter's constitutional rights to free speech.

The case's potential importance grew when the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia also sided with Levy and held that schools can't impose discipline for what students say when they're off campus.

American Civil Liberties Union lawyer David Cole, representing Levy, urged the justices to affirm the clean line the appeals court drew, making clear educators have no authority over children when they are not under a school's supervision, .

"Expanding Tinker would transform a limited exception into a 24/7 rule," Cole said.

But several justices said the campus border is not so clear in the age of the internet and the remote learning that has come with the pandemic.

"How does that fit with modern technology?" Chief Justice John Roberts asked.

The school district and the Biden administration both argued that the justices should reject the appellate ruling because it draws an artificial line.

Suspending Levy from cheerleading was a reasonable response because she targeted her coaches and a teammate's ability to compete, said Lisa Blatt, representing the district.

Levy is "not somebody you'd want at the bottom of the pyramid," Blatt said, referring to a cheerleading formation.

But if the court didn't appear ready to embrace Levy's argument, some justices also were concerned that a ruling for the district could give schools too much power to shut down speech they just don't like.

"Kids basically talk to their classmates. Most of their conversation is about school. Most of their exchanges have to do with their perceptions of the authoritarian nature of their teachers and others. And why isn't this any different than just that the coach of this team took personal offense?" Justice Sonia Sotomayor asked, noting that her law clerks told her that among teenagers "how much you curse is a badge of honor."

Kavanaugh also said the coach maybe went too far by suspending Levy.

"But, as a judge and maybe as a coach and a parent, too, it seems like maybe a bit of overreaction by the coach," Kavanaugh said.

By the end of the arguments, there was perhaps a sense among the justices that Levy's case — a teenager venting her unhappiness about an extracurricular program — may not be the best one to use to write a sweeping rule about student speech in the digital age.

A decision is expected by late June.

## **EXPLAINER: Capital gains tax hike targets wealthy investors**

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — After massive U.S. government spending helped send the stock market back to record heights, with even more potentially on the way, the bill may be coming due for the nation's wealthiest investors.

President Joe Biden is proposing to nearly double the tax rate the highest-earning Americans pay on profits made from stocks and other investments. It would force millionaires to pay similar tax rates on their investment gains as upper-middle class households pay on their salaries, after years of enjoying lower rates.

It's part of Biden's efforts to tax wealthy people and corporations to pay for infrastructure investments and programs aimed at helping the broader economy. The most recent proposals, which Biden will detail in a speech before Congress later on Wednesday, focus on lower-income families and children. They include universal preschool for 3 year olds, two years of free community college and the extension of tax cuts for lower- and middle-income families.

Even though the possibility of higher capital-gains tax rates has been telegraphed for a long time, reports of its pending unveiling shook up the stock market, with the S&P 500 falling to a nearly 1% loss on

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 73 of 85

Thursday. Stocks have since set more records, but the kneejerk reaction shows how much investors care about potential changes in tax rates.

## WHAT IS THE CAPITAL GAINS TAX?

The capital gains tax must be paid on profits made from an investment, such as a stock or a Bitcoin. But it only takes effect after a sale locks in the gain. So if you bought a share of Tesla at \$200 early last year and are sitting on a profit of more than \$500, you won't owe anything unless you sell.

If you do sell, and you are one of the highest-earning Americans, current law says you'd pay a 23.8% tax on a \$500 profit, or \$119. That includes a 20% tax on investments held for more than a year, known as a "long-term capital gains" tax. It also includes an extra 3.8% tax on investments for high earners that's been around since 2013 to help pay for the Affordable Care Act.

## WHAT IS BIDEN LOOKING TO CHANGE?

Biden wants to raise the tax rate on long-term capital gains for Americans who make more than \$1 million in a year. Their rate would rise to 39.6% from 20%. With the additional 3.8% tax, the highest-earning Americans could be paying a total tax rate of 43.4% on profits from long-term investments.

That would be the highest top rate since the 1920s, according to the Tax Foundation, and the proposal could make the rate on investment gains similar to the rate on income made from working.

The top tax rate that workers pay on salaries and wages now is 37%. Biden wants to move the top tax rate on work income up to 39.6%, which is where it was before the 2017 tax cuts.

One reason tax rates have been lower on long-term capital gains than for regular work is that supporters say it encourages long-term investment and helps the economy.

## ARE THERE OTHER RELATED CHANGES?

Biden is asking Congress to wipe out a preferential tax treatment for private-equity executives and other money managers earning millions of dollars annually, something referred to as "carried interest."

For years they've been paying only 23.8% in federal tax because much of their compensation was treated as a long-term capital gain. The industry says that encourages private-equity firms to take risks as entrepreneurs and to continue investing in companies.

Because of it, many wealthy private-equity managers pay a lower rate than what households with married people filing their taxes jointly were paying on income above \$171,050.

Besides targeting "carried interest," Biden is also asking Congress for more funding for the IRS so it can be more aggressive in auditing wealthy Americans, among other proposals.

## HOW BIG A DEAL ARE ALL THE CHANGES?

Altogether, the White House says the tax law changes focusing on higher-earning Americans would raise about \$1.5 trillion across the decade. That would be in addition to the more than \$2 trillion that the White House is looking to raise over the next 15 years from changes to corporate taxes.

Besides helping to pay for the programs Biden is proposing, the White House says its proposals for capital gains rates and other changes will eliminate tax laws "that reward wealth over work" and hopefully "rein in the ways that the tax code widens racial disparities in income and wealth."

Republicans in the Senate — where Biden's Democratic party holds the slimmest of majorities — have already offered resistance to Biden's proposals for big increases in spending and taxes for the wealthiest households.

## BUT THE CHANGE IN THE CAPITAL GAINS TAX WOULD HIT VERY, VERY FEW PEOPLE?

Only the top 0.3% of taxpayers, or about 500,000 households across the country, would be affected by the proposed rise in long-term capital gains rates, according to Brian Deese, director of the White House National Economic Council.

## THEN WHY DOES THE MARKET CARE SO MUCH?

The wealthiest households are very, very rich, and own a lot of stock.

The wealthiest U.S. households are collectively sitting on \$1 trillion to \$1.5 trillion in gains on stocks that they will have to pay taxes on whenever they sell, according to a Goldman Sachs analysis of data from the Federal Reserve. That's roughly 3% of the entire U.S. stock market's total value.

The concerns are that those rich investors will dump their stocks before the rate is increased, and that

would-be investors would be discouraged from buying stocks because of the higher rate.

ARE THOSE CONCERNS VALID?

The last time Washington raised capital-gains tax rates in 2013, the wealthiest households sold 1% of their stock holdings in the three months before the new rate went into effect, Goldman Sachs strategists say.

However, the selling was short-lived and the S&P 500 rose 30% for the year.

Stocks tend to go up over the long term. So, a sale today would mean an investor would be losing out on all the gains that may be coming in future years.

Also, many on Wall Street are expecting Democrats and Republicans to try for a compromise rate that's lower than 43.4%.

## **AP analysis: The expected COVID baby boom may be a baby bust**

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — When most of the U.S. went into lockdown over a year ago, some speculated that confining couples to their homes — with little to entertain them beyond Netflix — would lead to a lot of baby-making. But the statistics suggest the opposite happened.

Births have fallen dramatically in many states during the coronavirus outbreak, according to an Associated Press analysis of preliminary data from half the country.

The COVID-19 baby boom appears to be a baby bust.

Nationally, even before the epidemic, the number of babies born in the U.S. was falling, dropping by less than 1% a year over the past decade as many women postponed motherhood and had smaller families.

But data from 25 states suggests a much steeper decline in 2020 and into 2021, as the virus upended society and killed over a half-million Americans.

Births for all of 2020 were down 4.3% from 2019, the data indicates. More tellingly, births in December 2020 and in January and February 2021 — nine months or more after the spring 2020 lockdowns — were down 6.5%, 9.3% and 10% respectively, compared with the same months a year earlier.

December, January and February together had about 41,000 fewer births than the same three-month span a year earlier. That's an 8% decline.

"When there's a crisis, I don't think people are thinking about reproduction," said Dr. John Santelli, a Columbia University professor of population and family health who reviewed the AP's analysis.

The analysis included 24 states that provided data on births to residents. Joining them in the analysis was California, the most populous state, which provided data on all births that happened in the state, including among visitors.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is expected to provide a national picture later this year. But the data for the 25 states is not expected to change substantially; preliminary birth numbers usually end up being pretty close to the final counts, experts say.

The AP's findings echo projections by researchers at the Brookings Institution and elsewhere, who have predicted a sizable drop in births this year.

"The widespread consensus is there is going to be a decline," said Hans-Peter Kohler, a University of Pennsylvania researcher who focuses on fertility and health.

It didn't look that way to some around March 2020, when much of America was cooped up inside. Some figured that couples had more time together and that some men and women might find it harder to run out and get birth control, leading to at least a small uptick in births.

For Bryan and Katie Basamanowicz, it was more complicated than that.

The couple had planned to try to have a baby last summer to provide their son, Simon, with a younger sibling, but then came COVID-19 and the lockdown.

For a time "it was so intense and scary" that the couple thought they would have to put off trying to conceive, said Bryan, 39, a managing editor at a small publishing house who lives in Ventura, California.

But then a lull occurred in the early summer, as the first wave of COVID-19 illnesses waned and lockdowns were eased. The couple decided to try after all. Then cases started surging again.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 75 of 85

"We decided: 'Let's put this on hold,'" said Katie, a 32-year-old teacher. But it turned out to be too late: A pregnancy test came back positive in early July. "We were already pregnant," she said.

Fritz Basamanowicz was born last month, on March 6. The pregnancy was a worry-filled experience because expectant mothers run a greater risk of severe illness from the virus.

"I'm very thankful that we made it through," Katie said.

New York, the deadly epicenter of the U.S. outbreak in the spring of 2020, was not part of the analysis. Its Health Department said the figures were not available.

A majority of the babies born in 2020 were, of course, conceived in 2019, before the virus took hold in the U.S., so the numbers partly reflect the pre-existing downward trend.

But births in December 2020 declined in 23 of the 25 states from the same month a year earlier, the exceptions being Alaska and Wyoming. They dropped about 11% in Massachusetts and Virginia; 10% in California; and 7% in Florida, Illinois, Indiana and Nevada.

Declines were even more dramatic in January 2021 in many of the 25 states.

Still, Emily Newell, 31, who lives in Portland, Maine, with her husband, Ben Keller, said she witnessed the opposite phenomenon during the outbreak: "We know so many people who decided to have kids."

The couple married in January 2020 and were eventually forced to work from home. They saw a certain appeal in going through a pregnancy with both partners at home, said Newell, a 31-year-old assistant professor of sports management at the University of Southern Maine.

"It gives us a little more flexibility in terms of care" for the baby, she said.

Their son, Manuel, was born two months ago.

## The Hamburglar? How a story about meat limits fell apart

By DAVID BAUDER and ALI SWENSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Joe Biden spent only a weekend as the "Hamburglar" in the conservative media world.

But while the false story lasted, it moved with a damaging speed and breadth, another example of a closed ecosystem of information affecting public opinion.

An academic study published a year before Biden became president was used to speculate that he would place limits on how much red meat Americans can consume as part of his stated goal to sharply reduce greenhouse gas pollution.

It was a potentially potent, visceral argument with punchy cable TV octane, namely that Biden was trying to limit people to eating one hamburger a month — an allegation that could seriously undermine his climate change plan before he even announced it.

There was one main problem: He's said no such thing.

Yet two days after the Daily Mail brought up the topic in a report last Thursday, Rep. Lauren Boebert, a Colorado Republican, was tweeting, "Why doesn't Joe stay out of my kitchen?"

The Mail's story, by Emily Crane, was headlined "How Biden's climate plan could limit you to eat just one burger a MONTH, cost \$3.5K a year per person in taxes, force you to spend \$55K on an electric car and 'crush' American jobs."

Crane cited a January 2020 study by the University of Michigan's Center for Sustainable Systems, which discussed how a transition to a more plant-based diet by Americans could cut down on greenhouse gas emissions. The paper estimated the environmental impact of a 90% reduction in beef consumption.

Martin Heller, a research specialist at Michigan and one of the study's authors, said there was no connection between the research and Biden's plans.

"The conversation so quickly gets pushed to these extremes and I think that's an effort at poking at people's fears," Heller said. "That's the frustrating part to me — that we can't have a conversation about how to get creative in this sort of middle space."

The Britain-based Daily Mail defended its story while criticizing others in the media.

"President Biden has announced an extremely ambitious target for carbon emissions reduction that will

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 76 of 85

have a massive effect on the American economy and way of life without giving a single detail of how he expects to achieve it," a newspaper spokesperson said.

"Unlike the rest of the overwhelmingly White House-whipped American media, the Mail attempted to explore this gaping hole at the center of the president's announcement," the representative said.

In fact, Biden has discussed several initiatives to help reach his climate goals, including increasing the use of wind and solar power and slashing emissions from fossil fuels such as coal and oil.

The newspaper's spokesperson said that "we made it very clear these were steps that MIGHT have to be taken."

But as the story spread, the qualifiers were deemphasized or disappeared entirely.

The conservative website Gateway Pundit ran a story Friday with the headline "Biden's climate requirements: cut 90 percent of red meat from diet; Americans can only eat one burger per month."

The body of the story itself was less incendiary, quoting the Daily Mail and using the qualifier "could."

While a graphic on Friday's "Fox & Friends" talked about what will be required to meet Biden's green targets, host Ainsley Earhardt said, "He wants to cut out 90% of the red meat that you all eat."

Later, Fox News anchor John Roberts said: "Say goodbye to your burgers if you want to sign up for the Biden climate agenda. That's the finding of one study."

A graphic onscreen, with a picture of a cheeseburger, read: "Up in your grill. Biden's climate requirements: cut 90 percent of red meat from diet, max 4 lbs. per year, one burger per month."

The story spread rapidly on social media. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott tweeted Fox's "Up in your grill" graphic, adding, "Not gonna happen in Texas!" Idaho Gov. Brad Little retweeted Abbott, adding, "Idahoans also have beef with this agenda and for dinner!"

It was Republican Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene who dubbed Biden "The Hamburglar," a reference to a character in McDonald's commercials.

There were some 23,000 examples of terms like Biden's climate plan, requirements or mandates appearing together with "meat consumption" in the context of political conversations online between Thursday and Monday, according to the media intelligence firm Signal Labs. "Red meat" also had some 59,000 mentions in political chatter.

"This is pure propaganda," said Jennifer Grygiel, a Syracuse University communications professor who specializes in disinformation.

There is little incentive for politicians and others to check their facts before posting on popular social media platforms, and those platforms aren't doing it for them, Grygiel said.

Once the false claim gets into people's heads, it's hard to dislodge. Many targets of the story are unlikely to see fact-checks, said John Cook, a research fellow at the Monash Climate Change Communication Research Hub.

Republicans have been frustrated in trying to find lines of attack that will stick against Biden in his first 100 days in office. Many in the conservative media world have also continued to spread lies about widespread fraud in the 2020 election.

Also this past weekend, the New York Post reported that migrant children entering the United States across the southern border were getting copies of a book from Vice President Kamala Harris in a welcome kit. The Post has since corrected the story to say there has been only one known time that a migrant child got Harris' book.

The reporter who wrote the Post story, Laura Italiano, tweeted late Tuesday that she had resigned from the paper. She called the article "an incorrect story I was ordered to write and which I failed to push back hard against."

On Sunday, Biden spokesman Mike Gwin posted on Twitter a photo of a smiling Biden grilling steaks at a campaign stop, and linked to a CNN fact-checker who called claims about the president proposing limits on meat consumption "completely imaginary."

The Daily Mail on Monday updated its story on Biden's climate control plans without saying what was done. The headline did not change, and a spokesperson said it was for "minor cosmetic reasons."

On Fox, meanwhile, Roberts told viewers that while the network correctly presented data from the Michigan study, "a graphic and the script incorrectly implied it was part of Biden's plan for dealing with climate change. That is not the case."

A Fox spokeswoman on Tuesday would not discuss the network's editorial decision-making, including whether a journalist checked with the Biden administration before reporting on the issue.

## More tests and still more questions about the Tokyo Olympics

By STEPHEN WADE AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — The Tokyo Olympics open in under three months and there are still more questions than answers despite the rollout Wednesday of new rule books to explain how the games will take place in the middle of a surging pandemic in Japan.

The 60-page, second version of the "Playbooks" for athletes was released by the International Olympic Committee and the local organizers. Versions for other non-athlete groups are to be released later. And a third version will come out in June, just weeks before the Olympics open on July 23.

More testing for everyone was the key highlight on Wednesday:

— All participants will have to pass two COVID-19 tests before leaving their home country. And they will be tested upon arrival in Japan.

— Athletes will be tested daily, as will those in close proximity to athletes.

— Other games participants will be tested daily for the first three days, and then as required.

— All games participants must use dedicated vehicles and avoid public transportation for the first 14 days.

— Games participants must eat only in specified locations, including catering facilities at games venues.

Athletes will be dining in the Athletes Village, which will be an isolated "bubble."

— Game participants will avoid a 14-day quarantine rule for entering Japan, but to do so they must fill out a schedule listing their plans for that period, and also download a tracking app.

— A decision about capacity at the venues will be made in June. Fans from abroad were banned several months ago.

"We are in a very tense situation," Tokyo organizing committee president Seiko Hashimoto said after an online meeting with the IOC. "A full stadium is possible depending on the situation. So is 50%, 20,000, 10,000, 5,000 and no spectators. Those are the ranges. While we are prepared as the last possible option to have the games with no spectators — since we have the current situation under the state of emergency — we have hope that fans are possible."

Athletes will also have to sign a promise they will follow the rules in Playbook. This will apply to athletes and participants with vaccines as well as those without vaccines.

"There will be a written pledge and if that is not complied with, there will be a certain level of penalty," said Toshiro Muto, the CEO of the organizing committee. "We expect that these people will comply with the rules because Playbooks are the rules."

He did not specify a penalty, but the loss of a credential and expulsion was hinted at.

IOC President Thomas Bach offered his own take on enforcement.

"We will strictly enforce these rules and will take care of the full compliance by all participants," he said. "If the situation should require it, we are also ready to take even stricter measures."

The timing of the second edition of the Playbooks is not ideal.

Tokyo, Osaka and several others areas came under a third state of emergency this week, and the death toll in Japan from COVID-19 has passed 10,000. The numbers are good by global standards, but poor compared with other places in Asia, such as Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand or South Korea.

Tokyo recorded more than 900 new cases on Wednesday, its highest level in three months as new variants are popping up in the country.

"Yes, the situation is very difficult," Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike said. "We are fighting the invisible enemy."

The state of emergency has closed department stores, theme parks, and bars and restaurants serving alcohol. It also has forced baseball games to be played in empty stadiums after having allowed fans for

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 78 of 85

much of the pandemic.

Polls consistently show 70-80% of people in Japan think the Olympics should not be held.

Muto was asked if another postponement was possible. In the last few weeks renewed questions about cancellation have also popped up. The IOC long ago ruled out another postponement.

"Can you really take the time for another postponement?" Muto asked rhetorically. "It's not just a matter of taking the time, the organizers would have to prepare once again after having already spent years to prepare. It is not something that can be done that casually."

He of course quashed the idea, pointing out the importance of athletes and the impossibility of securing the Athletes Village, which is a massive housing project on Tokyo Bay that has already been partially sold off.

The British Medical Journal earlier this month, under an editorial titled "Reconsider this Summer's Olympic and Paralympic Games," said mass gatherings such as the Olympics are still neither "safe nor secure."

The editorial read in part: "Holding Tokyo 2020 for domestic political and economic purposes — ignoring scientific and moral imperatives — is contradictory to Japan's commitment to global health and human security."

Bach defended the IOC's procedures.

"The Playbooks are science and experience-based," he said. "They are based on, and taking into account, the latest scientific developments. They are based on the best scientific and medical expertise being available worldwide."

Only 1% of the Japanese population has been vaccinated and that number will still be small when the Olympics open. So far, officials say Japanese athletes have not been vaccinated.

This contrasts with many of the 15,000 Olympic and Paralympic athletes entering Japan who — encouraged by the IOC — will have shots. As will thousands of judges, officials, sponsors, media and broadcasters.

Though vaccines are now available, the strategy for the Olympics is geared around holding the games in a "bubble" as if there were no vaccines.

Muto said this week that 500 nurses were being requested for the games. Japanese television TBS on Tuesday, without citing a source, said organizers had contacted 30 hospitals to care for athletes who fall ill. Nurses groups online immediately questioned their availability, or being moved around like pawns.

Bach is expected to be in Hiroshima on May 17 to greet the torch relay, although he said last week his plans were still tentative.

Bach's arrival would come just days after the latest state of emergency ends on May 11. Opposition lawmakers in Japan's national legislature have suggested Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga scheduled the state of emergency to accommodate Bach.

## Satellites show world's glaciers melting faster than ever

BY SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Glaciers are melting faster, losing 31% more snow and ice per year than they did 15 years earlier, according to three-dimensional satellite measurements of all the world's mountain glaciers.

Scientists blame human-caused climate change.

Using 20 years of recently declassified satellite data, scientists calculated that the world's 220,000 mountain glaciers are losing more than 328 billion tons (298 billion metric tons) of ice and snow per year since 2015, according to a study in Wednesday's journal Nature. That's enough melt flowing into the world's rising oceans to put Switzerland under almost 24 feet (7.2 meters) of water each year.

The annual melt rate from 2015 to 2019 is 78 billion more tons (71 billion metric tons) a year than it was from 2000 to 2004. Global thinning rates, different than volume of water lost, doubled in the last 20 years and "that's enormous," said Romain Hugonnet, a glaciologist at ETH Zurich and the University of Toulouse in France who led the study.

Half the world's glacial loss is coming from the United States and Canada.

Alaska's melt rates are "among the highest on the planet," with the Columbia glacier retreating about 115 feet (35 meters) a year, Hugonnet said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 79 of 85

Almost all the world's glaciers are melting, even ones in Tibet that used to be stable, the study found. Except for a few in Iceland and Scandinavia that are fed by increased precipitation, the melt rates are accelerating around the world.

The near-uniform melting "mirrors the global increase in temperature" and is from the burning of coal, oil and gas, Hugonnet said. Some smaller glaciers are disappearing entirely. Two years ago, scientists, activists and government officials in Iceland held a funeral for a small glacier.

"Ten years ago, we were saying that the glaciers are the indicator of climate change, but now actually they've become a memorial of the climate crisis," said World Glacier Monitoring Service Director Michael Zemp, who wasn't part of the study.

The study is the first to use this 3D satellite imagery to examine all of Earth's glaciers not connected to ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica. Past studies either only used a fraction of the glaciers or estimated the loss of Earth's glaciers using gravity measurements from orbit. Those gravity readings have large margins of error and aren't as useful, Zemp said.

Ohio State University's Lonnie Thompson said the new study painted an "alarming picture."

Shrinking glaciers are a problem for millions of people who rely on seasonal glacial melt for daily water and rapid melting can cause deadly outbursts from glacial lakes in places like India, Hugonnet said.

But the largest threat is sea level rise. The world's oceans are already rising because warm water expands and because of melting ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica, but glaciers are responsible for 21% of sea level rise, more than the ice sheets, the study said. The ice sheets are larger longer term threats for sea level rise.

"It's becoming increasingly clear that sea level rise is going to be a bigger and bigger problem as we move through the 21st century," said National Snow and Ice Data Center Director Mark Serreze.

## US Catholic bishops may press Biden to stop taking Communion

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

When U.S. Catholic bishops hold their next national meeting in June, they'll be deciding whether to send a tougher-than-ever message to President Joe Biden and other Catholic politicians: Don't receive Communion if you persist in public advocacy of abortion rights.

At issue is a document that will be prepared for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops by its Committee on Doctrine, with the aim of clarifying the church's stance on an issue that has repeatedly vexed the bishops in recent decades. It's taken on new urgency now, in the eyes of many bishops, because Biden — only the second Catholic president — is the first to hold that office while espousing clear-cut support for abortion rights.

Such a stance, by a public figure, is "a grave moral evil," according to Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, who chairs the USCCB's Committee on Pro-Life Activities and believes it's necessary to publicly rebuke Biden on the issue.

"Because President Biden is Catholic, it presents a unique problem for us," Naumann told The Associated Press. "It can create confusion. ... How can he say he's a devout Catholic and he's doing these things that are contrary to the church's teaching?"

The document, if approved, would make clear the USCCB's view that Biden and other Catholic public figures with similar viewpoints should not present themselves for Communion, Naumann said.

In accordance with existing USCCB policy, it would still leave decisions on withholding Communion up to individual bishops. In Biden's case, the top prelates of the jurisdictions where he frequently worships — Bishop W. Francis Malooly of Wilmington, Delaware, and Cardinal Wilton Gregory of Washington, D.C. — have made clear that Biden is welcome to receive Communion at churches they oversee.

The document-in-the-works results from a decision in November by the USCCB's president, Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles, to form a working group to address the "complex and difficult situation" posed by Biden's stances on abortion and other issues that differ from official church teaching. Before disbanding, the group proposed the drafting of a new document addressing the issue of Communion — a

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 80 of 85

project assigned to the doctrine committee.

The committee has not released details about its work. Naumann said the matter will be discussed at the USCCB's meeting in June and the bishops will vote on whether the committee should continue working on the document so it could be publicly released later.

A two-thirds majority would be needed for work to proceed, Naumann said. But even critics of the initiative, such as Bishop John Stowe of Lexington, Kentucky, predict the endeavor will win overwhelming approval.

Stowe is among a relatively small group of U.S. bishops who worry that the USCCB's emphasis on abortion is undercutting Pope Francis' exhortations for the church to also stress such issues as climate change, immigration and inequality. Stowe also worries that the U.S. bishops are missing a chance to find common ground with Biden on such issues.

"If a politician is targeted as a negative example by his own church, that sets a sad context in which the church can deal with this Catholic president," Stowe said. "It contributes to the polarization of the church and of society."

Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego has expressed similar concerns.

"I do not see how depriving the president or other political leaders of the Eucharist based on their public policy stance can be interpreted in our society as anything other than a weaponization of the Eucharist ... to pummel them into submission," McElroy said during an online forum in February.

Nonetheless, the bishops wanting to send a tough message to Biden are determined to press ahead.

"There's a growing sense of urgency," said San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone. "Abortion is not just one among many important issues. ... It's a direct attack on human life."

Cordileone envisions a statement from the USCCB to Biden and others "that would move them in their conscience."

"They need to understand the scandal that is caused when they say they are faithfully Catholic and yet oppose the church on such a basic concept," he said.

American Cardinal Raymond Burke has broached the possibility of Catholicism's ultimate sanction. He says politicians who "publicly and obstinately" support abortion are "apostates" who not only should be barred from receiving Communion but deserve excommunication.

Bishops already troubled by Biden's stance on abortion grew more dismayed by three measures from his administration in mid-April.

It lifted restrictions on federal funding for research involving human fetal tissue. It rescinded a Trump administration policy barring organizations such as Planned Parenthood from receiving federal family planning grants if they also refer women for abortions. And it said women seeking an abortion pill will not be required to visit a doctor's office or clinic during the COVID-19 pandemic, enabling women to get a prescription via telemedicine and receive the pill by mail.

Naumann, who issued strongly worded denunciations after each action, told AP he was frustrated that Biden could authorize those while identifying as a devout Catholic.

"He doesn't have the authority to teach what it means to be Catholic — that's our responsibility as bishops," Naumann said, "Whether intentional or not, he's trying to usurp our authority."

The Vatican has not ruled on the specific matter of Communion and politicians supporting abortion in a major teaching document, though the church's in-house canon law says people in a situation of persistent sin shouldn't be allowed to receive Communion. It has also issued guidelines for the behavior of Catholics in political life exhorting them to uphold principles consistent with church doctrine.

The then-head of the Vatican's doctrine office, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI, told U.S. bishops in 2004 that priests "must" deny the sacrament if a politician goes to receive Communion despite an "obstinate persistence in manifest grave sin," including the sin of consistently campaigning for permissive abortion laws.

Ratzinger wrote a confidential letter outlining the principles to U.S. bishops in response to their question about whether to deny Communion to John Kerry, who was the Democratic nominee for president. In the end the bishops ignored Ratzinger's advice and voted instead for the policy currently in place allowing bishops to decide themselves whether to withhold it.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 81 of 85

The document being drafted by the doctrine committee may contain some guidelines for bishops, Corleone said, but it will not seek to strip their decision-making authority.

"This will put the burden of responsibility on Catholics who are prominent in public life," he said.

Archbishop Samuel Aquila of Denver, who has sharply criticized Biden's abortion stance, told the AP he favors creation of a national policy on Communion, as opposed to the current "patchwork approach." He said bishops should first have a private conversation with an individual deemed to be in a state of sin, and deny Communion if they persist.

Edward Peters, who teaches canon law at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, said the USCCB would have the option of seeking Vatican approval for a unified Communion policy applying to all bishops. But he doubted such a request would be made.

"The bishops' conference does have broad responsibility to speak out on matters that impact the effectiveness and clarity of Church's mission," Peters said via email. "The bad example being given by some high-profile Catholics who consistently fail to protect innocent human life is surely one of those matters."

Some Catholic academics are uneasy about the document.

"Are you really going to deny Communion for the president of the United States?" asked Margaret McGuinness, a religion professor at La Salle University in Philadelphia. "I don't think this is going to shake his faith. ... I don't see anything constructive coming out of it."

She noted that a majority of U.S. Catholics, according to polls, say abortion should be legal in at least some cases.

Steven Millies, a professor of public theology at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, said the Catholic church received significant financial support in recent years from conservative philanthropists who are skeptical of Francis and favored Donald Trump over Biden in the 2020 election.

"What we're seeing now is an effort to please donors who want a church which will wage a culture war," Millies said.

## Carmouche to be 1st Black jockey in Kentucky Derby since '13

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Sports Writer

Long before Kendrick Carmouche started riding horses growing up in Louisiana, Black jockeys were synonymous with the sport.

Black riders were atop 13 of the 15 horses in the first Kentucky Derby in 1875 and won 15 of the first 28 editions of the race. Everything has changed since: Carmouche on Saturday will be the first Black jockey in the Kentucky Derby since 2013 and is just one of a handful over the past century.

Carmouche is now one of the few remaining Black jockeys in the U.S. Much like Marlon St. Julien in 2000, Patrick Husbands in 2006 and Kevin Krigger in 2013, his presence in horse racing's biggest event is a reminder of how the industry marginalized Black jockeys to the point they all but disappeared from the sport.

"As a Black rider getting to the Kentucky Derby, I hope it inspires a lot of people because my road wasn't easy to get there and I never quit," Carmouche said. "What I've been wanting all my career is to inspire people and make people know that it's not about color. It's about how successful you are in life and how far you can fight to get to that point."

Carmouche is a success story in his own right. He is the son of a jockey who has won more than 3,400 races and earned \$118 million since beginning to ride professionally in 2000. He came back from a broken leg three years ago and set himself up for his first Kentucky Derby mount by riding 72-1 long shot Bourbonic to victory in the Wood Memorial on April 3. Bourbonic will leave from the 20th post in Saturday's race at Churchill Downs.

He's also a rarity in a sport now dominated by jockeys from Latin America.

"Obviously there haven't been many in recent decades, but if you go back to the early years of the Derby, the late 1800s, early 1900s, Black jockeys dominated the Kentucky Derby," NBC Sports analyst Randy Moss said. "Guys like Isaac Murphy and Jimmy Winkfield."

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 82 of 85

Carmouche joins St. Julien as the only U.S.-born Black jockeys in the Derby since 1921, which was even then long after the era dominated by Murphy, Winkfield and others.

Chris Goodlett, a historian at the Kentucky Derby Museum, cited a combination of Jim Crow laws and segregation in the U.S., intimidation by white riders and decisions by racing officials, owners and trainers for the decline of Black jockeys in the early 20th century. One example was white counterparts riding Winfield into the rail at Harlem Race Track outside Chicago and injuring him and his horse.

"Consequently, white trainers and owners would be (more) reluctant to ride Black jockeys on their horses due to instances like that," Goodlett said. "We see it also just from an administrative point of view, as well: fewer licenses being issued to Black jockeys, sometimes not issued at all."

Brien Bouyea, communications director for the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame, said many Black jockeys left for Europe because of better working conditions and never returned. Manny Ycaza came from Panama and blazed a trail for Latin American jockeys, who used riding schools and other factors that changed on-track demographics.

Along the way, participation by Black people in the Kentucky Derby ebbed and flowed with significant contributions along the way, including grooms Will Harbut with Man O'War in 1920 and Eddie Sweat with Secretariat in 1973 and trainer Hank Allen with Northern Wolf in 1989. Harbut's great grandson, Greg Harbut, co-owned 2020 Derby runner Neckar Island and helped found the Ed Brown Society, named after the 19th century Black jockey and trainer to further diversify racing.

Husbands was well-aware of his unique place in history when he rode Seaside Retreat in the 2006 Derby and feels a connection to Carmouche this year because "the stepping stone that he's doing for his culture is the same stuff I was trying to do for my culture."

Knowing the history of Black jockeys, Husbands is inspired by Carmouche's journey.

"When I saw the interview with him two years ago, it bring water to my eyes in terms of how his wife is white, he's Black and he's a little bit scared of his kids on his streets," Husbands said. "It brought me home because he said in this interview that no racetrack was being prejudiced to him. ... Now he's coming in to ride in the Kentucky Derby. It's like he's shining a light out there."

Husbands said Carmouche becoming the first Black jockey to win the Kentucky Derby since 1902 "would be a blessing. It would bring tears to a lot of people's eyes."

The usually talkative and confident Carmouche paused several times trying to put into words what it would mean to follow the footsteps of jockeys like first Derby winner Oliver Lewis, Winkfield and Murphy.

"From my perspective, if I win this race, man, it would touch a lot of people," Carmouche said. "A lot of people will be crying, a lot of people will be happy and a lot of happy tears."

## In Jaffa, gentrification stokes discord as Arabs pushed out

By ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — A turreted former Catholic girl's school in Jaffa is being transformed into an exclusive Soho House club. Around the corner, a historic ex-convent is now a five-star hotel. Across the street, the glittering towers of the Andromeda Hill luxury residences overlook the Mediterranean.

But farther down Yefet Street, working class Arabs of Jaffa's Ajami neighborhood face a starkly different reality. With housing prices out of reach, discontent over the city's rapid transformation into a bastion for Israel's ultra-wealthy is reaching a boiling point. The crisis has taken on nationalistic overtones, with some Arab residents accusing the government of trying to push them out to make way for Jews.

"Ninety percent of people here barely make a living, from hand to mouth, they don't have enough to eat," said Jaffa resident Ibrahim Tartir. "For a young man looking to get married, it's 5,000, 6,000 shekels (\$1,800) for rent, not including water and electricity and the rest. How much does he earn? 6,000 a month. How can he live?"

Jaffa, the historic port at the core of the greater Tel Aviv metropolis, is home to around 20,000 Arab residents, remnants of the Palestinian population that lived there before Israel's establishment in 1948. The district has undergone extensive gentrification in recent decades with government encouragement.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 83 of 85

That trend has accelerated in the past several years as real estate prices have skyrocketed amid surging demand. As wealthy Israelis and foreigners move from other areas of Tel Aviv into Jaffa, its mostly working-class Arab residents have been pushed out. This has added ethnic tensions to an economic phenomenon familiar in other cities around the world.

"We're reaching a point where Arab people can't buy houses unless they are very rich," said Youssef Masharawi, a Jaffa native and professor of physical therapy at Tel Aviv University. He said young Arabs in Jaffa have nowhere to go, unable to afford to start families in their hometown and facing discrimination in nearby Israeli cities with overwhelmingly Jewish populations.

The stress is starting to reach a breaking point.

Long smoldering tensions erupted last week after the rabbi and director of a pre-military religious seminary in the predominantly Arab neighborhood of Ajami were assaulted by two Arab residents while visiting an apartment for sale.

Moshe Schendowich, chief executive of the Meirim B'Yafo seminary, was injured in the incident. He said that while there have been some disagreements with Arab neighbors, those conflicts "should be solved with speech, with talking, not with violence."

Although the seminary says it isn't out to push anyone out, some residents view it with suspicion. Its head rabbi is a former West Bank settler and was formally affiliated with Ateret Cohanim, a group that takes over Arab properties in Jerusalem to make way for Jewish settlers. The yeshiva's website says its aim is to "strengthen Jewish identity and the voice of the Torah, (and) strengthen communities" in Jaffa.

The incident ignited an already flammable situation. In the days following, Arab residents and Jewish supporters faced off against Jewish nationalist counter-protesters. The demonstrations devolved into clashes with police.

Tel Aviv-Jaffa Mayor Ron Huldai condemned the violence but insisted "what we are seeing is not a nationalist conflict between Jews and Arabs."

"It is the product of ongoing frustration of a whole generation of Jaffans that can't continue to live there," he said.

But in Israel, nationalist conflict is never far away.

Before Israel's establishment in 1948, Jaffa was a predominantly Arab city of some 100,000 people. During the war surrounding Israel's creation, tens of thousands of Palestinian residents fled or were forced from their homes.

Under a 1950 absentee property law, the new Israeli government confiscated thousands of empty properties and handed them to state-run public housing companies. Many of the Palestinians who remained in Jaffa ended up in these properties.

Since 2011, the Israeli government has pushed to sell off these properties to develop more housing. Although occupants are given an opportunity to buy these homes, the prices are often too high, forcing many longtime residents to move out.

Amidar, a public housing company that manages the buildings, said there is no intention to expel people. "The properties are offered for sale first to tenants at a significant discount and with professional guidance" and most are purchased by residents, it said.

Even with generous terms, however, many low-income residents cannot afford to buy their homes. Many properties have been bought up by developers, resulting in low-income Arab residents being forced out.

On Wednesday, Tel Aviv City Hall announced that it would be opening registration for an affordable housing lottery for 28 units in Jaffa for Arab residents.

"In addition to the project, approval has been granted for a public housing renewal program in Jaffa's Ajami neighborhood," city hall said in a statement. "The program will enable 100 existing tenants to remain in renovated properties while increasing supply by a further 200 apartments."

Ravit Hananel, a professor of urban policy at Tel Aviv University, said the Israeli government has been ridding itself of public housing since the 1980s as it abandoned the country's socialist roots and adopted neo-liberal, capitalist policies.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 84 of 85

She said the government pledged to address housing issues after mass social justice protests in 2011. But she said the response has been to push for more privatization, further hurting the disadvantaged.

While this is the case across the country, Jaffa's rapid gentrification is not simply a case of rich against poor, said Abed Abou Shhadeh, a Tel Aviv city councilman from Jaffa.

"It has a national background behind it, and it's part of the conflict," said Abou Shhadeh.

While some try to depoliticize the issue, he said "it's more than a class war. There's a very deep rooted political tension happening at the same time, which makes it much more difficult to come with a fair and equal solution."

Organizers of a recent protest wrote on Facebook that the "economic expulsion and gentrification that's pushing the Arab community — and also poor Jewish residents — out of the city for the sake of real estate deals continues what was started in 1948." Graffiti on city walls say in Hebrew and Arabic: "Jaffa is not for sale."

Masharawi, the Jaffa-born professor, called for the construction of affordable housing for young Arabs in Jaffa. He said he was determined to stand his ground against the rising tide of change.

"I will never leave Jaffa even if I am going to die within a small room in the end," he said. "This is my home, my house, my way of life."

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, April 29, the 119th day of 2021. There are 246 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 29, 1992, a jury in Simi Valley, California, acquitted four Los Angeles police officers of almost all state charges in the videotaped beating of motorist Rodney King; the verdicts were followed by rioting in Los Angeles resulting in 55 deaths.

On this date:

In 1913, Swedish-born engineer Gideon Sundback of Hoboken, New Jersey, received a U.S. patent for a "separable fastener" — later known as the zipper.

In 1945, during World War II, American soldiers liberated the Dachau (DAH'-khow) concentration camp. Adolf Hitler married Eva Braun inside his "Führerbunker" and designated Adm. Karl Doenitz (DUHR'-nihtz) president.

In 1946, 28 former Japanese officials went on trial in Tokyo as war criminals; seven ended up being sentenced to death.

In 1957, the SM-1, the first military nuclear power plant, was dedicated at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

In 1967, Aretha Franklin's cover of Otis Redding's "Respect" was released as a single by Atlantic Records.

In 1961, "ABC's Wide World of Sports" premiered, with Jim McKay as host.

In 1983, Harold Washington was sworn in as the first Black mayor of Chicago.

In 1991, a cyclone began striking the South Asian country of Bangladesh; it ended up killing more than 138,000 people, according to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

In 1997, Staff Sgt. Delmar Simpson, a drill instructor at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, was convicted of raping six female trainees (he was sentenced to 25 years in prison and dishonorably discharged). A worldwide treaty to ban chemical weapons went into effect.

In 2000, Tens of thousands of angry Cuban-Americans marched peacefully through Miami's Little Havana, protesting the raid in which armed federal agents yanked 6-year-old Elian Gonzalez from the home of relatives.

In 2008, Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama denounced his former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, for what he termed "divisive and destructive" remarks on race.

In 2010, the U.S. Navy officially ended a ban on women serving on submarines, saying the first women would be reporting for duty by 2012. The NCAA's Board of Directors approved a 68-team format for the

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 85 of 85

men's basketball tournament beginning the next season.

Ten years ago: Britain's Prince William and Kate Middleton were married in an opulent ceremony at London's Westminster Abbey. President Barack Obama visited Tuscaloosa, Alabama, one of the sites of deadly tornadoes two days earlier, saying he had "never seen devastation like this."

Five years ago: Hundreds of rowdy protesters broke through barricades and threw eggs at police outside a hotel in Burlingame, California, where Donald Trump addressed the state's Republican convention. North Korea sentenced Kim Dong Chul, a U.S. citizen of Korean heritage, to 10 years in prison after convicting him of espionage and subversion. Joey Meek, a friend of Dylann Roof, the white man later convicted of killing nine Black parishioners during a Bible study at a Charleston, South Carolina, church pleaded guilty to lying to federal authorities. (Meek was sentenced in March 2017 to more than two years in prison.)

One year ago: Scientists announced the first effective treatment against the coronavirus, the experimental antiviral medication remdesivir, which they said could speed the recovery of COVID-19 patients. The government estimated that the U.S. economy shrank at a 4.8% annual rate in the first quarter of the year as the pandemic shut down much of the country. The Federal Reserve said it would keep its key short-term interest rate near zero for the foreseeable future as part of its effort to bolster the economy. A suburban Minneapolis nursing home said 47 residents had died from complications of COVID-19. President Donald Trump said the federal government would not extend the social distancing guidelines that were expiring the next day; he said he would resume his own out-of-state travel. Police were called to a Brooklyn, New York, neighborhood after a funeral home overwhelmed by the coronavirus resorted to storing dozens of bodies on ice in rented trucks and a passerby complained about the smell; no criminal charges were filed.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Keith Baxter is 88. Conductor Zubin Mehta is 85. Pop singer Bob Miranda (The Happenings) is 79. Country singer Duane Allen (The Oak Ridge Boys) is 78. Singer Tommy James is 74. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., is 71. Movie director Phillip Noyce is 71. Comedian Jerry Seinfeld is 67. Actor Leslie Jordan is 66. Actor Kate Mulgrew is 66. Actor Daniel Day-Lewis is 64. Actor Michelle Pfeiffer is 63. Actor Eve Plumb is 63. Rock musician Phil King is 61. Country singer Stephanie Bentley is 58. Actor Vincent Ventresca is 55. Singer Carnie Wilson (Wilson Phillips) is 53. Actor Paul Adelstein is 52. Actor Uma Thurman is 51. International Tennis Hall of Famer Andre Agassi is 51. Rapper Master P is 51. Actor Darby Stanchfield is 50. Country singer James Bonamy is 49. Gospel/rhythm-and-blues singer Erica Campbell (Mary Mary) is 49. Rock musician Mike Hogan (The Cranberries) is 48. Actor Tyler Labine is 43. Actor Megan Boone is 38. Actor-model Taylor Cole is 37. Pop singer Amy Heidemann (Karmin) is 35. NHL center Jonathan Toews is 33. Pop singer Foxes is 32. Actor Grace Kaufman is 19.