

# Groton Daily Independent

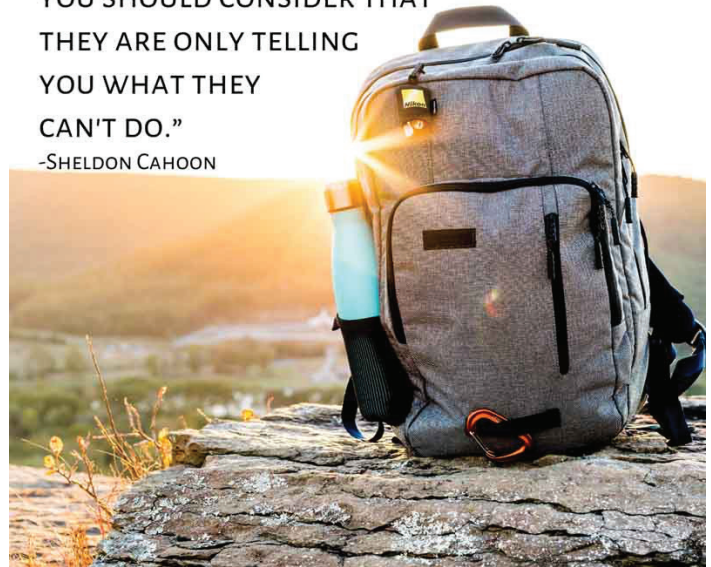
Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 1 of 65

- [1- Munger's 80th Birthday](#)
- [2- Obit: Gail Berreth](#)
- [3- Weekly Vikings Roundup](#)
- [4- Truss Pros/Precision Wall Systems Hiring Ad](#)
- [5- Prairie Doc Column: Did you get the message?](#)
- [6- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [7- Weather Pages](#)
- [10- Daily Devotional](#)
- [11- 2021 Community Events](#)
- [12- News from the Associated Press](#)

“WHEN SOMEONE TELLS YOU THAT YOU CAN'T DO SOMETHING, PERHAPS YOU SHOULD CONSIDER THAT THEY ARE ONLY TELLING YOU WHAT THEY CAN'T DO.”

-SHELDON CAHOON

Chicken Soup  
for the Soul





## Munger 80th Birthday

The family of Helen Munger would like you to join us in honoring her on her 80th birthday. Greetings may be sent to 2517 S. Melgaard Road, Aberdeen SD 57401.



## **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

## The Life of Gail Marie Berreth

Groton, SD-Memorial Service for Gail Marie Berreth, 66, of Groton will be 10:00 am Tuesday, May 25, 2021 at Carlsen Funeral Home and Crematory. Rev. Jon Droege will officiate.

Gail died Friday, May 21, 2021 at Avera St. Luke's Hospital in Aberdeen.

Gail Marie Blank, daughter of Arthur "Art" and Esther (Walz) Blank was born November 7, 1954 at Aberdeen, SD. She grew up in Aberdeen and attended Roncalli Catholic Schools, graduating with the class of 1973.

Gail was united in marriage to Roger Berreth on September 27, 1974 at First United Methodist Church in Aberdeen. They made their home in Aberdeen. Gail stayed home and raised their family. In 2010, Gail and Roger moved to Groton.

Family was the most important part of Gail's life. She loved flowers and enjoyed gardening. Gail also enjoyed going to rummage sales and crafting was a fun pastime. Gail will always be remembered by her very giving nature.

Grateful for having shared Gail's life are her husband, Roger; children, Becky (Tim) Felix of Mitchell, SD, James Berreth of Aberdeen, Josh Berreth of Aberdeen, and Jerry (Mallory) Berreth of Aberdeen; mother, Esther Erlenbusch of Aberdeen; siblings, Pam (Mike) Berreth of Sioux Falls, SD, John (Jill) Blank of Sioux Falls, SD and Mike (Trish) Blank of Rapid City, SD; four grandchildren, Natasha Berreth, Matthew Berreth, Justin Felix and Lucas Berreth.

She was preceded in death by her father and one grandson, Eli Berreth.

Carlsen Funeral Home and Crematory of Aberdeen has been entrusted with arrangements.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 3 of 65

## Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

After taking a week off from talking about to draft so we could cover the Vikings' schedule release, we'll take one more look back before moving on to a roster breakdown that will take us right up to the team's first preseason game. We've already covered the Vikings' draft class, so now we look at the rest of the NFC North to see how the division rivals fared. We'll begin by averaging the draft grades given out by NFL.com, CBS, and Fox Sports, then move on to a breakdown of the picks.

### Chicago Bears

Grade: B+ (NFL.com A, CBS B+, Fox Sports B-)

The Chicago Bears made one of the biggest moves on draft day, moving up in the first round to grab Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields. The Bears haven't had a good QB since Jay Cutler left in 2016, and the front office hopes Fields can change that narrative. Widely considered one of the best quarterbacks in this year's draft, once Fields started to slip in the draft the team saw their chance to move up and took it. Fields will "compete" with Andy Dalton for the starting role, and while there is a chance Dalton could be the week 1 starter, it won't be long until the rookie sees the field.

After securing their QB, the Bears looked to upgrade their offensive line by using their next two picks on the position. In the second round, Chicago grabbed Teven Jenkins from Oklahoma State. Jenkins was considered a first-round talent but slipped because most teams believe he will only play right tackle in the NFL. In the fifth round, the Bears drafted Larry Borom from Missouri. The massive lineman played tackle in college but will likely move inside to guard in the NFL. In the sixth round, the team selected RB Khalil Herbert from Virginia Tech, WR Dazz Newsome from North Carolina, and CB Thomas Graham Jr. from Oregon. Rounding out their draft, the Bears drafted DT Khyiris Tonga from BYU in the seventh round.

### Detroit Lions

Grade: A- (NFL.com A-, CBS B+, Fox Sports A)

The Lions made it a priority to upgrade their trenches in the draft. In the first round, the team grabbed Penei Sewell, offensive tackle from Oregon. Sewell was my favorite player in the draft, and I'm surprised he slipped all the way to the seventh pick. In the second round, Detroit drafted DT Levi Onwuzurike from Washington, followed by DT Alim McNeill from N.C. State in the third. Both of those defensive tackles were highly rated, and are huge upgrades for that defensive line. Onwuzurike figures to play the three-tech and use his athleticism to cause disruption, while McNeill – who is possibly the most nimble 320-pound person I have ever seen in my life – will likely play nose tackle.

After beefing up the offensive and defensive lines, Detroit drafted cornerback Ifeatu Melifonwu from Syracuse in the third round, and receiver Amon-Ra St. Brown from USC and linebacker Derrick Barnes from Purdue in the fourth round. The Lions used their final pick on running back Jermar Jefferson from Oregon State in the seventh round.

### Green Bay Packers

Grade: B- (NFL.com B-, CBS B, Fox Sports B-)

Another draft, another year of the nation scratching their heads and mumbling "huh?". On the first night of draft coverage, a bomb was dropped that claims Aaron Rodgers does not want to play for the Packers anymore. Rodgers has been asking the team to get him a weapon to complement All-Pro receiver Davante Adams, and after watching the team move up last year to get his replacement, the hall of fame QB had had enough. Surely the Packers from office would do everything they could to appease their star quarterback right? Wrong. The team decided to draft a cornerback in the first round when they took Eric Stokes from Georgia. Stokes was widely considered a day-two CB, so this was a little bit of a reach.

In the second round, the Packers AGAIN decided against getting a receiver to make Rodgers happy, this time drafting Josh Meyers, a center from Ohio State. This was another reach, as the Packers could have gotten similar players later in the draft (like Ben Cleveland in the third or Drew Dalman in the fourth). Green Bay eventually drafted a receiver in the third round when they grabbed Amari Rodgers from Clemson, but it might have been too little too late. The Packers rounded out their draft by selecting OL Royce Newman from Mississippi in the fourth round, DT Tedarrell Slaton from Florida and CB Shermar Jean-Charles from Appalachian State in the fifth round, OL Cole Van Lanen from Wisconsin and LB Isaiah McDuffie from Boston College in the sixth, and RB Kylin Hill from Mississippi State with their seventh-round pick.



Day shift  
and night  
shift  
assemblers!

**Competitive starting wage  
with monthly tier increases!  
Full benefit package!**

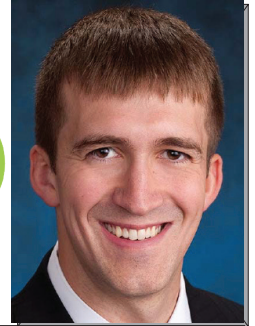
**To apply:  
[www.uslbm.com/careers](http://www.uslbm.com/careers) or  
call Diane at 605-448-2929**

**Britton**



## Did you Get the Message?

We all know the feeling. You ate too much, and now your stomach is letting you know about it. Or maybe you ate some junk food, and now you don't feel well. How is it that another slice of pizza one moment seems like exactly what we want, but later we realize it was not what we needed?



**By Andrew Ellsworth, MD ~ Prairie Doc® Perspectives**

In the simplest of terms, it comes down to hunger and cravings. The message for hunger is initiated by the body. When our stomach is empty, and our blood sugar and insulin levels begin to drop, our bodies release the hormone ghrelin and send it to the hypothalamus in our brains resulting in a desire to eat. Cravings, however, are entirely controlled by our brain. Fatty and sugary foods help release feel-good opioids and dopamine in our brains. The message in this case is a misapplied sense of reward.

Our bodies, especially the gastrointestinal system, respond directly to what we put into them. Many common problems like abdominal pain, heartburn or reflux, constipation, and diarrhea are often directly caused by our diet. Other conditions like irritable bowel syndrome and Celiac disease can also be treated by a change in diet. Cutting down on processed meats and processed carbohydrates may help decrease your risk of colon cancer.

Thus, when it comes to filling our hungry stomachs with healthy options, there are ways to overpower the feel-good cravings from our brains. First, turn off the TV. Plenty of studies have shown we eat more than we ought to with the TV on. That goes for your phone, too. Second, slow down. Savor your food. Give your body time to send the signals from your digestive tract to your brain that you've had enough. Third, drink water while you eat. Room temperature water is best for digestion. Also, we often misinterpret being thirsty for being hungry. Having a glass of water before you eat can help satisfy your thirst and help you eat less. Fourth, eat with someone in person, via Zoom or phone call. When you eat with someone you are more likely to make healthier choices and eat slower.

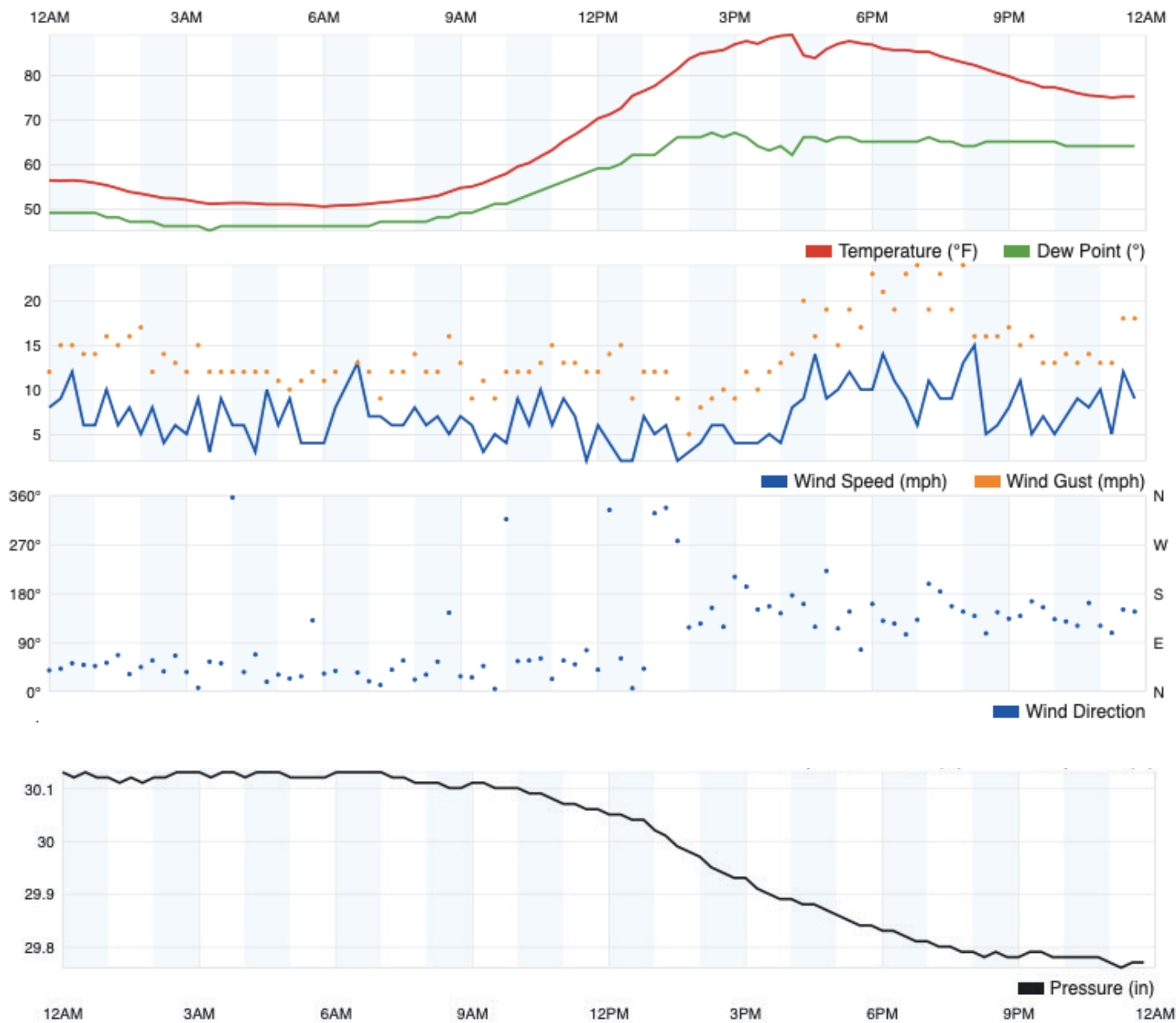
Our bodies know what is good for us. We just need to understand the messages. Next time you have a craving, or think you feel hungry, rather than automatically eating more, take time to assess your situation. If you discover you are tired, stressed, sad, angry, or lonely, appreciate your new self-awareness and explore behaviors other than eating that could better satisfy your needs. If what you are feeling truly is hunger, give your body what it really wants: a healthy diet.

Andrew Ellsworth, M.D. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices family medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. For free and easy access to the entire Prairie Doc® library, visit [www.prairiedoc.org](http://www.prairiedoc.org) and follow Prairie Doc® on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show streaming on Facebook and broadcast on SDPB most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 6 of 65

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 7 of 65

**Monday**



Mostly Sunny  
then Sunny  
and Breezy

**High: 84 °F**

**Monday  
Night**



Mostly Clear  
and Breezy  
then Mostly  
Clear

**Low: 52 °F**

**Tuesday**



Sunny and  
Breezy

**High: 78 °F**

**Tuesday  
Night**



Mostly Clear  
and Breezy  
then Mostly  
Clear

**Low: 45 °F**

**Wednesday**



Mostly Sunny  
then Chance  
Showers

**High: 64 °F**

## This Week's Forecast

### Probability of Precipitation

	5/24 Mon			5/25 Tue			5/26 Wed			5/27 Thu			5/28 Fri						
	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm				
	Aberdeen	11	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	6	31	62	74	74	63	58	34	14	7
Britton	10	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	3	24	56	69	69	62	59	38	18	9	8
Eagle Butte	5	0	0	1	1	0	1	4	30	64	81	81	75	54	41	17	8	6	10
Eureka	6	0	0	1	1	3	3	2	11	47	64	74	74	61	50	27	10	7	9
Gettysburg	5	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	16	50	80	80	80	60	51	25	10	7	8
McIntosh	5	1	2	3	2	4	4	3	25	62	75	75	75	55	39	16	6	6	16
Milbank	9	2	5	0	0	1	1	1	2	14	50	72	72	68	64	45	25	13	6
Miller	6	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	7	36	85	85	83	64	57	33	15	8	7
Mobridge	5	0	0	1	1	2	2	2	18	57	73	77	77	60	46	22	9	6	10
Murdo	5	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	18	53	83	83	62	49	42	19	10	7	7
Pierre	5	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	17	51	84	84	74	56	46	22	11	7	7
Redfield	8	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	6	30	74	81	81	65	59	35	17	8	7
Watertown	7	3	2	0	0	1	1	1	2	16	54	75	75	68	65	42	23	11	6
Wheaton	12	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	1	11	41	62	62	61	57	41	22	12	5

### Maximum Temperatures

	5/24 Mon	5/25 Tue	5/26 Wed	5/27 Thu	5/28 Fri
Aberdeen	84	79	65	57	66
Britton	84	77	61	55	63
Eagle Butte	77	71	63	53	67
Eureka	81	74	62	54	66
Gettysburg	78	73	64	55	66
McIntosh	74	67	57	50	66
Milbank	86	81	65	58	62
Miller	83	78	69	59	66
Mobridge	82	75	64	57	70
Murdo	79	75	71	60	71
Pierre	82	78	70	61	71
Redfield	85	79	68	58	66
Watertown	82	79	66	58	63
Wheaton	85	80	64	57	63

Updated: 5/24/2021 3:39 AM Central



The early part of this week will be dry and warm. However, chances for rain increase Wednesday night and Thursday as a system moves across the region. Temperatures will also turn cooler at that time.  
#sdwx #mnwx

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 8 of 65

## Today in Weather History

May 24, 1960: A tornado touched down about 7 miles northwest of Roscoe and destroyed a small shed near a country schoolhouse. Funnel clouds were also observed in Hosmer area, near Eureka, and 30 miles west of Aberdeen. An unofficial report of 4 inches of rain fell at Hosmer.

May 24, 2008: A supercell thunderstorm produced seven tornadoes in Dewey County. Since these tornadoes remained in the open country, all were rated EF0.

1894 - Six inches of snow blanketed Kentucky. Just four days earlier as much as ten inches of snow had fallen across Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia. Six days earlier a violent storm had wrecked nine ships on Lake Michigan. (David Ludlum)

1896: An estimated F4 tornado passed ten miles north of Des Moines, Iowa during the late evening. As many as seven members of one family, the at the north edge of Valeria, Iowa, died as they ran to the storm cellar. Five others died in a nearby home. A steel railroad rail was reportedly driven 15 feet into the ground. The death toll was at least 21.

1930 - A tornado touched down near the town of Pratt, KS, and traveled at the incredibly slow speed of just 5 mph. (The Weather Channel)

1940 - Hail fell near Ada OK to a depth of six to eight inches, and rainfall runoff left drifts of hail up to five feet high. (The Weather Channel)

1973: An F4 tornado tore through the small town of Union City, Oklahoma, killing two and injuring four others. This tornado was the first storm to be studied in detail by the National Severe Storms Laboratory Doppler Radar Unit at Norman, OK and an armada of researchers in the field. Research of the radar data from the storm would lead to the discovery of a "TVS," or Tornado Vortex Signature. The presence of a TVS on Doppler radar data is a very strong indication of tornadic potential in a severe thunderstorm.

1987 - Severe thunderstorms in southwest Texas spawned a couple of tornadoes near Silverton, and produced golf ball size hail east of the town of Happy. Thunderstorms also produced large hail and damaging winds in Louisiana and Texas. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the southeastern U.S. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 88 mph at Columbia, NC. Baseball size hail was reported near Tifton GA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced severe weather across the Upper Midwest through the day and night. Thunderstorms spawned 30 tornadoes, and there were 158 reports of large hail and damaging winds. A strong (F-3) tornado caused five million dollars damage at Corning, IA, and a powerful (F-4) tornado caused five million dollars damage at Traer, IA. Thunderstorm winds gusting to 88 mph killed one person and injured five others at Stephenville, WI. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Severe thunderstorms spawned two dozen tornadoes from Montana to Oklahoma. Four tornadoes carved a 109-mile path across central Kansas. The third of the four tornadoes blew 88 cars off an 125-car train off the track, stacking them three to four cars high in some cases, and the fourth tornado caused 3.9 million dollars damage. The third tornado injured six persons who were trying to escape in vehicles. A woman was "sucked out" of a truck and said that at one time she was "airborne, trying to run but my feet wouldn't touch the ground". She also saw a live deer "flying through the air". (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2002: The last measurable snow of the season fell in Marquette, Michigan. This snowfall brought the city's seasonal snowfall to 319.8 inches, by far the city's snowiest winter ever.



# Groton Daily Independent

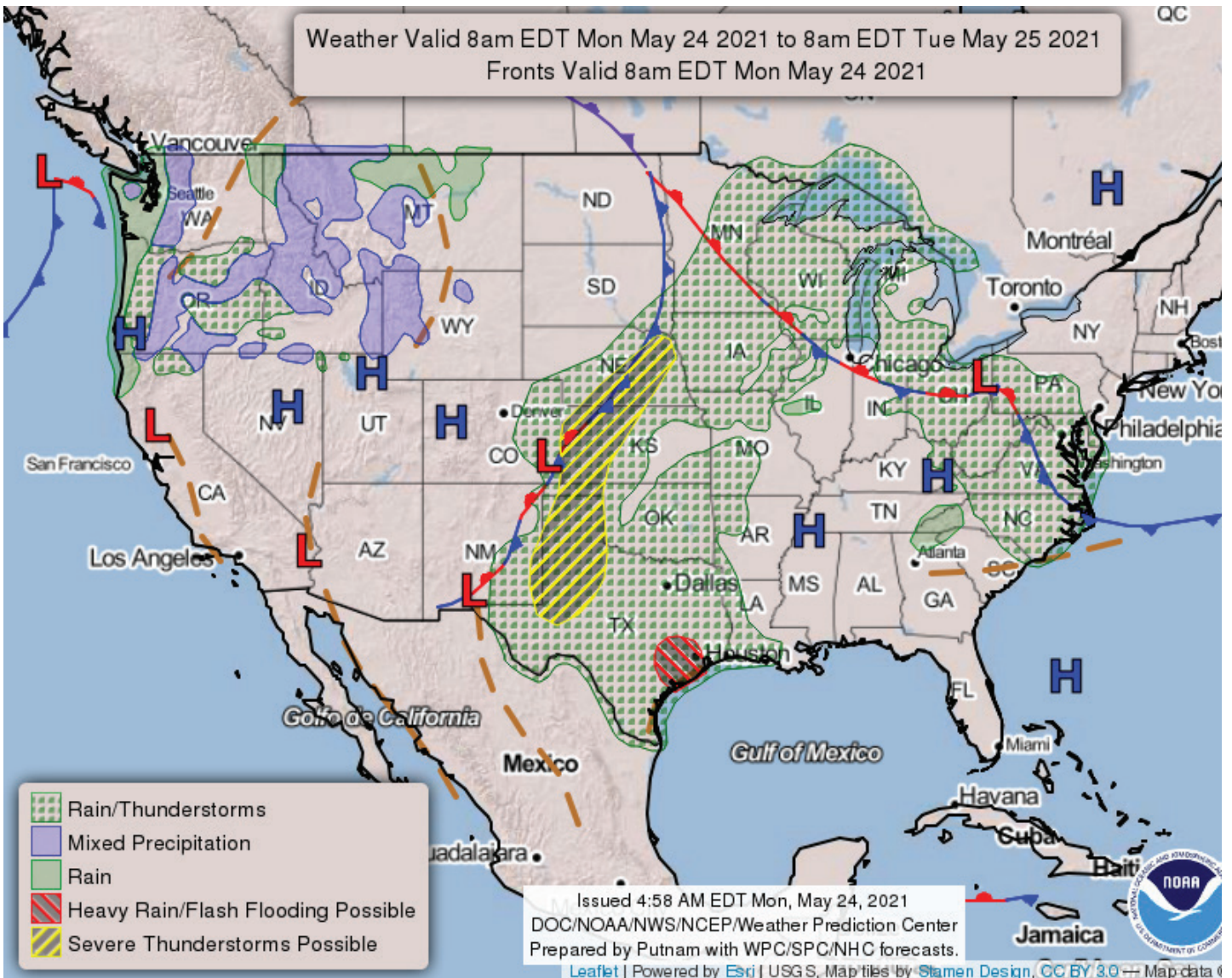
Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 9 of 65

## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 89 °F at 4:12 PM**  
**Low Temp: 50 °F at 5:55 AM**  
**Wind: 24 mph at 6:52 PM**  
**Precip: .00**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 99° in 1926**  
**Record Low: 25° in 1897**  
**Average High: 73°F**  
**Average Low: 48°F**  
**Average Precip in May.: 2.51**  
**Precip to date in May.: 0.27**  
**Average Precip to date: 6.48**  
**Precip Year to Date: 3.04**  
**Sunset Tonight: 9:08 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:53 a.m.**



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 10 of 65



## READY OR NOT

"I don't want to die. Please do not let me die," he whispered in desperation. He was a world leader – loved by many, dreaded by some, questioned by others. He was a prominent figure on the world's stage having great power and prestige, wealth and control that could not be denied. But in his final moments everything that he had or had accomplished could not extend the life of Hugo Chavez one moment nor release him from his fear of dying. David described the reason that his life ended this way. "Here now is the man who did not make God his stronghold."

Another man came to the end of his life who was also a world leader. His résumé describes him as a ruler with great power and authority, vast wealth and owner of beautiful buildings, a soldier, a poet, one who cared deeply for others and was "a man after God's own heart." When he faced death he said, "When I walk through the dark valley of death, I will not be afraid."

Two different men, two different destinies because of two different choices. One lived his life with no fear of God. He sought fame and the favor of man. The other lived his life in fear of God and sought His favor, often His forgiveness, but always His approval.

All of us have these same choices. We can live for ourselves, as Hugo Chavez did, seeking recognition and power and die in fear as he did. Or we can choose to live for God as David did, serve Him faithfully with great love and passion, and die as he did - in peace and with hope.

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for the peace and hope we have in You, Your love and salvation and the gift of eternal life. May we share Your grace and love with others in need of You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Here now is the man who did not make God his stronghold but trusted in his great wealth and grew strong by destroying others! Psalm 52:7

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 11 of 65

## 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
- 06/17/2021 Groton Transit Fundraiser, 4-7 p.m.
- 06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
- 06/19/2021 U8 Baseball Tournament
- 06/19/2021 Lions Crazy Golf Fest at Olive Grove Golf Course, Noon
- 06/26/2021 U10 Baseball Tournament
- 06/27/2021 U12 Baseball Tournament
- 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

### Officials seeking affording housing solutions in Black Hills

By SIANDHARA BONNET Rapid City Journal

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — As the number of houses for sale shrinks and prices climb, many are wondering if affordable housing will become a relic of the past in Rapid City.

Tom Johnson, president and CEO of Elevate Rapid City, has some ideas that he believes could help with the problem.

"I think it's no secret to anybody that (housing has) been alive in the last six to nine months and that housing is an issue across the board from affordability to availability," Johnson said recently.

The April economic indicators showed a decrease in active real estate listings from 128 in March to 118 in April. The median listing price increased from \$234,000 to \$302,000.

Affordable housing is defined as 30% of a household's income. Rapid City's area median income was \$49,000 in 2019, which would mean \$14,700 would be dedicated to housing and utilities a year, according to a city presentation on a strategic housing plan.

One solution to achieve affordable housing is to subsidize the cost of construction, which would reduce costs for developers and builders, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Johnson said there could be programs to subsidize the cost of development so the developer can build houses at a lower cost, still see a profit and allow the home buyer to see an affordable rate.

CNN Business reported that random-length lumber futures reached a record high of \$1,615, a seven-fold gain from a low of about \$300 in April 2020.

The second solution is to subsidize the borrower, which could also be through a program where a non-profit offers lower interest rates or equity requirements to first-time home-buyers.

Single-family homes have increased on average by \$35,872 over the last year with an increase in lumber prices, according to the National Association of Homebuilders.

Johnson said the third solution is having nonprofits and governments look at infrastructure to help eliminate cost to the borrower and developer. He said developers need water lines, sewers and roads to develop homes.

The fourth solution is for local governments to get into development, although Johnson said it's not an ideal solution.

He said local governments would artificially come in and affect the market rate by building homes and setting prices. He said it works in the short-term, but can create problems in the long-term.

"Building houses themselves can become fraught with corruption," Johnson said. "Ongoing maintenance issues, cost issues -- it's the basic question of if it's the correct philosophical approach to competing in the private sector."

He said a more appropriate solution is the nonprofit sector coming up with creative solutions between developers and borrowers.

The active real estate listings in the area have been on a decline since August 2020, according to previous Elevate Rapid City economic indicators.

A graph showing the active real estate listings from July 2020 to April 2021, according to numbers from Elevate Rapid City's economic indicators.

However, Johnson said it's not just Rapid City or the Black Hills facing affordable and available single-family housing. He said he's seen it in Denver, Minneapolis and Wyoming.

He said the housing dilemma is fueled by the federal policy on interest rates and the stimulus package.

Joel Kan, vice president of economic and industry forecasting for Mortgage Bankers Association, said Wednesday that mortgage rates were slightly higher last week and purchase applications fell for the second week in a row. He said average loan sizes increased for each loan type.

"This is a sign that the competitive purchase market, driven by low housing inventory and high demand,

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 13 of 65

is pushing prices higher and weighing down on activity," Kan said. "The higher prices are also affecting the mix of activity, with stronger growth in purchase loans with larger-than-average balances."

Johnson said money has never been this cheap in the United States, so a lot of first-time home-buyers are out in the market.

"On the other side, sellers are realizing that people want to buy houses, so that causes upward pressure on prices," he said.

Johnson said many economists believe this is unsustainable and could result in inflation since there are prices increasing in not only housing but in corn, wheat, flour, shortages on circuit boards and more.

He said if inflation goes up too high, interest rates will be raised to tighten the market, which would affect the capacity of borrowers, a decrease in home purchases and fewer people on the market.

Johnson said people are fleeing to suburbs and smaller cities due to the pandemic, which is a "double whammy to the market" and affects the prices, too.

He said another aspect to consider is single-family housing versus multi-family housing. Multi-family housing would focus on density.

Johnson said the rental market is an issue, too, with cost of development high to begin with. He said single-family housing affects the price of two- to-three bedroom apartments. If apartment rent is so expensive it's cheaper to buy a house than rent, someone may just buy a house.

Bryan Achbach, executive director of the Pennington County Housing and Redevelopment Commission, said the commission is planning to develop more public housing in the near future with the demand increasing and affordable housing waning.

"There are 331 million people in the country and there are 331 million definitions of affordable housing," he said.

The commission is a low-income housing authority that exists to provide housing assistance to families that are at 80% of the area median income and lower. It has units in Wall, New Underwood, Hill City and Rapid City.

Achbach said the solutions Johnson discussed for housing could apply to the commission. He said the agency would accept all the help they can get as far as subsidies for development.

He said the commission is working to figure out how to serve the most people possible by a development, and may consider expanding the housing they already have.

"I see us having some plan here within the next couple of months," he said. "We're really trying to quantify (the need). We don't want to build a \$5 million complex and find out we don't have any customers."

Achbach said they're going to look at their numbers to help determine the next move. According to the April 29 waiting lists, there are 1,971 people on the list for a one-bedroom for the commission's public housing with an estimated waiting time of almost two years. There are 2,475 on a two-bedroom list with a 28- to 30-month wait, 1,441 on a three-bedroom waiting list with a 16- to 18-month wait, and 424 people on a four-bedroom waiting list with a wait of a little over two years.

Johnson said the area needs more housing and affordable housing now. He said the pandemic mixed with inflation and availability of cheap financing for housing has caused something that hasn't been seen in a long time.

"Add on top of the fact that Rapid City is seeing the most significant growth in the Black Hills with the base and what's happening," he said. "We're bound to see challenges and think of creative solutions. It's not easy, but we get up everyday and try."

Housing availability and affordability are concerns in every South Dakota county, said state Rep. Roger Chase, R-Huron, who is a real-estate agent. He will chair a legislative summer study to identify how the state can help communities strengthen their local housing markets. The first meeting for the group is scheduled for June 9 in Pierre. Other meetings will likely be held on the western and eastern sides of the state, Chase said.

## North Dakota addiction treatment plan eyes border residents

By JACK DURA The Bismarck Tribune  
BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota lawmakers took several approaches to boosting an addiction treatment voucher program that ran out of money last year.

The 2021 Legislature approved \$15 million for the substance use disorder voucher program in the 2021-23 budget cycle, which begins July 1.

Lawmakers also approved two \$1 million grants for establishing 16-bed treatment centers in underserved areas in North Dakota.

"I think this is a very comprehensive look at how we will go forward in addiction and treatment centers, and I think we're covering a better coverage for the state of North Dakota, and I think we'll have better outcomes coming forward," Rep. Jon Nelson, R-Rugby, told the House of Representatives.

The 2015 Legislature created the voucher, which is used to cover gaps in people's abilities to access services close to them. For example, someone in a rural town who lives far from a publicly funded state human service center could use a voucher to obtain services from a local private provider.

The 2019 Legislature set \$8 million for the program, which ran out of money last summer, halfway through the 2019-21 budget cycle.

State Behavioral Health Division Director Pamela Sagness said the \$15 million approved during the recently concluded 2021 legislative session should last "right to the point of 24 months and maintaining the program for the full biennium."

"There's a few services that are going to be shifting from the voucher to Medicaid that we think will make a difference in being able to hopefully have that \$15 million be able to sustain the program for the full two years based on our calculations," Sagness said.

More than 4,200 people have used the program. Twenty-one private providers offer services through the voucher, which extends to screening, evaluations, individual therapy, outpatient or residential treatment, transportation, and room and board.

No new participants have been accepted since July, but around 1,300 people using the voucher continue to receive services, Sagness said. New participants will be accepted starting July 1, The Bismarck Tribune reported.

The grants are for establishing new treatment programs with 16 or fewer beds in areas without services or not enough services to meet demand, such as the Devils Lake, Dickinson and Williston regions, Sagness said.

"Even if an individual has a need for service, they're often having to go to Fargo to get that service, based on the data that we can see with the voucher," she said.

The Legislature also approved extending the voucher to treatment providers in bordering states for aiding underserved areas in North Dakota.

Rep. Alisa Mitskog, D-Wahpeton, who brought House Bill 1402, pointed out that Wahpeton's border neighbor of Breckenridge, Minnesota, has the sole substance use disorder treatment provider in the sister cities on the Red River. She said access and transportation are challenges for Wahpeton-area people who have to go to Fargo for services.

"We'll be able to work with those providers that are serving individuals that are right on the border and wherever there's an underserved area," Sagness said.

It's unclear how many providers in Minnesota, Montana and South Dakota will be interested. North Dakota's Department of Human Services will have to develop rules for procedures and requirements for out-of-state provider reimbursement. Those providers will have to complete a needs assessment and receive Human Services' approval.

The Legislature also enacted some cost controls for the voucher funds. Only 45% of the money can be spent on residential programs with more than 16 beds, such as ShareHouse and Prairie St. John's in Fargo. The two providers received the most voucher applications by far, and were each reimbursed about \$4 million from 2015-20.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 15 of 65

"We tried to utilize the services of 16-bed-and-under treatment centers because we can leverage Medicaid dollars in that area so we can get a lot more treatment bang for the buck," Nelson said.

Providers with more than 16 beds are not covered by Medicaid. Waivers exist, but they're difficult to get and are not available in North Dakota, Nelson said.

To control costs and to incentivize establishing 16-bed-and-under facilities, lawmakers also put a moratorium on Human Services adding providers to the voucher who have more than 16 beds, he said. The Behavioral Health Division also must make quarterly funding reports to lawmakers on the voucher program.

Heartview Foundation Executive Director Kurt Snyder said 31% of patients utilized some type of voucher coverage from January-June 2020. Heartview has 16-bed facilities in Bismarck and Cando.

"The SUD voucher is extremely important for allowing people to have timely access to services," Snyder said. "There are a lot of folks that interface with our services but have difficulties because of not having any coverage. The SUD voucher fills those gaps."

He's excited about the Legislature having approved a full-time position for fast-tracking Medicaid enrollment for voucher-eligible people.

More than 60% of Heartview voucher recipients are eligible for Medicaid, but the enrollment process in Burleigh County can take three to four months, leading Heartview to rely heavily on the voucher, he said. Sagness said Medicaid does have 90-day retroactive eligibility coverage prior to application.

"If people are enrolled (under Medicaid), the voucher then becomes really less important for us because it covers very little that those insurance coverages would normally cover," Snyder said. "That's going to be really, really important to take pressure off of the SUD voucher."

Medicaid last fall began to cover methadone, "another way that Heartview becomes less reliant" on the voucher, he said.

"If you don't have access for services when the services are needed, those people tend to show up in other ways -- 911 calls, emergency rooms, our jails," Snyder said.

## Iran agrees to extend deal on cameras at its nuclear sites

By PHILLIP JENNE and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

VIENNA (AP) — Iran and the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog agreed on Monday to a one-month extension to a deal on surveillance cameras at Tehran's atomic sites, buying more time for ongoing negotiations seeking to save the country's tattered nuclear deal with world powers.

The last-minute discussions further underscored the narrowing window for the U.S. and others to reach terms with Iran as it presses a tough stance with the international community over its atomic program. The Islamic Republic is already enriching and stockpiling uranium at levels far beyond those allowed by its 2015 nuclear deal.

Speaking at a news conference Monday in Vienna, IAEA Director-General Rafael Mariano Grossi told journalists that came after a discussion with Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of Iran's civilian nuclear program. He acknowledged that challenges remain, however, as the agency still can't access images taken by its cameras.

"I'd want to stress this is not ideal," Grossi said. "This is like an emergency device that we came up with in order for us to continue having these monitoring activities."

Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's representative to the IAEA, acknowledged the deal at the same time on Twitter. "We recommend the negotiating countries to seize the extra opportunity provided by Iran in good faith for the complete lifting of sanctions in a practical and verifiable manner," Gharibabadi wrote.

Under a confidential agreement called an "Additional Protocol" with Iran, the IAEA collects and analyzes images from a series of surveillance cameras installed at Iranian nuclear sites. Those cameras helped it monitor Tehran's program to see if it is complying with the 2015 nuclear deal.

Iran's hard-line parliament in December approved a bill that would suspend part of U.N. inspections of its nuclear facilities if European signatories did not provide relief from oil and banking sanctions by February.

The IAEA then struck a three-month deal with Iran in February to have it hold the surveillance images,

with Tehran threatening to delete them afterward if no deal had been reached.

Iran since has broken all the deal's limits after then-President Donald Trump in 2018 unilaterally withdrew America from the accord. Negotiations continue in Vienna to see if both the U.S. and Iran can re-enter the deal, which limited Tehran's enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's ambassador to the IAEA, called Monday's agreement "commendable."

"It will help maintain businesslike atmosphere at the Vienna talks on #JCPOA and facilitate a successful outcome of the diplomatic efforts to restore the nuclear deal," he wrote on Twitter, using an acronym for the deal.

But if a deal isn't reached in a month's time — which will be after Iran's upcoming June 18 presidential election — that footage again would be in jeopardy.

Asked about that, Grossi simply said: "We are going to discuss that when we get to that point."

## George Floyd's family holds rally, march in brother's memory

By MOHAMED IBRAHIM Associated Press/Report for America

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Members of George Floyd's family, and others who lost loved ones to police encounters, joined activists and citizens in Minneapolis on Sunday for a march that was one of several events planned nationwide to mark the one-year anniversary of Floyd's death.

Hundreds of people gathered for the rally in front of the courthouse in downtown Minneapolis where the Chauvin trial concluded a month ago, many carrying signs with pictures of Floyd, Philando Castile and other Black men killed by police.

Amid chants of "no justice, no peace!" and "Say his name," Gov. Tim Walz, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey and St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter watched alongside a dozen of Floyd's family members as speakers called for justice for families of Black men slain by police.

"It has been a long year. It has been a painful year," Floyd's sister Bridgett told the crowd on Sunday. "It has been very frustrating for me and my family for our lives to change in the blink of an eye — I still don't know why."

Tuesday will mark one year since Floyd, who was Black, died after former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin held his knee on Floyd's neck as Floyd pleaded for air. Chauvin, who is white, has since been convicted of murder and manslaughter for Floyd's death, which sparked worldwide protests and calls for change in policing in the U.S.

Speakers at the event included several local activists, Floyd family attorney Ben Crump, and the Rev. Al Sharpton, who called on the U.S. Senate to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. The legislation, which would bring about the most significant changes to policing on the federal level, would ban the use of chokeholds and establish a national database of police misconduct.

"We want something coming out of Washington. We want something that will change federal law," Sharpton said. "There's been an adjournment on justice for too long. It's time for them to vote and make this the law."

The George Floyd Memorial Foundation, a nonprofit based in Fayetteville, North Carolina, where Floyd was born, is hosting a series of events in Minneapolis this weekend and early next week to honor Floyd on the anniversary. Those events include the rally and a march downtown on Sunday that will be led by Floyd's family and other families of victims of police violence.

The nonprofit was launched by Floyd's siblings in September 2020 to help combat racial inequities in Black and brown communities in their brother's honor.

Other events in Minneapolis ahead of the anniversary include a virtual "day of action" that encourages people to organize remotely and two panels with the families and other activists on Monday, followed by a community festival and candlelight vigil on Tuesday.

In New York on Sunday, Floyd's brother, Terrence, attended a Brooklyn gathering in his brother's memory organized by Sharpton and told supporters not to forget his brother or victims of racist violence.

"If you keep my brother's name ringing, you're going to keep everybody else's name ringing," Terrence



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 17 of 65

Floyd said. "Breonna Taylor, Sean Bell, Ahmaud Arbery, you could go through the whole list. There's a lot of them."

Executive director Jacari Harris said the group has received donations from the Minneapolis Foundation, Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation and athletic shoe and apparel retailer Finish Line, among others. Despite large grants from corporations and other organizations, Harris the average donation to the nonprofit was \$47.

Harris said the group has also funded an initiative in Fayetteville to help reduce homelessness, a scholarship program for law school students and an internship program at Texas A&M University, where Floyd went to school.

## EU calls for probe after plane diverted to arrest journalist

By RAF CASERT and LIUDAS DAPKUS Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Western leaders decried the diversion of a plane to Belarus in order to arrest an opposition journalist as an act of piracy and terrorism. The European Union and others on Monday demanded an investigation into the dramatic forced landing of the Ryanair jet, which was traveling between two of the bloc's member nations.

The airline said Belarusian flight controllers told the crew there was a bomb threat against the plane as it was crossing through the country's airspace and ordered it to land in the capital of Minsk. A Belarusian MiG-29 fighter jet was scrambled to escort the plane.

Raman Pratasevich, who ran a popular messaging app that played a key role in helping organize massive protests against Belarus' authoritarian president, was on board and he and his Russian girlfriend were led off the plane shortly after landing. The plane, which began its journey in Athens, Greece, was eventually allowed to continue on to Vilnius, Lithuania.

Western leaders forcefully condemned the move.

A group of the chairs of the foreign affairs committees of several Western countries' legislative bodies called it an act of piracy.

"This reckless act put the passengers and crew in grave danger. It is a reminder of the illegitimacy of the regime claiming authority in Minsk," signed by representatives from several EU countries, the United Kingdom and the United States, who called for an inquiry by the International Civil Aviation Organization.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the plane's diversion was "shocking," while Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda called it a "state-sponsored terror act." He proposed banning Belarusian planes from European Union airports and "serious sanctions" against the Belarusian government.

The U.S. and the EU already have imposed sanctions on top Belarusian officials amid months of protests, which were triggered by President Alexander Lukashenko's reelection to a sixth presidential term in an August vote that the opposition rejected as rigged. More than 34,000 people have been arrested in Belarus since August, and thousands were brutally beaten.

The 27 EU leaders open a two-day summit later Monday, and the issue immediately shot to the top the agenda.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell called it "yet another blatant attempt by the Belarusian authorities to silence all opposition voices." He called the diversion of the plane an "inadmissible step."

The Belarusian Foreign Ministry on Monday bristled at what it described as "belligerent" EU statements, insisting that the country's authorities acted "in full conformity with international rules."

Flight tracker sites indicated the plane was about 10 kilometers (six miles) from the Lithuanian border when it was diverted. There have been conflicting reports of what exactly happened.

The press service of Lukashenko said the president himself ordered that a fighter jet accompany the plane after he was informed of the bomb threat. Deputy air force commander Andrei Gurtsevich said the plane's crew made the decision to land in Minsk.

But Ryanair said in a statement that Belarusian air traffic control instructed the plane to divert to the capital.

"I saw this Belarusian guy with girlfriend sitting right behind us. He freaked out when the pilot said the plane is diverted to Minsk. He said there's death penalty awaiting him there," passenger Marius Rutkauskas said after the plane finally arrived in Vilnius. "We sat for an hour after the landing. Then they started releasing passengers and took those two. We did not see them again."

Pratasevich was a co-founder of the Telegram messaging app's Nexta channel, which played a prominent role in helping organize major protests against Lukashenko. The Belarusian authorities have designated it as extremist and leveled charges of inciting riots against Pratasevich, who could face 15 years in prison if convicted.

## As Congress returns to funding earmarks, who will benefit?

By KEVIN FREKING and JOHN MONE Associated Press

HUFFMAN, Texas (AP) — Don't tell Laura Fields that providing \$1.7 million to her flood-prone neighborhood would be wasteful spending. Her home in a Houston-area subdivision was filled with 10 inches (25 centimeters) of water during Hurricane Harvey.

"The stress of that was just horrific," Fields said. "You know, to see fish swimming through your house, it's not a good feeling,"

The money sought by her congressman, Republican Rep. Dan Crenshaw, to improve drainage and flood prevention in Huffman, Texas, is among thousands of requests that lawmakers have submitted as Congress begins to lift a moratorium on targeted federal spending, often referred to as earmarks.

Banished from Congress for over a decade, earmarks are marking a sudden and robust return. Lawmakers in both parties have grown frustrated by their inability to shape spending legislation and worry that Congress has ceded too much of the power of the purse to the executive branch. Aiming to avoid scandal, lawmakers have revamped and renamed the process.

The experiment could rise or fall on the reaction from voters, particularly in places skeptical of Washington spending. Many Republicans in Congress are refusing to earmark as a matter of principle, characterizing it as graft. Crenshaw said in a statement that he was "proud" to advocate for resources that would help his constituents and that the flood control earmark "will ensure that we don't have to spend even more resources recovering from future flood events."

"This is not wasteful spending, no, sir, not at all," Fields said. "These are our homes. This is where we're supposed to feel safe and secure and not have to worry about every time a storm comes through."

About \$14 billion, or 1% of discretionary spending, will be devoted to earmarks in this year's spending bills. The requests that lawmakers made, listed on the House Appropriations Committee website, go beyond the roads, bridges and research grants earmarked in the past.

Republican Rep. Garret Graves of Louisiana, for example, wants \$775,000 for a mobile medical clinic offering free cancer screenings to rural residents in his district.

And Democratic Rep. Mary Gay Scanlon of Pennsylvania wants \$650,000 for mental health professionals to team up with police or to intervene when someone is experiencing a mental health crisis.

It remains to be decided which projects will get funded. Lawmakers have been told they can put in up to 10 requests, but "nobody will be getting 10 requests," said Rep. Rosa DeLauro, the Democratic chairwoman of the House Appropriations Committee.

Supporters of earmarks have set up guardrails to curb the complaints of corruption and waste that flared in the past. Still, more than 100 House Republicans and one Democrat have declined to participate in what is now being called "community project funding."

Graves said he requested money for the mobile cancer screening unit because some communities in his district experience a higher rate of cancer than the national average.

"You hear over and over again, lack of access to care, difficulty getting appointments, affordability," Graves said. "This kind of addresses all those historic deficiencies or challenges because it is the provider coming to you — sort of the 2021 version of the doctor with his or her little black bag doing house calls."

Graves voted against reviving earmarks when members of the House GOP conference changed their

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 19 of 65

rules earlier this year. He said the process could still be improved, but in the end, it's better than letting federal agencies dictate where money goes. And he said there's more accountability when lawmakers have to disclose their requests and defend them.

In one of her requests, Scanlon drew on the experiences of the past summer as people in Philadelphia and elsewhere protested the death of George Floyd and other African Americans at the hands of police.

"You know, we hear stories all the time about people calling 911 when someone is in mental health distress, and then police arrive and there's misunderstandings and there can be fatal mistakes made," Scanlon said.

Scanlon cited the death in Philadelphia of Walter Wallace Jr., who was fatally shot last year after he ignored orders to drop a knife. His mother said she had warned police her son was in the throes of a mental health crisis.

"Police arrived on the scene. They were not equipped with tasers," Scanlon said. "It appears that they did not know how to de-escalate the situation, and within a minute, Walter Wallace had been shot multiple times and he died."

She said that county law enforcement officials and the local emergency medical system asked for funding to help integrate mental health specialists with law enforcement. It was one of 10 projects she selected from about 60 applicants. The House Appropriations Committee will winnow that list even further.

"Setting the expectations very low because we don't know if we'll get anything has been part of the challenge of rolling out the program," Scanlon said.

Earmarks still have many detractors in Congress. About half of House Republicans declined to request funding for local projects, including House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif.

Club for Growth, a conservative group, said its report card grading member's votes would include whether they signed a letter from Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, pledging to abstain from earmark requests.

The group said earmarks are used as "legalized bribery" to get lawmakers to support big spending elsewhere.

"By virtue of members of Congress saying, 'I'm going to get my bridge' or 'I'm going to get my museum,' or 'I'm going to get' whatever it is, you're kind of beholden," Roy said. "That's what I think is the most problematic."

Senate Republicans have maintained their conference rules banning earmarks, but lawmakers are not bound by them.

Separately, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will include earmarks in a bill reauthorizing money for roads, bridges and transit programs. Democrats requested money for 1,775 projects and Republicans requested money for 605 projects.

As part of the vetting process, lawmakers must provide evidence of community support for the earmarks they seek.

In Texas, Harris County Commissioner Adrian Garcia said 40% of the homes in the Huffman neighborhood have flooded, some repeatedly.

Garcia said the money would be used to improve and widen existing roadside ditches and culverts that drain water, moving it to bayous and other waterways. The improvements are among the flood control projects that Harris County voters approved in 2018 through a \$2.5 billion bond measure. In March, county commissioners said they were facing a \$1.4 billion shortfall to fully fund the bond program's flood control projects.

The federal money, Garcia said, will help close the gap.

"We've been waiting for four years (since Hurricane Harvey). We can't wait any longer," Garcia said. "Mother Nature is not going to give us any more of a reprieve."

## Italy probes cable car crash as lone child survivor recovers

By NICOLE WINFIELD and CHARLENE PELE Associated Press

STRESA, Italy (AP) — Italy's transport minister vowed Monday to establish the cause of a cable car di-

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 20 of 65

saster that killed 14 people, after the lead cable apparently snapped and the cabin careened back down the mountain until it came off the line and crashed to the ground.

The lone survivor of Sunday's horrific incident, a 5-year-old Israeli boy living in Italy, remained hospitalized in Turin on Monday with multiple broken bones.

The Israeli foreign ministry identified him as Eitan Biran. His parents, younger brother and two great-grandparents were among the dead, the ministry said, correcting an earlier statement that had included Eitan among the victims.

Italian media identified all the other victims as residents of Italy.

The disaster, in one of the most picturesque spots in northern Italy — the Mottarone mountaintop overlooking Lake Maggiore and other lakes near Switzerland — raised questions anew about the quality and safety of Italy's transport infrastructure.

Transport Minister Enrico Giovannini visited the site Monday and announced a commission of inquiry to investigate the "technical and organizational causes" of the accident, while prosecutors will focus on any criminal blame.

Giovannini told reporters in Stresa, the lakefront town at the foot of the Mottarone peak, that the aim of the investigative commission would be to "ensure this never happens again."

The transport ministry said a preliminary check of the cable line's safety and maintenance record show that the whole lift structure underwent a renovation in August 2016, and that a full maintenance check was performed in 2017.

Late last year, inspections were performed on the cables themselves, including magnetic inspections on the primary cables of the lift: the cable that pulls the cabin up the mountain, the support cable that holds the car and the rescue cables. In December another visual check was performed, the ministry said.

The mayor of Stresa, Marcella Severino, quoted witnesses as saying they heard a "loud hiss," apparently when the lead cable snapped. She said the cabin reeled back down the line until it apparently hit a pylon and then plummeted to the ground. It rolled over two or three times before crashing into trees, she said.

It wasn't immediately clear why a brake had not engaged.

Some of the bodies were thrown from the car and were found amid the trees, rescue workers said.

The funicular line is popular with tourists and locals alike to scale Mottarone, which reaches a height of 1,491 meters (4,900 feet) and overlooks several picturesque lakes and the surrounding Alps of Italy's Piedmont region.

The mountain hosts a small amusement park, Alpyland, that has a children's rollercoaster, and the area also has mountain bike paths and hiking trails.

It only reopened a few weeks ago after Italy's wintertime coronavirus lockdowns lifted, and officials hypothesized that families were taking advantage of a sunny Sunday to visit the peak and take in the view.

The mayor declared a day of mourning for Stresa, which like tourist destinations around the country had suffered from COVID-19 lockdowns that not only slashed foreign tourism but cut local day-trip visits by Italians.

Giovannini acknowledged the community was "at a moment of rebirth" with the tourist season just beginning. "It has been particularly struck by this event and has already shown a great sense of responsibility" in sharing in the pain of the families, he said.

The Israeli foreign ministry identified the five Israelis killed as Eitan's parents, Amit Biran and Tal Peleg-Biran, an Israeli-born couple studying and working in Pavia. Biran's Facebook page identifies him as a medical student at the University of Pavia.

Their 2-year-old son, Tom Biran, was killed at the scene, as were Peleg-Biran's grandparents, Barbara and Yitzhak Cohen. The ministry said they had arrived in Italy on May 19 to visit their granddaughter and great-grandchildren.

Amit Biran's sister, Aya, was not involved in the crash and was at the bedside of Eitan at Turin's Regina Margherita hospital, the foreign ministry said, adding that other family members were flying to Italy from Israel to join her.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 21 of 65

The Israeli embassy was working to help repatriate the bodies to Israel, it said.

Among the other victims were an Italian researcher, Serena Consentino, and her Iranian-born companion, Mohammadreza Shahaisavandi, according to a statement from Italy's National Council of Research, where Consentino had a research grant.

Also killed at the scene were Vittorio Zorloni and his wife, Elisabetta Persanini. Their six-year-old son, Mattia, died at Regina Margherita after multiple efforts to restart his heart, hospital officials said.

A young couple, Silvia Malnati and Alessandro Merlo, were killed while Malnati's brother stayed down in town and frantically tried to call her, Italy's La Stampa newspaper reported, quoting the brother.

Another couple, Roberta Pistolato and Angelo Vito Gasparro were celebrating Gasparro's 45th birthday. La Stampa said Roberta texted her sister in Puglia right before the tragedy: "We're going up in the funicular. It's paradise here."

## India virus death toll passes 300,000, 3rd highest in world

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — India crossed another grim milestone Monday of more than 300,000 people lost to the coronavirus as a devastating surge of infections appeared to be easing in big cities but was swamping the poorer countryside.

The milestone, as recorded by India's health ministry, comes as slowed vaccine deliveries have marred the country's fight against the pandemic, forcing many to miss their shots, and a rare but fatal fungal infection affecting COVID-19 patients has worried doctors.

India's death toll is the third-highest reported in the world after the U.S. and Brazil, accounting for 8.6% of the nearly 34.7 million coronavirus fatalities globally, though the true numbers are thought to be significantly greater.

The health ministry on Monday reported 4,454 new death in the last 24 hours, bringing India's total fatalities to 303,720. It also reported 222,315 new infections, which raised the overall total to nearly 27 million. Both are almost certainly undercounts.

From the remote Himalayan villages in the north, through the vast humid central plains and to the sandy beaches in the south, the pandemic has swamped India's underfunded health care system after spreading fast across the country.

In the capital, New Delhi, residents have died at home with no oxygen as hospitals exhausted limited supplies. In Mumbai, COVID-19 patients have died in crowded hospital corridors. In rural villages, fever and breathlessness took people before they were even tested for coronavirus.

While the megacities have seen signs of improvement in recent days, the virus isn't finished with India by any means. It appears to have already taken a ghastly toll in the country's vast rural areas, where a majority of the people live and where health care is limited.

In recent weeks, hundreds of bodies have washed up on the banks of the Ganges River in Uttar Pradesh state. Many others have been found buried in shallow graves along its sandy banks. It has prompted concerns that they're the remains of COVID-19 victims.

India's vaccination drive has also slowed recently, and many states say they don't have enough vaccines to administer.

The world's largest vaccine-producing nation has fully vaccinated just over 41.6 million people, or only 3.8% of its nearly 1.4 billion population.

The first known COVID-19 death in India happened on March 12, 2020, in southern Karnataka state. It took seven months to reach the first 100,000 dead. The toll hit 200,000 deaths in late April. The next 100,000 deaths were recorded in just 27 days after new infections tore through dense cities and rural areas alike and overwhelmed health care systems on the brink of collapse.

Average daily deaths and cases have slightly decreased in the past few weeks and the government on Sunday said it is conducting the highest number of COVID-19 tests, with more than 2.1 million samples tested in the previous 24 hours.

## US restricting visas, taking other action over Tigray crisis

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States has begun restricting visas for people undermining efforts to resolve the deadly fighting in Ethiopia's Tigray region, saying it is time for the international community to take action in a conflict that has sparked allegations of ethnic cleansing and fears of famine.

Thousands of people are estimated to have died in the six months the conflict between Ethiopian troops and the Tigray People's Liberation Front has raged in the northern regional state. Atrocities including rape, extrajudicial killings and forced evictions have been part of the violence, local authorities and aid groups have alleged.

"Despite significant diplomatic engagement, the parties to the conflict in Tigray have taken no meaningful steps to end hostilities or pursue a peaceful resolution of the political crisis," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement Sunday night.

"Without an immediate cessation of hostilities and a rapid expansion of humanitarian access, current and significant food insecurity could lead to famine," Blinken said.

The crisis began in November after Ethiopia accused former leaders of the Tigray People's Liberation Front, or TPLF, of ordering an attack on an Ethiopian army base in the region. Troops sent by Ethiopia's leader, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, quickly ousted the TPLF from major cities and towns, but guerrilla fighting was still reported across the Tigray region. Troops from neighboring Eritrea joined in support of Ethiopian forces.

In the U.S., the Senate last week passed a resolution condemning "all violence against civilians" in Tigray and calling for the withdrawal of troops from Eritrea. Blinken has alleged that ethnic cleansing was taking place in the western Tigray area.

Besides the visa restrictions, Blinken said Sunday night the U.S. was imposing wide-ranging restrictions on economic and security assistance to Ethiopia and would bring U.S. defense trade control policy in line with the restrictions.

The U.S. will continue humanitarian assistance and certain other critical aid to Ethiopia in areas such as health, food security, basic education, support for women and girls, human rights and democracy, good governance and conflict mitigation, Blinken said. At the same time, the U.S. will continue broad restrictions on assistance to Eritrea, he said.

Citing provisions in the the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act, Blinken said the visa restrictions would affect issuance of visas for any current or former Ethiopian or Eritrean government officials, members of the security forces or other individuals responsible for, or complicit in, undermining the resolution of the crisis.

Amhara regional and irregular forces and members of the TPLF were included, Blinken said. Also included were people who have conducted wrongful violence or other abuses against people in the region, as well as those who have hindered access of humanitarian assistance to those in the region. Immediate family members of such persons may also be subject to the restrictions, he said.

"The United States has deepening concerns about the ongoing crisis in Ethiopia's Tigray region as well as other threats to the sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity of Ethiopia," Blinken said in the statement.

"People in Tigray continue to suffer human rights violations, abuses and atrocities, and urgently needed humanitarian relief is being blocked by the Ethiopian and Eritrean militaries as well as other armed actors," he said.

The U.S. called on the Ethiopian government to meet public commitments to hold accountable all those responsible for human rights violations and abuses, to protect civilians, and to ensure unhindered humanitarian access, Blinken said.

"The United States reiterates its calls for a durable, political solution to the crisis," he said.

## Japan opens mass vaccine centers 2 months before Olympics

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 23 of 65

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan mobilized military doctors and nurses to give shots to elderly people in Tokyo and Osaka on Monday as the government desperately tries to accelerate its vaccination rollout and curb coronavirus infections just two months before hosting the Olympics.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga is determined to hold the Olympics in Tokyo after a one-year delay and has made an ambitious pledge to finish vaccinating the country's 36 million elderly people by the end of July, despite skepticism it's possible. Worries about public safety while many Japanese remain unvaccinated have prompted growing protests and calls for canceling the games, set to start on July 23.

Suga's government has repeatedly expanded the area and duration of a largely voluntary request-based virus state of emergency since late April and has made its virus-fighting measures stricter. Currently, Tokyo and nine other areas that are home to 40% of the country's population are under the emergency and a further extension is deemed unavoidable.

With COVID-19 cases still high, Suga now says vaccines are key to getting infections under control. He has not made vaccinations conditional for holding the Olympics and has arranged for Pfizer to donate its vaccine for athletes through the International Olympic Committee, while trying to speed up Japan's inoculation drive as anti-Olympic sentiment grows.

Suga, speaking to reporters after a brief visit to the Tokyo center, said accelerating the vaccine rollout is an "unprecedented challenge."

"We will do whatever it takes to accomplish the project so that the people can get vaccinated and return to their ordinary daily lives as soon as possible," he said.

At the two centers, staffed by about 280 military medical staff and 200 civilian nurses, the aim is to inoculate up to 10,000 people per day in Tokyo and 5,000 per day in Osaka for the next three months.

In hardest-hit Osaka, where hospitals are overflowing, with tens of thousands of people becoming sicker or even dying at home, dozens began lining up before the inoculation center opened early Monday. In Tokyo, some vaccine recipients said they took taxis or shuttle buses to get to the center to avoid packed commuter trains.

People inoculated at the two centers were the first in Japan to receive doses from Moderna Inc., one of two foreign-developed vaccines Japan approved on Friday.

Previously, Japan had used only Pfizer Inc., and only about 2% of the population of 126 million has received the required two doses.

Japan began vaccinating health care workers in mid-February after delays resulting from its decision to require additional vaccine clinical testing inside Japan — a decision many experts said was medically meaningless and only slowed the inoculation process.

Vaccinations for the next group — the elderly, who are more likely to suffer serious COVID-19 effects — started in mid-April but have been slowed by reservation procedures, unclear distribution plans and shortages of medical staff to give shots.

The completion of Japanese-developed vaccines is still uncertain, but government officials hope the approvals Friday of Moderna and AstraZeneca will accelerate inoculations.

"Speeding up the rollout makes us feel safer because it affects our social life and the economy," said Munemitsu Watanabe, a 71-year-old office worker who got his first shot at the Tokyo center. "If 80-90% of the population gets vaccinated, I think we can hold the Olympics smoothly."

That goal seems impossible to meet. Those currently eligible are 65 years or older, and some officials say it may take until next March before younger people are fully vaccinated.

Japan also has a dire shortage of medical staff who can give shots since only doctors and nurses can legally do so — and they are already busy treating COVID-19 patients.

Under pressure, Suga's government has allowed dentists and retired nurses to perform inoculations, and on Monday asked for pharmacists' help. Suga said he is also considering adding paramedics and clinical laboratory technicians to create a pool of "several tens of thousands" of medical personnel. There are worries, however, that loosening the criteria may increase vaccine hesitancy in the public.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 24 of 65

Also Monday, Tokyo's downtown Sumida district organized a one-time inoculation event at the Kokugikan sumo arena, a venue for Olympic boxing, to attract elderly people with a lottery to win sumo-themed souvenirs.

Several other local governments, including Aichi in central Japan and Gunma near Tokyo and Miyagi in the north, also were to open their own large vaccination centers on Monday.

## A little US city, battered by the virus, tells its stories

By TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

CENTRAL FALLS, R.I. (AP) — The beleaguered people of Central Falls moved quickly through the high school gym's injection stations and then to rest on dozens of metal folding chairs, borrowed from the Knights of Columbus.

Immunity was at hand, but no one was celebrating.

Central Falls — the poorest and smallest city in the nation's smallest state — is also among the hardest hit by COVID-19. Sorrow reaches across the city: The dead husband. The mother who came from Guatemala in search of a better life, only to die in a new land. The Polish priest who buried parishioner after parishioner.

The city has endured repeated waves of illness, with rates of confirmed cases that often dwarfed cities across New England.

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — Another in an occasional series, COVID's Scars, looking at how some of those battered by the pandemic are trying to recover after a year of pain and loss.

But the troubles of Central Falls extend far back, long before the coronavirus arrived: Moonshine in the 1920s, cocaine in the 1980s. Illegal gambling dens in the 1940s, when policemen who tried to shut them down were fired for misconduct. Cascading mill and factory closures in the years after World War II, starting an inexorable slide into poverty and, finally, city bankruptcy in 2011.

So the people of Central Falls — mostly Latin Americans these days, and before that immigrant waves of French Canadians, Irish, Greeks, Syrians and others — are accustomed to hard times. But in the gym on this dreary Saturday, they were mostly stoic. A few gossiped quietly. Some stared at their phones.

If you asked, though, they would tell you their stories of their COVID year — how they suffered, how they rose to the occasion and how they failed, what they lost.

Off to the side, sitting almost beneath the basketball hoop, was Christine McCarthy. McCarthy was relieved to get her shot. She's 65, has diabetes and knows what COVID-19 could do to her.

But mostly she wanted to talk about her husband, John, and how after nearly 40 years of marriage — after three children, some tough financial years and too many illnesses — he'd still sing to her. He'd sit on the bed, lean over his acoustic guitar, and his voice would fill the room. Sometimes it was Steely Dan. Sometimes Soul Asylum.

But in 2020 he mostly stuck to a couple Beatles' classics. They now echo with pain.

"A love like ours  
Could never die  
As long as I  
Have you near me."

On Jan. 1, at 9:39 p.m., John McCarthy died of complications of COVID-19.

"That's my story," she said, choking back tears. "Aren't you glad you came to talk to me?"

The 911 call came around dinner time from a small, ground-floor apartment, on yet another crowded Central Falls street.

It was the end of March 2020.

When firefighter Andres Nunes went through the door, this is what he saw: A two-bedroom apartment



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 25 of 65

packed with humanity, packed with stuff. Clothes and sheets and blankets piled in the living room. The kitchen table shoved aside to create more space. There weren't enough beds, so at least one person was sleeping on the sofa.

Sitting in a conference room in the city's firehall more than a year later, Nunes recalled that this was the moment when he knew: "This was coming for us."

America's first reported COVID-19 death had come a few weeks earlier. By the end of March, the world was watching as New York City's streets echoed with the wail of ambulances.

And in a little city little known outside this corner of New England, coronavirus was starting to burn through the streets like a firestorm.

Seven or eight people from an extended family were living in the apartment, Nunes said. Five were sick. Symptoms ranged across the coronavirus spectrum: Body pain, headaches, coughing.

The family, immigrants from Guatemala who didn't speak English, refused to go to the hospital unless they all could go. That was impossible because of the hospital's coronavirus restrictions. Because no one was in immediate danger, the medical crews left information on COVID-19 tests, and what to do if anyone got sicker.

No one died that evening. No one was taken to the hospital. But the crews left shaken.

"That was when we realized we had something big," Nunes said.

Nunes knew what would happen in Central Falls when coronavirus took root. He's lived here since he was 15, and graduated from Central Falls High School. His family is in the city, nearly all his friends. He was born in Colombia, and knows what life is like here for many immigrants.

It's an ideal place for the virus to spread.

Central Falls is crowded — 20,000 people in 1.3 square miles — and filled with street after street of triple deckers, narrow three-story apartment buildings ubiquitous in working-class Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Those apartments are often full to bursting, with parents, grandparents, children, cousins and friends often crowded together.

Buildings are so close together that you can often lean out the window of one apartment and touch the one next door. Many properties don't have a blade of grass.

Then there are the job realities.

Central Falls is a deeply working-class city, a place of janitors, warehouse workers, cashiers and others who can't work from home. With a virus that disproportionately hits the poor, more than 30% of the city lives below the poverty line.

Nunes believes the virus had been snaking through the city since early February, when there had been a glut of calls about people suffering flu-like symptoms.

"We just didn't know what to call it."

The husband — always a worrier — brought the strange news home.

"He was talking about this pandemic going around," said Marcelina Hernandez, a 36-year-old mother of four with a huge smile and a deep well of Catholicism. "I told him: 'You're crazy! You always think everything is bad!'"

Mauricio Pedroza is a burly 41-year-old whose size belies a gentle friendliness. He smiled bashfully as his wife spoke, both to acknowledge his pessimism and maybe to gloat a little because he'd been right to worry.

A few weeks later, the virus began sweeping through the city. Schools shut. Stores. Bars. Restaurants. For seven months, they barely let their 13-year-old twins out of the house.

They live in yet another triple decker, in a top-floor apartment scattered with crucifixes, religious prints and avalanches of pink plastic toys for their baby daughter.

On the front porch, a long row of mailboxes spills over with residents' names.

Like so many in Central Falls, they arrived following a network of family and friends, part of the large Latin American influx over the past 30 years. They come because rents are cheap, commutes are easy to cities from Boston to Providence, and plenty of people speak only Spanish. Restaurants serve memories of home, from Colombian-style ceviche to beef tripe soup.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 26 of 65

For the couple, who emigrated from rural Guatemala more than 20 years ago but met in Central Falls, it has become home. Their families are nearby. There are parks for family reunions. There are decent schools. There are plenty of jobs for people willing to work hard.

This is a city that understands hard work. Pedroza has two jobs: a store janitor in the mornings, and a forklift operator at a warehouse in the evenings.

Unemployment skyrocketed here after the pandemic struck, jumping from 6% in January 2020 to 20% two months later (it had settled to 9% by March 2021). Demand at food pantries exploded with the unemployment rate, in part because undocumented workers couldn't get most government assistance.

Pedroza was lucky. He lost only a few weeks of work.

But he never stopped worrying: "I was always overthinking," he said, as a cage of parakeets chirped and screeched in the kitchen.

The family went into a hard lockdown. In a culture where social distancing from relatives can seem like a betrayal, they retreated into their apartment and stopped seeing family.

He was scared, constantly watching news reports and social media rumors. Work became terrifying. He rarely went out.

Still, a few days after Christmas, he began feeling sick: exhausted, sore throat, headache. Then Hernandez got it. Then the baby.

The next few weeks were a blur. New Year's, a big holiday for the extended family, was just food dropped off at the bottom of the stairs. They couldn't taste it.

In the end they were lucky.

Both were sick for just a couple weeks. Neither had to go to the hospital.

And maybe, just maybe, all the vaccinations mean the extended family can have their annual Fourth of July reunion, gathering in a park on Naragansett Bay.

"I don't know when it will be normal," Hernandez said, as the baby started to squall. "Someday, I hope."

---

Back when he was younger, John McCarthy had been a carpet installer. A great carpet installer.

He'd worked in the mansion-museums of Newport, Rhode Island, where Gilded Age industrial barons had spent their summers, and in the locker room of the New England Patriots, where he'd helped craft the team logo out of carpeting. He'd worked in houses and businesses across Rhode Island and Massachusetts, a craftsman of carpet fabric who dreamed of opening his own design studio.

"He was the best. The absolute best," said Christine.

Things changed in the early 1990s, when a pancreatic crisis and a highly complex surgery meant his working days were over. Later there were other medical issues, including chronic lung problems.

Finances weren't always easy, and there were three kids to raise.

But the connections to Central Falls remained deep. John grew up in the city, hanging out on Dexter Street. He graduated from Central Falls High School, as did all three children. Christine got a job working as a secretary for the city's schools. There were friends and family nearby.

Around Christmas, though, things started to look grim for John McCarthy. He had been hospitalized twice for low hemoglobin levels, and was awaiting results from a coronavirus test.

On Christmas Day, everyone kept their masks on. "He stayed in the bedroom. I brought him his gifts. One of the kids might have popped their head in the bedroom, but nobody went in there and he didn't come out," she said.

Two days later, with John's breathing increasingly labored, he asked Christine to take him to the hospital. When they got there, though, and found people lined up outside the emergency room, he couldn't face going in.

"Forget it," he told her. "Just bring me home."

Hours later, feeling even worse, he told her to call an ambulance. He would never come home again.

He tested positive for COVID-19. On New Year's Day, the doctors called to say John's medical troubles were overwhelming: kidney failure, pneumonia, internal bleeding, blood clots, brain damage.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 27 of 65

Christine and one of her daughters had tested positive by then, so they couldn't go inside the hospital to see him. Her other daughter and son went in.

The doctors asked what they should do.

"I think it's time we say goodbye," she told their children. "So they went and they got the chaplain. And the chaplain did his thing."

"Then they unplugged him."

It was hard not to think about what might have been if John had survived long enough for a vaccination.

"If he had only gotten through those last weeks," she said, her voice trailing off.

When the state designated extra doses to Central Falls because it had been hit so hard, Mayor Maria Rivera helped create an aggressive vaccination program, with weekly jab days and city-organized health ambassadors going door to door and stopping people on the streets, encouraging them to get shots. A local doctor worked to ensure that undocumented immigrants weren't overlooked.

In late February, Central Falls had one of the highest vaccination rates in the U.S.

"We're blowing everyone else out of the water," crowed Dr. Michael Fine, the city's chief health strategist. But he warned that herd immunity wouldn't come easy. "At a certain point we're going to hit the people who aren't so interested in vaccination."

Which is exactly what has happened. Just as the pace of vaccination has decelerated across the United States, it has slowed even at a COVID ground zero.

There has been a precipitous decline in the number of people showing up at the high school gym for vaccinations. And there has been a noticeable increase in risky behavior: When the fire alarm went off in a Cape Verdean club on recent night, firefighters found dozens of people crowded inside. No one was wearing masks.

And yet the mayor remains upbeat. Rivera, 44, is a standard-bearer of a new Central Falls. There is still much poverty, but the city emerged from bankruptcy in 2012 and had a budget surplus in 2013. The cocaine reputation was gone.

Rivera was sworn in as Rhode Island's first Latina mayor on Jan. 4, 2020, just weeks before the pandemic's arrival. She is popular, unrelentingly energetic and a constant presence around the city. She is an indefatigable cheerleader for vaccination, and for a city she says is rising like a phoenix from COVID's ashes.

"This isn't rocket science," Rivera said. "We know what we need."

## After another war, displaced in Gaza face familiar plight

By FARES AKRAM Associated Press

BEIT HANOUN, Gaza Strip (AP) — It took Ramez al-Masri three years to rebuild his home after it was destroyed in a 2014 Israeli offensive. When war returned to the area last week, it took just a few seconds for the house to be flattened again in an Israeli airstrike.

The despondent al-Masri once again finds himself among the thousands of Gazans left homeless by another war between Israel and the territory's Islamic militant Hamas rulers. He and the 16 others who lived in the two-story structure are scattered at relatives' homes, uncertain how long they will remain displaced as they wait with hope for international aid to help them rebuild the home.

"My children are scattered — two there, three here, one there. Things are really very difficult," he said. "We live in death every day as long as there is an occupation," he said, referring to Israel's rule over Palestinians, including its blockade of Gaza.

The United Nations estimates that about 1,000 homes were destroyed in the 11-day war that ended last Friday. Lynn Hastings, the U.N. humanitarian coordinator for the region, said hundreds of additional housing units were damaged so badly they are likely uninhabitable.

The destruction is less extensive than in the 50-day war of 2014, in which entire neighborhoods were reduced to rubble and 141,000 homes were either wiped out or damaged.

But following that war, international donors quickly pledged \$2.7 billion in reconstruction assistance for

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 28 of 65

the battered enclave. It remains unclear this time around whether the international community, fatigued from the global COVID-19 crisis and years of unsuccessful Mideast diplomacy, will be ready to open its wallet again.

It was 3 a.m. on Wednesday when the phone call from Israel came to a neighbor ordering everyone in the area to evacuate. "Leave your homes, we are going to bomb," al-Masri says they were told.

The neighborhood is home to members of al-Masri's extended family. At the time of the warning, he said no one knew which house might be targeted. But he could not believe that the airstrike hit the two-floor home where he lived with his eight children, his brother's family and their mother.

"If we knew someone was wanted, we would not have stayed here from the outset," he said. Al-Masri, who owns a small grocery store, said neither he nor his brother have anything to do with militant groups.

The airstrike turned his home into a crater. On Sunday, the massive hole was filled with murky water spewing from broken water and sewage lines.

Seven adjacent homes belonging to relatives were badly damaged. Their walls were blown up, exposing the colorful interior decorations of the living and bedrooms. The blast was so powerful that concrete support beams were weakened and the houses are likely beyond repair.

On Sunday, a mobile pump was deployed to suck the stinky water out as bulldozers worked to reopen streets. City workers were removing damaged power lines. But much of the rubble remained uncleared.

After the 2014 war, al-Masri bounced around between rental homes and "caravans" — small metal huts that dotted hard-hit areas of Gaza like shantytowns. He dreads the thought of returning to the temporary shelters.

"Life was disastrous in the caravans. We were living between two sheets of tin," he said.

He said he hopes the international community "will stand by us, try to help us so we can rebuild quickly."

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request seeking comment on why the home had been targeted.

Throughout the fighting, it accused Hamas of using residential areas as cover for rocket launches and other militant activity. The army says its system of warnings and evacuation orders is meant to prevent civilians from being harmed.

During the recent fighting, Israel unleashed hundreds of airstrikes across Gaza at what it said were militant targets. Hamas and other armed groups fired more than 4,000 rockets toward Israeli cities, most of which were intercepted or landed in open areas.

The fighting began May 10, when Hamas militants in Gaza fired long-range rockets toward Jerusalem. The barrage came after days of clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli police at Al-Aqsa. Heavy-handed police tactics at the compound and the threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families by Jewish settlers had inflamed tensions.

The true costs of the war will not be known for some time. Palestinian health officials said 248 Palestinians, including 66 children and 39 women, were killed in the fighting.

Twelve people in Israel, including two children, also died in the fighting.

On Sunday morning, hundreds of municipal workers and volunteers started a one-week campaign to clear rubble from Gaza City's streets.

Outside a flattened high-rise building, workers loaded rubble into donkey carts and small pickup trucks. Next to a destroyed government building, children collected cables and whatever recyclable leftovers they could sell for a few shekels.

In Beit Hanoun, one of the homes that was struck last week belonged to Nader al-Masri, Ramez's cousin and a long-distance runner who participated in dozens of international competitions. Since he lost his house in the 2014 war, Nader, 41, has lived in the second of floor of a three-floor home belonging to relatives.

The third and the first floors sustained heavy hits. A room filled with medals and trophies that Nader collected through his 20-year career was damaged. Fortunately, he said, many of his mementos survived.

Nader al-Masri is familiar with loss. Beit Hanoun, situated just along the frontier with Israel, has frequently been the scene of heavy fighting, and his home has been damaged two previous times.

"I had over 150 trophies. In each of the previous wars, I lost one or two or three," he said. Some 20

glass awards have been shattered over the years. "Each war the number drops," he said, showing a medal from the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics.

As a world-class runner from 1998 to 2018, Nader was one of Gaza's most famous residents, especially after Israel and Egypt imposed a blockade on Gaza following Hamas' takeover of the territory in 2007.

The blockade often prevented him from traveling abroad to compete. In many cases, he arrived just in time for his races.

On Sunday, debris filled his apartment. The ceiling of his daughters' bedroom was cracked. The bright layers of paint had fallen off, exposing gloomy, dark plaster. School backpacks lay on the ground among shards and debris.

Nader, now a coach with the Palestinian Athletics Federation, moved his five children to their uncle's house. "I'm an athlete and have nothing to do with politics," he said. "Things are difficult because we cannot build a home every day."

## Myanmar's Suu Kyi makes first in-person court appearance

BANGKOK (AP) — Myanmar's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi appeared in court in person Monday for the first time since the military arrested her when it seized power on Feb. 1, Myanmar media reported.

One of her lawyers, Min Min Soe, told The Associated Press by phone that Suu Kyi was able to meet with her defense team before her hearing began at a special court set up inside the city council building in Naypyitaw, the capital. The hearing's purpose was procedural.

The lawyers also met with Win Myint, who was president in the government that Suu Kyi led as state counsellor, and a defendant on some of the same charges she faces.

Suu Kyi had been charged with several criminal offenses, but her only previous court appearances had been by video link, and she had not been allowed to meet in person with any of her lawyers.

Min Min Soe said Suu Kyi had a message for Myanmar's people to the effect that her National League for Democracy party would stand by them.

"The main thing (she said) is that she always wishes good health and well-being for all the people, and she also said that since the NLD was founded for the people, the NLD will exist as long as the people exist," said Min Min Soe said after the hearing.

"She looks fresh, healthy and full of confidence," she added.

Monday's hearing concerned several of the six charges Suu Kyi faces.

These are two counts of violating the Natural Disaster Management Law for violating COVID-19 pandemic restrictions during the 2020 election campaign; illegally importing walkie-talkies that were for her bodyguards' use; unlicensed use of the radios; and spreading information that could cause public alarm or unrest.

The most serious charge that Suu Kyi faces is breaching the colonial-era Official Secrets Act, which carries a penalty of up to 14 years' imprisonment, but that is being handled by a separate court.

Suu Kyi's supporters say the proceedings against her are politically motivated and meant to try to legitimize the military's seizure of power and discredit her. If convicted of any of the offenses, she could be banned from running in the election that the junta has said it will hold within one or two years of its takeover.

The military ousted Suu Kyi's government less than three months after her National League for Democracy party won a landslide victory in a general election that would have given it a second five-year term in office. Before the start of democratic reforms a decade ago, Myanmar was ruled by the military for 50 years.

The junta claims it was justified in taking power because of alleged widespread electoral fraud, especially irregularities in the voting lists.

The Asian Network for Free Elections, a non-partisan poll watching organization, in a report issued last week rejected the military's allegations of massive fraud, saying the results of last November's voting were representative of the will of the people.

On Friday, however, the head of Myanmar's military-appointed state election commission said his agency will consider whether to dissolve Suu Kyi's former ruling party for alleged involvement in electoral fraud

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 30 of 65

and whether those involved “should be punished as traitors.”

The junta has accused Suu Kyi of corruption and presented on state television what it said was evidence that she took bribes, but has so far only said it intends to pursue charges for that offense. Her lawyers dismiss the allegations.

Several cases are also pending against other senior members of Suu Kyi’s party in addition to Win Myint, the ousted president.

Australian economist Sean Turnell, who served as Suu Kyi’s adviser and was also detained on the day of the army’s takeover, has been charged with violating the Official Secrets Act.

## One more thrill: Phil Mickelson wins at 50 in raucous PGA

By BEN NUCKOLS AP Sports Writer

KIAWAH ISLAND, S.C. (AP) — Standing on the 18th tee with a two-shot lead in a championship he refused to imagine himself winning, Phil Mickelson took one last violent swing with a driver — the club that betrayed him 15 years earlier in the U.S. Open.

His tee shot Sunday in the PGA Championship at Kiawah Island landed only a few yards off the fairway, but it still nestled among the people — the gallery packed tightly between the ropes and a row of hospitality tents — screaming the name of their aging hero.

After Mickelson’s approach shot settled on the green, assuring the 50-year-old of becoming the oldest major champion in history, the crowd swallowed him up entirely.

Phil Mickelson, the people’s champion.

“It’s an incredible experience. I’ve never had something like that,” Mickelson said. “It was a little bit unnerving, but it was exceptionally awesome, too.”

Golf can be cruel to veteran, sentimental favorites. Ben Hogan at the 1955 U.S. Open. Greg Norman at the 1996 Masters and the British Open a dozen years later. And, perhaps most heartbreaking, 59-year-old Tom Watson at the 2009 British Open.

Mickelson, too, has had as many close calls as major victories — most of them at the U.S. Open, where he’s been runner-up six times. Winged Foot — where he gave away a one-shot lead on the 72nd hole in 2006 — wasn’t the first, or the last.

But now, the two biggest stars of their generation have a signature late-career win. Tiger Woods overcame four back surgeries, turmoil in his personal life and 11 years of frustration in major championships to win the Masters two years ago at age 43.

Mickelson — happy at home and injury-free — merely stretched the limits of what’s possible after a half-century on Earth.

“There’s no reason why I or anybody else can’t do it at a later age. It just takes a little more work,” Mickelson said.

Nine days earlier, Mickelson accepted a special exemption to play in the U.S. Open at Torrey Pines in his hometown of San Diego. Now he’s assured at least five more cracks at the lone major that has eluded him. The victory makes him exempt at the U.S. Open through 2025.

Already a Hall of Famer, Mickelson joined Nick Faldo and Lee Trevino as six-time major winners. Only 11 players have won more. If he somehow won another in his 50s, he’d match Arnold Palmer, Bobby Jones, Gene Sarazen, Sam Snead and Harry Vardon.

“I don’t know how to describe the feeling of excitement and fulfillment and accomplishment to do something when — you know, of this magnitude when very few people thought that I could,” Mickelson said.

The record will show Mickelson closed with a 1-over 73 for a two-shot win over Brooks Koepka (73) and Louis Oosthuizen (74). That doesn’t begin to describe the wild fluctuations of Sunday on the menacing Ocean Course, where Mickelson and Koepka hit shots that were both spectacular and shocking, sometimes on the same hole.

Between them, Mickelson and Koepka made 16 pars, 10 bogeys, nine birdies and one double bogey. Five of the first 10 holes had swings of two shots or more — and that didn’t include the par-3 fifth, when

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 31 of 65

Mickelson holed out from a waste bunker with Koepka safely on the green.

Even with three bogeys in a five-hole stretch on the back nine, Mickelson hit enough good shots to avoid bigger numbers and hold off Koepka. Then came the bedlam on 18, where Mickelson and Koepka fought their way through the crowd to get to the green.

There were no fans at last year's three major championships. Patrons returned to the Masters last month to cheer Hideki Matsuyama's breakthrough win. But this was golf's rowdiest gallery since before the COVID-19 pandemic, and it came at a time when the virus is receding in the U.S., with well over half of adults at least partially vaccinated.

Masks were rare among the crowd, which the PGA of America said was limited to 10,000 people a day. Fans pressed five-deep against the ropes, stumbled atop steep dunes and clambered into trees on the sprawling Ocean Course.

Golf, which surged in popularity last year as a sport with built-in social distancing, returned to something approaching normal, with fans celebrating an extraordinary champion.

"It was like the Phil that I remember watching just when I turned pro and it was great to see," Oosthuizen said.

The records Mickelson shattered were numerous. Julius Boros for 53 years held the distinction of golf's oldest major champion. He was 48 when he won the 1968 PGA Championship.

Mickelson became the first player in PGA Tour history to win tournaments 30 years apart. The first of his 45 titles was in 1991, when he was still a junior at Arizona State and Koepka was 8 months old.

Mickelson joined Woods — who sent a tweet of congratulations — among the 10 players who've won majors in three decades.

Lefty spent very little time talking to reporters before Sunday's post-tournament news conference and refused to discuss what a win would mean to him. Instead, he pounded extra balls on the driving range — even on Sunday, he was rehearsing swing positions in between shots — and spent time meditating to recapture the mental sharpness he said he'd lost earlier this year.

"Anybody who really thinks they can win on a Sunday is going to be feeling that pressure and the nerves," said 49-year-old Padraig Harrington, who closed with a 69 to tie for fourth. "I'd say Phil is full to capacity, but that's where he likes to live."

This was Mickelson's first major win with his brother, Tim, as his caddie. Could there be more?

"It's very possible that this is the last tournament I ever win. Like if I'm being realistic," Mickelson said. "But it's also very possible that I may have had a little bit of a breakthrough in some of my focus and maybe I go on a little bit of a run."

## Could Beto be back? O'Rourke mulling bid for Texas governor

By PAUL J. WEBER and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — There's no road trip, no soul searching. No beard or blogging. But Beto O'Rourke is making a political life decision again.

Three years after becoming Democrats' breakout star out of Texas, and a year removed from crashing back to Earth in a short-lived presidential run, O'Rourke is again weighing another campaign — this time for governor.

But now O'Rourke, who announced his run for the White House on the cover of Vanity Fair, is being quiet about it. He says he hasn't ruled out anything, but isn't saying much else. And Texas Democrats are itching for an answer.

"Impatience is not the word for it," Texas Democratic Party chairman Gilberto Hinojosa said. "But anxious is."

For months, O'Rourke has kept his options open. A top aide to the former Texas congressman and presidential candidate said O'Rourke, 48, has not ruled out challenging Republican Gov. Greg Abbott in 2022 but has taken no formal steps toward a campaign, like calling donors or recruiting staff. The aide spoke on condition of anonymity in order to discuss private deliberations more freely.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 32 of 65

If O'Rourke jumped in, it would be his third straight election cycle as a candidate, following his narrow loss for U.S. Senate in 2018 and failed White House run last year. A comeback in Texas could be complicated by liberal positions he took while seeking the presidency, but likely no other Democrat would enter the governor's race with the same ability to quickly raise the massive campaign funds needed to compete in the state.

There is no timeline on a decision, according to the aide, who said O'Rourke only recently has been able to think more about running now that he's finished teaching virtual classes at two Texas universities. For one he led a seminar on the struggle for voting rights — O'Rourke's most visible cause lately, as state lawmakers are set to approve a sweeping bill that would restrict polling hours and reduce options to cast a ballot.

Texas is the last big battleground in the GOP's nationwide campaign to impose new voting restrictions, driven by former President Donald Trump's false claims that the election was stolen from him. That fight is the latest way O'Rourke has remained an out-front presence, following the coronavirus pandemic and February's catastrophic freeze and blackouts across much of Texas that killed more than 150 people. He hasn't let up on Abbott, who is expected to seek a third term.

"These jokers can't even keep the lights on, or the heat on, or the the water on when the temperature drops. Now they want to take away our election?" O'Rourke told protesters this month at the Texas Capitol.

The decision facing O'Rourke comes at a dark moment for Texas Democrats, even by the standards of a hapless 25 years of getting clobbered in statewide elections and steamrolled in the Legislature. For one, they are still wobbling after their massive expectations for a 2020 breakthrough flopped spectacularly. The party had hoped to flip the Texas House and O'Rourke led a massive campaign to do just that, but failed to give Democrats a single extra seat.

The Election Day wipeout emboldened Texas Republicans, who have responded by muscling through staunchly conservative measures over guns, abortion and teaching curriculum that Democrats are all but powerless to stop.

Any Texas Democrat running for governor faces long odds against the well-funded Abbott, who could ultimately face a stiffer challenge from actor Matthew McConaughey and his musings about joining the race himself. Still, O'Rourke went from virtual unknown to nearly upsetting Republican Sen. Ted Cruz in 2018, and relishes the role of underdog.

While weighing his presidential run in early 2019, O'Rourke briefly grew a beard. He hit the road and wrote long, quasi-philosophical blog posts. When he did finally announce, it coincided with the Vanity Fair cover, which proved more memorable than most of his time actually campaigning.

Hinojosa said he encouraged O'Rourke to consider running for governor after last year's letdown for Democrats. He said he's itching for an answer because the current hole at the top of the ticket is keeping others in the party sidelined for 2022 until they know whether there will be a strong gubernatorial candidate who could boost their own chances downballot.

"I told him that I thought that we needed a strong candidate for governor and he certainly fit that mold, and that, in my opinion, if anybody could beat Abbott, he could beat him," Hinojosa said of his conversation with O'Rourke.

Republicans who already hold massive advantages statewide are looking to extend their territory along the Texas-Mexico border, historically a Democratic stronghold, which swung heavily toward Trump in November. In Webb County, which includes Laredo, Trump cut in half his vote deficit from 2016.

Sylvia Bruni, the county's Democratic Party chairwoman, said she hopes O'Rourke runs but knows his presidential bid could hurt his chances. O'Rourke remade his campaign after a mass shooting in his hometown of El Paso in August 2019 and during one debate even made a full-throated call on national TV for confiscating assault rifles, saying "Hell, yes, we're going to take your AR-15."

That kind of comment isn't forgotten easily in Laredo, which Bruni describes tongue-in-cheek as an area where "your guns are more important than your wife." In April, O'Rourke drove 600 miles to Laredo to knock on doors and canvass for new voters. Bruni registered another 256 new voters Thursday at a high school, and worries the election bill heading to Abbott's desk will make casting their first ballot harder.



"No one else has surfaced," she said of Democrats' non-O'Rourke prospects for governor. "I haven't seen anyone out there."

## On a mission to heal after exposing her dad to deadly virus

By LUIS ANDRES HENAO and JESSIE WARDARSKI Associated Press

SHARON, Mass. (AP) — For a year, Michelle Pepe awoke every day, recited the Kaddish, the mourner's prayer, and kissed a photo of her father. And coped with her guilt.

"Dad," she says, "I'm so sorry that this happened."

"This" was COVID-19. In March 2020, just as the pandemic bloomed in the United States, Pepe traveled from Boston to Florida for her mother's 80th birthday. She believes she gave the coronavirus to her father; Bernie Rubin died weeks later.

"At the beginning, people would say, 'Well, how did he get it?' From me. That's how he got it — he got it from me," Pepe says, sobbing.

"Nobody's ever said, 'This is your fault and you gave it to him,' but I know it's true. I know I couldn't save him. It's just something I'm going to have to go to the grave with."

Hers is a common sorrow of the times. Around the world, countless people are struggling to shake off the burden of feeling responsible for the death of a loved one due to COVID-19. They regret a trip or feel anguish over everyday decisions that may have spread the disease — commuting to work, hugging parents, even picking up food.

On the eve of the anniversary of her father's death, Pepe's hands tremble as she holds a framed portrait of Bernie and Phyllis Rubin, smiling and surrounded by their 10 grandchildren. Taken on March 8, 2020, it's one of the last images of the couple with their family.

After the celebration, Pepe stayed in Florida to take care of them during the pandemic. She believes she caught the virus while shopping for groceries for her parents. Then her father and mother sickened. Worried about his worsening condition, she called 911. He died alone at Delray Medical Center; family members were unable to visit him.

"I shouldn't have given up and called the ambulance," she says. "That's what haunts me, and thinking about him, alone in that room ... I know he was terrified."

There was just a brief, socially distanced graveside burial. Pepe watched on Zoom while she continued to care for her mother, who has multiple sclerosis and was recovering from COVID-19.

Pepe has been battling despair ever since.

"I was in a real funk for a real long time," she says. "And then one of my daughters said to me, 'Mommy, we thought that we lost our grandfather, but ... we didn't realize we also lost our mom.' I figured I have to snap out of it."

Pepe joined online support groups where she met other grieving survivors; went to a psychic medium, searching for signs; and sought guidance from a rabbi who taught her how to recite the Kaddish.

On April 13, she awakens to say the prayer and light a yahrzeit candle marking the one-year anniversary of her father's death. "We just have to get through this day," she repeats on the drive to the cemetery. She wears her father's gold chain and high school graduation ring.

At his grave, she places yellow flowers on a tombstone that reads: "Loving husband, father, pup" — his nickname — "and great grandfather." In the Jewish tradition, family members leave behind small stones.

They remember a man who adored his grandchildren, calling them daily to catch up on the latest Red Sox news or to invite them to games at Fenway Park. In recent years, "he couldn't walk very fast — unless it was for a baseball game. Then he'd turn into Carl Lewis!" says Bob Pepe, Michelle's husband, who worked with his father-in-law and remained his close friend for 30 years.

The furniture store that Rubin founded with his wife in 1983 grew into the Bernie & Phyl's Furniture chain, with nine locations across New England.

The couple were featured in TV commercials best-known for their catchy jingle. Strangers would often recognize them at restaurants and recite the catchphrase: "Oh, are you Bernie from Bernie and Phyl's,

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 34 of 65

quality, comfort and price?"

And Bernie Rubin would chime in, as in the ads: "That's nice!"

After the cemetery, Pepe visits the company's headquarters in Norton. She admires the walls adorned with hundreds of autographed photos of baseball players her dad began collecting as a kid. She takes a deep breath and walks into his office, decorated with another, equally prized collection: photos of his family on cruise vacations, at bar mitzvahs, college graduations and weddings.

She picks up her dad's work phone, leaning in close to take a whiff as she often does with his wallet, his shirts and his cologne, hoping to sense his presence. But she smells nothing — COVID-19 robbed her of her senses of smell and taste.

At lunch, the family walks to Rubin's favorite restaurant and orders the "Bernie Reuben," a sandwich named after him. Every day, Rubin would walk into Kelly's Place to order a cheese omelet and go through the same comedic routine with a waitress.

"Carol, I have to stand here for 20 minutes? There's 10 empty tables. How do you run a business like this?" Bob Pepe says, imitating Bernie's voice. "And she'd go: 'Will you shut up? You know where you're sitting, go sit down!'"

Sitting next to her husband, Michelle Pepe bursts into laughter. Later, she wipes away tears.

"It was torture," she says. "But a year later, here I am, and I can laugh at these stories."

The next day, she awakens to kiss her father's photo. She looks at the calendar and heaves a sigh of relief. The ritual year of mourning is over.

"My father would be so tortured if he thought about how tortured I was, and I want him to be happy and at peace," she says. "And he's only going to be that way if I'm that way here."

## Drake, Pink, The Weeknd win big at Billboard Music Awards

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — It was a family affair at the Billboard Music Awards: Pink twirled in the air in a powerful performance with her daughter, and Drake was named artist of the decade, accepting the honor alongside his 3-year-old son.

Drake, who extended his record as the most decorated winner in the history of the awards show to 29 wins Sunday, was surrounded by family and friends who presented him with the Artist of the Decade Award. He walked onstage outside the Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles with his son Adonis holding his hand.

"I wanna dedicate this award to my friends, to my longtime collaborators ... to my beautiful family, and to you," he said, looking to Adonis and picking him up to kiss him.

Drake placed his first song on the Billboard Hot 100 chart in 2009, and since has logged the most songs ever on the chart, with 232 entries. He's also logged a record 45 Top 10 hits on the Hot 100 and a record 22 No. 1s on the Hot R&B/Hip-Hop songs chart.

He was also named top streaming songs artist Sunday.

Pink received the Icon Award and was joined onstage by her 9-year-old daughter — showing off their powerful gymnastic skills as they spun in the air in a jaw-dropping performance. Known for her signature aerial and acrobatic moves, Pink was matched by Willow Sage Hart as "Cover Me In Sunshine" played in the background, Pink's song featuring vocals from her daughter.

"Willow, you nailed it," Pink said after the performance. "I love what I do and I love the people that I get to do it with, and we're pretty good at what we do, but it wouldn't matter if no one came to see us and play with us. So all you guys out there ... thank you for coming out!"

Pink's performance was one of several pre-taped moments at the awards show, which aired on NBC and was hosted by Nick Jonas. Live performances were held outdoors, in front of feverish audience members wearing masks.

The Weeknd was on hand to accept the most wins of the night — 10. He walked into the show with 16 nominations, winning honors like top artist, top male artist, top Hot 100 song for "Blinding Lights" and top R&B album for "After Hours."

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 35 of 65

"I wanna take this opportunity to thank you, my parents," he said. "I am the man I am today because of you. And thank you to my fans, of course. I do not take this for granted."

The late rapper Pop Smoke was also a big winner: He posthumously earned five honors, including top new artist and top rap artist, while his debut — "Shoot for the Stars, Aim for the Moon" — won top rap album and top Billboard 200 album, which his mother accepted onstage.

"Thank you to the fans for honoring the life and spirit of my son, so much that he continues to manifest as if he was still here in flesh," Audrey Jackson said.

Another late rapper was also honored during the show. Before presenting top rap song to DaBaby, Swizz Beatz dedicated a moment to those who have recently died in hip-hop, including his close friend and collaborator DMX. And Houston rapper and activist Trae Tha Truth, who earned the Change Maker Award, ended his speech with a powerful sentence: "We still gon' need justice for Breonna Taylor."

Other winners Sunday included Bad Bunny and BTS, who both won four awards and also performed. Breakthrough country singer Gabby Barrett won three awards, including top female country artist and top country song for the hit "I Hope." The song's remix featuring Charlie Puth won top collaboration.

"Oh my gosh. Thank y'all so much. This means so much to me," Barrett said as she broke into tears. "I've been performing for 10 years really hard. ...We've worked so hard to get here."

Another country star also won big Sunday though he wasn't allowed to participate in the show.

Morgan Wallen, who was caught on camera using a racial slur earlier this year, won three honors, including top country artist and top country album for "Dangerous: The Double Album," which has had major success on the pop and country music charts despite his fallen moment.

Wallen was nominated for six awards, and Billboard Awards producer Dick Clark Productions said it couldn't prevent Wallen from earning nominations, or winning, because finalists are based on album and digital sales, streaming, radio airplay and social engagement. The producers did ban Wallen from performing or attending the show.

The Billboard Awards kicked off with a collaborative performance by DJ Khaled, H.E.R. and Migos, who brought the concert vibe back to life a year after live shows were in the dark because of the pandemic. Doja Cat and SZA — accompanied by futuristically dressed background dancers — sang their big hit "Kiss Me More" inside the venue, where the seats were empty. Alicia Keys, celebrating the 20th anniversary of her groundbreaking debut "Songs in A Minor," sang songs from the album including the hit "Fallin'." The performance was introduced by former first lady Michelle Obama.

Other performers included Karol G, twenty one pilots, Duran Duran, Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis, Jonas Brothers and Glass Animals.

Stars like Taylor Swift, Lady Gaga and Kanye West won honors at the show though they didn't attend. Machine Gun Kelly, who started in rap but has had recent success on the rock charts, won top rock artist and top rock album.

"I released my first mixtape 15 years ago and this is the first big stage I've ever been invited to accept an award on," he said, kissing his actor-girlfriend Megan Fox before walking to the stage.

"To the box that society keeps trying to put me, you need stronger material because you can't keep me in it," he proclaimed.

## Volcanic eruption, ensuing chaos kill at least 15 in Congo

By JUSTIN KABUMBA KATUMWA Associated Press

GOMA, Congo (AP) — Torrents of lava poured into villages after dark in eastern Congo with little warning, leaving at least 15 people dead amid the chaos and destroying more than 500 homes, officials and survivors said Sunday.

The eruption of Mount Nyiragongo on Saturday night sent about 5,000 people fleeing from the city of Goma across the nearby border into Rwanda, while another 25,000 others sought refuge to the northwest in Sake, the U.N. children's agency said Sunday.

More than 170 children were still feared missing Sunday, and UNICEF officials said they were organizing transit centers to help unaccompanied children in the wake of the disaster.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 36 of 65

Goma ultimately was largely spared the mass destruction caused by the volcano's last eruption in 2002. Hundreds died then and more than 100,000 people were left homeless. But in outlying villages closer to the volcano, Sunday was marked by grief and uncertainty.

Aline Bichikwebo and her baby managed to escape when the lava flow reached her village, but said both her mother and father were among those who perished. Community members gave a provisional toll of 10 dead in Bugamba alone, though provincial authorities said it was too soon to know how many lives were lost.

Bichikwebo says she tried to rescue her father but wasn't strong enough to move him to safety before the family's home was ignited by lava.

"I am asking for help because everything we had is gone," she said, clutching her baby. "We don't even have a pot. We are now orphans and we have nothing."

The air remained thick with smoke because of how many homes had caught fire when the lava came.

"People are still panicking and are hungry," resident Alumba Sutoye said. "They don't even know where they are going to spend the night."

Elsewhere, authorities said at least five other people had died in a truck crash while they were trying to evacuate Goma, but the scale of the loss had yet to be determined in some of the hardest-hit communities.

Residents said there was little warning before the dark sky turned a fiery red, sending people running for their lives in all directions. One woman went into labor and gave birth while fleeing the eruption to Rwanda, the national broadcaster there said.

Smoke rose from smoldering heaps of lava in the Buhene area near the city Sunday.

"We have seen the loss of almost an entire neighborhood," Innocent Bahala Shamavu said. "All the houses in Buhene neighborhood were burned and that's why we are asking all the provincial authorities and authorities at the national level as well as all the partners, all the people of good faith in the world, to come to the aid of this population."

Elsewhere, witnesses said lava had engulfed one highway connecting Goma with the city of Beni. However, the airport appeared to be spared the same fate as 2002 when lava flowed onto the runways.

Goma is a regional hub for many humanitarian agencies in the region, as well as the U.N. peacekeeping mission. While Goma is home to many U.N. peacekeepers and aid workers, much of surrounding eastern Congo is under threat from myriad armed groups vying for control of the region's mineral resources.

## Ageless wonder Mickelson wins PGA to be oldest major champ

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

KIAWAH ISLAND, S.C. (AP) — The pandemonium closed in around Phil Mickelson as he walked toward the 18th green at Kiawah Island, where thousands upon thousands of euphoric fans wanted a piece of the history he delivered Sunday in the PGA Championship.

For all the thrills and spills that have defined his 30 years of pure theater, his latest act gave Mickelson his own place in the game.

A major champion at age 50, the oldest in the 161 years of major championship golf.

That final walk toward a two-shot victory was as much stress as he faced over the final hour, and it was a bit scary until Mickelson emerged out of the masses and flashed a thumbs-up.

"Slightly unnerving," Mickelson said, "but exceptionally awesome."

Just like his game.

Mickelson never thought he was too old to win again, much less a major. He just didn't have much evidence on his side until a remarkable four days at Kiawah Island where he kept his nerve and delivered all the right shots for his sixth major, and by far the most surprising.

He made two early birdies with that magical wedge game that never left him, and then let a cast of challengers fall too far behind to catching him in the shifting wind off the Atlantic.

Mickelson closed with a 1-over 73 to win by two over Brooks Koepka and Louis Oosthuizen.

"One of the moments I'll cherish my entire life," Mickelson said. "I don't know how to describe the feeling of excitement and fulfillment and accomplishment to do something of this magnitude when very few

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 37 of 65

people thought that I could.”

That list didn't include Mickelson. Never mind that he had not won in more than two years, had not registered a top 20 in nearly nine months and last won a major in 2013 at the British Open.

Never mind that he was No. 115 in the world.

“This is just an incredible feeling because I believed it was possible, but everything was saying it wasn't,” Mickelson said.

Julius Boros for 53 years held the distinction of golf's oldest major champion. He was 48 when he won the 1968 PGA Championship in San Antonio.

The record now belongs to Mickelson, whose legacy is as much rooted in longevity as any of the skills that have made him among the most exciting players in the game.

Mickelson became the 10th player to win majors in three decades, an elite list that starts with Harry Vardon and was most recently achieved by Tiger Woods.

Woods, who won the Masters in 2019 at age 43 after four back surgeries, was among to send a tweet of congratulations.

Three months after 43-year-old Tom Brady won a seventh Super Bowl, Mickelson added to this year of ageless wonders.

Mickelson became the first player in PGA Tour history to win tournaments 30 years apart. The first of his 45 titles was in 1991 when he was still a junior at Arizona State.

“He's been on tour as long as I've been alive,” Jon Rahm said. “For him to keep that willingness to play and compete and practice, it's truly admirable.”

Koepka and Oosthuizen had their chances, but only briefly. Koepka was 4 over on the three par 5s he faced when the game was still on and closed with a 74. Oosthuizen hit into the water as he was trying to make a final run and shot 73.

“Phil played great,” Koepka said. “It's pretty cool to see, but a bit disappointed in myself.”

Koepka also got lost in the chaos and said it was the most his right knee, on which he had ligament surgery two months ago, hurt all day.

This was history in the making. No one wanted to miss it.

Tom Watson came close at Turnberry in 2009 when at 59 he had a one-shot lead playing the 18th hole and made bogey, losing the British Open in a playoff to Stewart Cink. Greg Norman was 53 when he had the 54-hole lead at Royal Birkdale and failed to hang on in the 2008 British Open.

Mickelson didn't let this chance pass him by.

“It was like the Phil that I remember watching just when I turned pro and it was great to see,” Oosthuizen said. “I mean, what an achievement to win a major at 50 years old, and he deserves all of that today.”

Mickelson finished at 6-under 282

The victory came one week after Mickelson accepted a special exemption into the U.S. Open because at No. 115 in the world and winless the last two years, he no longer was exempt from qualifying. As recently as a month ago, he was concerned that he could not keep his focus for 18 holes and kept throwing away shots that set him back.

And then he beat the strongest field of the year — 99 of the top 100 players — and made it look easy at times.

The PGA Championship had the largest and loudest crowd since the return from the COVID-19 pandemic -- the PGA of America said it limited tickets to 10,000, and it seemed like twice that many -- and it clear what they wanted to see.

The opening hour made it seem as though the final day could belong to anyone. The wind finished its switch to the opposite direction from the opening rounds, and while there was low scoring early, Mickelson and Koepka traded brilliance and blunder.

Koepka flew the green with a wedge on the par-5 second hole, could only chip it about 6 feet to get out of an impossible lie and made double bogey, a three-shot swing when Mickelson hit a deft pitch from thick grass behind the green.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 38 of 65

Mickelson holed a sand shot from short of the green on the par-5 third, only for Koepka to tie for the lead with a two-shot swing on the sixth hole when he made birdie and Lefty missed the green well to the right.

Kevin Streelman briefly had a share of the lead. Oosthuizen was lurking, even though it took him seven holes to make a birdie.

And then the potential for any drama was sucked out to sea.

Oosthuizen, coming off a birdie to get within three, had to lay up out of the thick grass on the 13th and then sent his third shot right of the flag and into the water, making triple bogey.

Just like that, Mickelson was up by five and headed toward the inward holes, the wind at his back on the way home with what seemed like the entire state of South Carolina at his side.

The next stop is the U.S. Open at Torrey Pines, the only major keeping Mickelson from the career Grand Slam.

"It's very possible that this is the last tournament I ever win, like if I'm being realistic," Mickelson said. "But it's also very possible that I may have had a little bit of a breakthrough in some of my focus and maybe I go on a little bit of a run. I don't know.

"But the point is that there's no reason why I or anybody else can't do it at a later age. It just takes a little bit more work."

Even at 50, Mickelson still keeps everyone guessing what he will do next.

## AP FACT CHECK: Senate GOP misrepresents Jan. 6 riot panel

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With a showdown vote looming, Senate Republicans are misrepresenting the timeline of a proposed independent commission to investigate the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol insurrection.

The House easily approved the bill last week with 35 Republicans signing on. But the measure faces an uncertain fate in the evenly divided Senate. Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell is opposed and former President Donald Trump is demanding the effort be quashed.

On Sunday, Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, suggested that a roadblock to gaining GOP support is the commission's timing, echoing concerns from Republican leaders last week that the panel's final report could extend into the 2022 midterm election year.

That's not the case.

COLLINS, citing issues that could lead her to oppose the panel: "I see no reason why the report cannot be completed by the end of this year. The commissioners have to be appointed within 10 days. There's plenty of time to complete the work. And I'm optimistic that we can get past these issues based on recent conversations I've had with" Democrats. — interview Sunday on ABC's "This Week."

SEN. JOHN CORNYN, R-Texas, suggesting that Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi will drag the commission's work well into the middle of 2022: "Well, part of the concern is that's the plan. That's Pelosi's plan ... That would be the Democrats' dream." — interview with CNN on May 19.

THE FACTS: Those claims of a delayed report are untrue. The bill calls for the report to be complete by the end of this year.

According to the legislation, the "final report" from the bipartisan commission, whose members would be evenly divided among Democrats and Republicans, must be submitted to the president and Congress "not later than December 31, 2021."

There is a subsequent 60-day period for the commission to finish administrative tasks, such as to distribute the report and provide testimony to congressional committees, which would come in the early part of 2022. But the panel's investigation, including all findings, conclusions and recommendations, would need to be fully complete this year.

So there has not been a roadblock to Senate Republican support for the panel based on the report's timing as Collins and others describe it.

Collins said she wants an independent commission and is talking with House leaders about her issues with the bill, including how staffing is handled. She wants assurances that the panel's staff, along with

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 39 of 65

commission members, will be bipartisan. The legislation calls for the chairperson, who would be appointed by Democrats, to hire staff "in consultation with the vice chairperson," who would be chosen by Republicans. Collins said Sunday that staff should be either jointly appointed by both parties or staffed in equal numbers by both sides.

If approved, the bipartisan commission is expected to look at Trump's role in stoking the Jan. 6 riot, including his persistent false claims in the months beforehand that the November election was "stolen."

## 2 dead, 12 injured in shooting at New Jersey house party

By GEOFF MULVIHILL undefined

FAIRFIELD TOWNSHIP, N.J. (AP) — A family house party in South Jersey turned into a crime scene where at least two people were fatally shot and 12 others were wounded, state police said.

Authorities arrived at the house in Fairfield Township, about an hour outside of Philadelphia, late Saturday night. A resident who runs a local anti-violence organization said he was called out to assist families at the 90s-themed party. John Fuqua, of Life Worth Living, said guests who attended the party were of all ages.

New Jersey State police said a 30-year-old man and 25-year-old woman were fatally shot. There were 12 other people who were injured and transported to local hospitals.

No arrests have been made.

Photos show overturned pop-up party tents, tables and chairs, and debris throughout the home's yard. A long driveway was still filled with cars late Sunday morning.

Two cousins who live in the area of the shooting said they heard music from the party until after midnight, then a series of shots — at least 15 of them over a few minutes.

Joeron Pierce and James Pierce, who live in homes next to each other, said that there was chaos after that. Partygoers ran through their yards and asked to come into their houses. They said cars ran into one other trying to speed away.

Fairfield Township Mayor Benjamin Byrd Sr., who was at the scene Sunday, said that New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy offered his support and help.

"Nobody knows when someone's going to come out of the woods with a gun," Byrd said. He did not have any details about the shooting.

Murphy called the shooting "horrific."

"This despicable and cowardly act of gun violence only steals our commitment to ensuring New Jersey leads the nation in passing and enforcing strong and commonsense gun safety laws," Murphy said in a statement. "No community should ever experience what occurred last night in Fairfield."

WPVI-TV reported that the reverend of a nearby church heard the gunfire.

"I just started hearing at first what I thought was fireworks, it was really gunshots, and I heard nine in rapid succession," said the Rev. Michael Keene of the Trinity AME Church.

Messages seeking additional information have been left with multiple organizations.

State police scheduled a press conference for Monday morning.

## The Latest: Mickelson makes history at PGA Championship

KIAWAH ISLAND, S.C. (AP) — The Latest on the PGA Championship (all times local):

7:09 p.m.

Phil Mickelson has made history at the PGA Championship as the oldest, at 50, winner in major championship history.

Mickelson finished off his 73 with a simple par on the 72nd hole to the wild cheers of fans at the Ocean Course.

Mickelson raised his arms in triumph and hugged his caddie, his brother Tim, for his sixth career major and second PGA win joining his Wanamaker Trophy from Baltusrol in 2005.

Mickelson broke the previous mark for oldest player that was held by 48-year-old Julius Boros in winning the 1968 PGA Championship.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 40 of 65

Louis Oosthuizen and Brooks Koepka tied for second. Oosthuizen had a 73 and Koepka, who held the lead after the first hole, finished with a 74.

British Open champion Shane Lowry, 49-year-old Padraig Harrington, Harry Higgs and Paul Casey tied for fourth, four shots behind Mickelson.

6:55 p.m.

Phil Mickelson has a two-stroke lead and one hole left on his try at history in the PGA Championship.

Mickelson fell to 6-under at a bogey on the par-3 17th. Still, he's taking a two-stroke edge over Louis Oosthuizen and Brooks Koepka into the 72nd hole of the year's second major.

Mickelson would like four simple, uncomplicated shots to become, at 50, the oldest to win a major championship. It would also be Mickelson's sixth career major and second PGA Championship, joining his victory at Baltusrol in 2005.

6:40 p.m.

Phil Mickelson has a three-shot lead with two holes left at the PGA Championship. But those are two of the most difficult holes at the Ocean Course in the 17th and 18th.

The par-3 17th is playing second toughest for the week while the par-4 18th is playing eighth hardest. Mickelson can attest to both, having gone 2-over par on them the first three rounds.

He hasn't made a birdie on either so far and had bogeys on each of them in the second round on Friday.

Mickelson is three in front of Louis Oosthuizen and Brooks Koepka in his chase for history to become, at 50-year-old, the oldest major winner in golf history.

6:20 p.m.

Phil Mickelson is once again squandering his big lead on the back nine at the PGA Championship.

Mickelson carried a five-shot lead into the final nine holes Saturday before holding on to lead by a stroke.

He was at 8 under and four in front in the final round at the Ocean Course after a birdie on the 10th hole. But consecutive bogeys on the 13th and 14th holes have cut the margin to three strokes over Louis Oosthuizen.

Mickelson had four holes remaining as the 50-year-old attempts to become golf's oldest winner at a major championship.

5:50 p.m.

Brooks Koepka only has to look at the Ocean Course's par 5s to see where he came up short at the PGA Championship.

Koepka gave away shots on the first three par 5s in Sunday's final round, falling out of the lead with the first two and out of contention with the last.

Koepka was a shot ahead of Phil Mickelson when he made a double-bogey 7 on the second hole to fall behind. Tied with Mickelson at the top coming to the seventh, Koepka made a bogey to drop into second.

And when Koepka made bogey on the par-5 11th, he was five shots in back of Mickelson with holes running out.

Koepka played the par 5s in 7-under during the tournament's first two rounds. He's gone 2 over so far on the weekend with only one, the 16th, remaining.

5:10 p.m.

Phil Mickelson has widened his lead at the PGA Championship.

Mickelson made his fourth birdie of the day on the 10th hole to move to 8 under and take a four-shot lead over Louis Oosthuizen and Brooks Koepka at the Ocean Course on Sunday.

The crowd went crazy when Mickelson's putt rolled in. Moments later, Koepka missed a par-saving putt to drop down with just eight holes remaining.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 41 of 65

The 50-year-old Mickelson is trying to become golf's oldest to win a major.

4:50 p.m.

Phil Mickelson is a back nine away from history at the PGA Championship. But what a back nine it is at the Ocean Course at Kiawah Island.

Mickelson is at 7-under par and is two shots in front of Louis Oosthuizen and Brooks Koepka as they start the tournament's final stretch.

Should Mickelson prevail, the 50-year-old would become the oldest major champion in golf history. He'll need to navigate a tricky back nine that has confounded the game's best throughout the week.

4:25 p.m.

Phil Mickelson is back on top at the PGA Championship after the seventh hole following his third birdie of the final round.

Mickelson moved to 7-under par, two shots ahead of Brooks Koepka and Louis Oosthuizen.

Koepka had been tied with Mickelson for the lead a hole earlier, but he put his second shot on No. 7 right of the fairway and could not save par. It was Koepka's second error on a par 5 this round at the Ocean Course.

The 50-year-old Mickelson is trying to become the oldest to win one of golf's four majors. Koepka is seeking his third PGA title in the past four years.

4:10 p.m.

Another hole, another shift atop the leaderboard at the PGA Championship.

Brooks Koepka's birdie on the sixth hole combined with Phil Mickelson's bogey have the two tied at 6-under par in Sunday's final round at the Ocean Course at Kiawah Island.

Koepka put his approach shot within 3 feet to move up. Mickelson hit his second shot over the green and could not save par.

Koepka is seeking his third PGA title in the past four years. The 50-year-old Mickelson is trying to become golf's oldest to win a major championship.

3:50 p.m.

Phil Mickelson used some of his Lefty magic to extend his lead at the PGA Championship.

After landing in a bunker on the par-3 fifth hole, Mickelson blasted out and into the cup for birdie to move to 7-under par. He's two shots in front of Kevin Streelman and Brooks Koepka.

Mickelson lifted his wedge in the air in celebration after the ball rolled into the cup. The large crowd following him erupted in cheers.

The 50-year-old is chasing history as he tries to become the oldest player to win one of golf's four major titles.

3:20 p.m.

Just like that, Phil Mickelson is back out front at the PGA Championship.

One hole after losing the lead, Lefty regained it with a birdie on the par-5 second hole as Brooks Koepka shot a double-bogey seven.

Koepka struggled around the second green, his third shot out of a sandy, scrubby area going just a few feet and leading to his miscue.

Mickelson moved to 7-under par and was two ahead of Koepka, Louis Oosthuizen and Kevin Streelman.

The 50-year-old Mickelson is trying to become the oldest player to win one of golf's four major titles.

2:55 p.m.

It took just one hole for Brooks Koepka to take the lead away from Phil Mickelson at the PGA Champi-

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 42 of 65

onship.

Koepka rolled in a 13-footer for birdie to move to 7-under par while Mickelson made bogey after driving in the rough and leaving his approach some 45 feet from the cup. He could not save par and dropped to 6 under.

The 50-year-old Mickelson is attempting to become the oldest player to win one of golf's four major titles. Koepka is seeking his third PGA Championship win in the past four seasons.

2:35 p.m.

Phil Mickelson has begun his chase of history at the PGA Championship, where the 50-year-old tries to become the oldest player to win a major title.

Mickelson started the round with a one-stroke lead over playing partner Brooks Koepka, who is hoping to add another PGA title to ones he won in 2018 and 2019.

Louis Oosthuizen, who shared the 36-hole lead with Mickelson, is two shots off the lead. Longtime PGA Tour pro Kevin Streelman is another stroke back in fourth.

The Ocean Course at Kiawah Island appears to be playing a bit easier, with the wind milder and blowing in a different direction. The pressure on those trying to win won't ease until the final putt drops in a few hours.

1:20 p.m.

Abraham Ancer posted the lowest score of the PGA Championship with his 65 in the final round.

Ancer had seven birdies and no bogeys to finish at 1-under par for the tournament. He took advantage of the milder, less windy conditions at the Ocean Course at Kiawah Island. There might be more such low rounds ahead; leader Phil Mickelson and second-place Brooks Koepka tee off in about an hour.

Wind coming off the Atlantic battered the course for much of the first three rounds, confounding the world's best golfers in the year's second major.

noon

On the fourth and final day, it's a new look at Kiawah Island for the PGA Championship. The early scoring looks different, too.

The wind is strong for a final round that features Phil Mickelson with a one-shot lead over Brooks Koepka as the 50-year-old tries to become golf's oldest major champion. But it's coming out of the opposite direction.

Garrick Higgo of South Africa made eight birdies in his round of 69. Justin Rose already is 5 under for his round through seven holes.

The par-3 17th hole is playing its full length at 231 yards because of the helping wind. The PGA of America also moved up the tee on No. 3 so that it's easily reached with less than driver.

The early indication is to expect low scores and fireworks on a sunny day.

## Belarus opposition figure detained when flight diverted

By LIUDAS DAPKUS Associated Press

VILNIUS, Lithuania (AP) — A prominent opponent of Belarus' authoritarian president was arrested Sunday after the airliner in which he was traveling was diverted to the country after a bomb threat, in what the opposition and Western officials denounced as a hijacking operation by the government.

Raman Pratasevich, who faces charges that could bring 15 years in prison, was aboard the Ryanair flight from Athens, Greece, to the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius when it changed course to head for Minsk.

"I saw this Belarusian guy with girlfriend sitting right behind us. He freaked out when the pilot said the plane is diverted to Minsk. He said there's death penalty awaiting him there," passenger Marius Rutkauskas said after the plane arrived in Vilnius following several hours in the Belarusian capital.

"We sat for an hour after the landing. Then they started releasing passengers and took those two. We

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 43 of 65

did not see them again" Rutkauskas said.

Flight tracker sites indicated the plane was about 10 kilometers (six miles) from the Lithuanian border when it was diverted. There were conflicting accounts of the move.

The press service of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said the president himself ordered that a MiG-29 fighter jet accompany the airliner after he was informed of the bomb threat. Deputy air force commander Andrei Gurtsevich said the plane's crew made the decision to land in Minsk.

But Ryanair said in a statement that Belarusian air traffic control instructed the plane to divert to the capital.

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda called the incident a "state-sponsored terror act." He said that the European Council would discuss the case Monday and that he would propose banning Belarusian planes from European Union airports and "serious sanctions" against Lukashenko's government.

"Belarusian airspace is completely unsafe for any commercial flight, and it should be deemed this not only by the EU but by the international community. Because now, this instrument could be used for any plane crossing Belarusian airspace," said Lithuania's foreign minister, Gabrielius Landsbergis..

Pratasevich is a co-founder of the Telegram messaging app's Nexta channel, which Belarus last year declared as extremist after it was used to help organize major protests against Lukashenko. The protests have dwindled in recent months, but Belarus authorities are continuing to crack down on opposition with arrests.

The Belarus presidential press service said the bomb threat was received while the plane was over Belarusian territory. Officials later said no explosives were found on board.

Passengers were taken off the plane in Minsk. After the plane arrived in Vilnius, Defense Minister Arvydas Anusauskas said Pratasevich's girlfriend and four other people did not reboard.

"We will find out who are the other four that did not travel with the rest. Lithuania has launched an investigation to find out what really happened on that plane," he said on Facebook.

Exiled opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya called on the International Civil Aviation Organization to begin an investigation.

"It is absolutely obvious that this is an operation by the special services to hijack an aircraft in order to detain activist and blogger Raman Pratasevich," she said in a statement. "Not a single person who flies over Belarus can be sure of his safety."

The ICAO later said it "is strongly concerned by the apparent forced landing."

Belarusian authorities said there were 123 passengers on the plane. But Landsbergis, the Lithuanian foreign minister, said there were 171.

Western countries also expressed alarm.

Belarus "showed again its contempt for international community and its citizens," U.S. Ambassador Julie Fisher said, calling the event "dangerous and abhorrent."

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen tweeted: "It is utterly unacceptable to force @Ryanair flight from Athens to Vilnius to land in Minsk."

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said that "such an act cannot be left without definite consequences from the side of the European Union" and called for Pratasevich to be released.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken called the incident "shocking" and accused Lukashenko's government of endangering the lives of those aboard the aircraft, some of them Americans. He called for the release of Pratasevich and for the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization to review the incident.

"Independent media are an essential pillar supporting the rule of law and a vital component of a democratic society. The United States once again condemns the Lukashenko regime's ongoing harassment and arbitrary detention of journalists," Blinken said.

Months of protests erupted in Belarus after last August's presidential election that official results said gave Lukashenko a sixth term in office.

Police cracked down on the protests harshly, detaining around 30,000 people and beating many of them.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 44 of 65

Although protests died down during the winter, Belarus has continued to take actions against the opposition and independent news media. Last week, 11 staff members of the TUT.by news website were detained by police.

## National Guard mission to provide security ending at Capitol

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Nearly five months after being deployed to the U.S. Capitol to help quell the Jan. 6 insurrection, National Guard troops were set to leave and turn over security of the area to Capitol Police. Guard troops, their mission ending Sunday, were expected to be leaving on Monday, a person familiar with the plan told The Associated Press. The person was not authorized to discuss the plan by name and requested anonymity.

The Pentagon announced earlier in the week that an extension of the Guard presence — 2,149 troops — had not been requested.

The planned departure came as Democrats and Republicans sparred over how to fund fortifications of the Capitol and whether to form an independent bipartisan commission to investigate the attack that sought to overturn former President Donald Trump's loss to Democrat Joe Biden.

Some Republican lawmakers have begun downplaying the event despite the handful of deaths, injuries to scores of police officers, hundreds of arrests, damages to the building and shouted threats against lawmakers from many of those who stormed the building. Much of the violence was caught on camera.

Retired Lt. Gen. Russel Honore, who oversaw a security review in the wake of the rioting, told CBS' "Face the Nation" on Sunday that the Capitol itself will be secured by Capitol Police but that the complex will remain closed to the general public because of the strain on the police force.

"God bless the National Guard," Honore said. "They've done significant work."

The House on Thursday approved — by a single vote largely along party lines — a \$1.9 billion measure to fortify the Capitol. The next day the House approved with 35 Republican votes the formation of an investigative commission. Both measures face an uncertain future in the evenly divided Senate.

Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has said he opposes the commission proposal, which would need significant Republican support to advance under Senate rules. Republican opponents say the commission would become a political tool as midterms elections approach, though the proposal requires its work to be concluded by the end of this year.

## Italian cable car plunges to the ground, killing at least 14

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — A cable car taking visitors to a mountaintop view of some of northern Italy's most picturesque lakes plummeted to the ground Sunday and then tumbled down the slope, killing 14 people. The lone survivor, a young child, was hospitalized in serious condition with broken bones, authorities said.

Six of the dead were Israeli citizens, including a family of four who lived in Italy, the Israeli foreign ministry said. It wasn't clear if the other couple was related.

The mayor of Stresa, where the incident occurred, said it appeared that a cable broke, sending the car careening until it hit a pylon and then fell to the ground. At that point, the car overturned "two or three times before hitting some trees," said Mayor Marcella Severino. Some of those who died were thrown from the cabin.

The Italian government announced a commission to investigate the disaster, which is likely to renew questions about the quality and safety of Italy's transport infrastructure.

Images from the site showed the crumpled car in a clearing of a thick patch of pine trees near the summit of the Mottarone peak overlooking Lake Maggiore. The car was believed to have fallen around 15 meters (50 feet), according to Italian media.

"It was a terrible, terrible scene," Severino told Italy's SkyTG24.

The plunge on the the Stresa-Mottarone line happened about 100 meters (yards) before the final pylon,

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 45 of 65

said Walter Milan, spokesman for Italy's Alpine rescue service.

By Sunday evening, the death toll had risen to 14 dead after one of two children taken to Turin's Regina Margherita children's hospital died. The child died after several attempts to restart his heart failed and "there was nothing more we could do," said hospital spokesman Pier Paolo Berra. The other young child, who arrived at the hospital conscious, remained in serious condition, authorities said.

Milan noted that the cable line had been renovated in 2016 and had only recently reopened after coronavirus lockdowns in Italy curtailed travel and forced the suspension of many leisure activities. Milan suggested many families may have flocked to the mountain on a sunny Sunday after months of restrictions.

The line is popular with tourists and locals alike to scale Mottarone, which reaches a height of 1,491 meters (4,900 feet) and overlooks several picturesque lakes and the surrounding Alps of Italy's Piedmont region.

The mountain hosts a small amusement park, Alpyland, that has a children's rollercoaster, and the area also has mountain bike paths and hiking trails.

Premier Mario Draghi offered his condolences to the families of the victims "with a particular thought about the seriously injured children and their families."

Sunday's tragedy appeared to be Italy's worst cable car disaster since 1998 when a low-flying U.S. military jet cut through the cable of a ski lift in Cavalese, in the Dolomites, killing 20 people.

Italy's transport minister, Enrico Giovannini, announced a commission to look into the tragedy and said he had already requested data on the maintenance work and inspections done on the line in the past. He planned to visit the site Monday.

While the cause hasn't been determined, the disaster was likely to raise questions about Italy's transport infrastructure. In 2018, the Morandi bridge in Genoa collapsed after years of neglect, killing 43 people.

In 2009, a freight train carrying gas derailed at the Viareggio station, near Lucca, and exploded, killing 32 people. Poorly maintained axels of the train were blamed.

President Sergio Mattarella, in offering his condolences, called for the "rigorous respect of all security norms" in transportation.

## **US general: As US scales back in Mideast, China may step in**

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — As the United States scales back its military presence across the Middle East to focus on great power competition with China and Russia, it risks giving those two countries a chance to fill the gap and expand their influence around the Gulf, the top U.S. commander for the region said Sunday.

While traveling through the Middle East over the past week, Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie, who heads U.S. Central Command, fielded a persistent question from the military and political leaders he met: Is the U.S. still committed to their country and the region, and what more support can they get.

From the dusty battlefields in Syria to the rocket-pummeled neighborhoods in Iraq and Saudi Arabia, they worry that America's pivot to Asia means they will be left without the troops, ships, aircraft and other military aid they need to battle Iranian-backed militant groups attacking their people.

And if the U.S. is slow to respond, they may look elsewhere for help.

"The Middle East writ broadly is an area of intense competition between the great powers. And I think that as we adjust our posture in the region, Russia and China will be looking very closely to see if a vacuum opens that they can exploit," McKenzie told reporters traveling with him. "I think they see the United States shifting posture to look at other parts of the world and they sense there may be an opportunity there."

Speaking in his hotel room after meeting with Saudi officials, McKenzie said weapons sales would be one need that Moscow and Beijing could exploit. Russia, he said, tries to sell air defense systems and other weapons to whomever it can, and China has a long-term goal to expand its economic power and ultimately establish military bases in the region.

In the few short months since President Joe Biden took office, he has ordered the full withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan and begun to review America's force presence in Iraq, Syria and around the

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 46 of 65

globe. His administration is cutting U.S. military support for the Saudi-led offensive against Iranian-back Houthi rebels in Yemen, and the Pentagon has moved ships, forces and weapons systems out of other Middle East countries.

At the same time, however, Biden this month dispatched senior administration officials to the Gulf region to reassure nervous allies as the U.S. looks to reopen talks with Iran on the 2015 nuclear deal, which former President Donald Trump scrapped three years ago.

The effort to restart talks with Iran triggers worries in a number of Middle East nations who rely on the U.S. to maintain pressure on Tehran and its campaigns to fund and supply weapons to militant groups in the region.

But there is ongoing discussion within the Pentagon about sending more assets to the Pacific to fight a rising China. And U.S. military commanders around the globe, including McKenzie, may lose troops and resources as a result. Those could include warships such as the aircraft carrier now sitting in the Gulf, providing security for the Afghanistan withdrawal.

The Biden administration views China's rapidly expanding economic influence and military might as America's primary long-term security challenge. Officials believe the U.S. must be more ready to counter threats to Taiwan and China's development of military outposts on manmade islands in the South China Sea.

Military commanders caution that China's growing assertiveness isn't limited to Asia, noting that Beijing is aggressively seeking footholds in Africa, South America and the Middle East.

"I agree completely that China needs to be the pacing threat we orient on," McKenzie said in the interview with reporters from The Associated Press and ABC News. "At the same time, we are a global power and we need to have a global outlook. And that means that you have the ability to consider the globe as a whole."

In meetings Sunday, Saudi leaders were "very concerned" about the ongoing U.S. military posture review, McKenzie said. The kingdom is under almost daily bombardment from Houthi rebels with a variety of ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and small drones. And Saudi leaders rely on the U.S. to help them defend themselves.

McKenzie said his message to them was that the number of troops and weapons is not as important as the overall capability of the integrated U.S. and Saudi air and missile defense system arrayed around the country.

And more broadly, he said, that strategy of doing more in the region with less military presence may prevent China and Russia from cashing in on any U.S. void.

"I'm not sure it's actually going to turn out to be an opportunity for them when it's all said and done," he said.

The troop numbers may not be the same as the hundreds of thousands that were in the region five to seven years ago, he said, but the U.S. will have a presence in the region.

"I think we're going to play a very smart game ... to leverage what we have," he said. "The United States is the partner of choice. It's only when that option is not open are countries going to hedge and seek other opportunities."

## Last cat out of the Tiger King Park bag as seizure completed

THACKERVILLE, Okla. (AP) — Federal officials have removed the last of the 68 big cats from the private zoo in Oklahoma that had been the center of the "Tiger King" saga.

A jaguar was among the last cat removed from Tiger King Park in Thackerville, a few miles north of Oklahoma's border with Texas, The Oklahoman reported Sunday.

The turbulent beginnings of the zoo were the subject of the final episode of the Netflix true-crime series "Tiger King: Murder, Mayhem and Madness." Zookeeper Jeff Lowe moved the cats to a Thackerville property after the August shutdown of the Greater Wynnewood Exotic Animal Park.

The U.S. Justice Department on Thursday announced the seizure of the federally protected lions, tigers, lion-tiger hybrids and a jaguar as part of a court-approved agreement to resolve a federal complaint against

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 47 of 65

Lowe and his wife, Lauren Lowe, over the animals' care.

The civil complaint, filed in November, accused the Lowes of recurring inhumane treatment and improper handling of animals protected by the Endangered Species Act. The couple received numerous citations for failing to properly care for the animals following three inspections of the Tiger King Park in Thackerville since December 2020.

During a hearing two weeks ago, a judge found the couple in contempt for failing to comply with court orders to employ a qualified veterinarian and establish a program of veterinary care for the animals. Daniel Card, an attorney for the couple, told a federal judge that the Lowes "want out completely."

Jeff Lowe was a central figure in "Tiger King" that featured a mullet-wearing zookeeper named Joe Exotic and became a cultural phenomenon last year. Joe Exotic, a pseudonym for Joseph Maldonado-Passage, is serving a 22-year sentence in federal prison in Texas for his 2020 conviction on charges that he participated in a murder-for-hire plot and violated federal wildlife laws.

## Tennessee moves to the forefront with anti-transgender laws

By JONATHAN MATTISE, KIMBERLEE KRUESI and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Conservative lawmakers nationwide introduced a flurry of anti-LGBTQ bills this year, but no state's political leaders have gone further than Tennessee in enacting new laws targeting transgender people.

Lawmakers passed and Republican Gov. Bill Lee signed five new bills into law, consistently dismissing concerns that they discriminate against an already vulnerable population, that some of the laws are unworkable and that they could damage the state's reputation.

Supporters defend the laws policy by policy, arguing that one protects parental rights, others protect girls and women and one even improves equality. Opponents reject those claims.

Colin Goodbred, a 22-year-old transgender student raised in the Nashville suburbs who attends college in New Hampshire, says the bevy of new laws could keep him from ever calling Tennessee home again.

"I think that these sorts of bills are part of what is pushing me away from identifying Tennessee as my own state, even though I spent the vast majority of my childhood, I grew up, in Tennessee," said Goodbred, a Dartmouth College senior. "I don't feel like I want to return there. I'm already going to college out of state. I'm wanting to work out of state. And they've made it abundantly clear that they do not want trans people in the state."

Tennessee's emergence as an anti-LGBTQ leader grows out of a rightward political shift in a state Republicans already firmly controlled. Lee's Republican predecessor tapped the brakes on some socially conservative legislation, but emphatic GOP election wins fueled by strong support for former President Donald Trump have emboldened lawmakers since then. That's the political landscape in which Lee is launching his 2022 reelection bid.

Legislatures in 30 other states, most of them Republican-controlled, have considered banning trans youth from sports teams that align with their gender identity. Twenty have weighed bans on gender-confirming medical care for transgender minors. The Human Rights Campaign has called 2021 the worst year for anti-LGBTQ legislation in recent history.

Tennessee this year banned transgender athletes from playing girls public high school or middle school sports. The state is poised to become the first to require government buildings and businesses that are open to the public to post signs if they let trans people use multi-person bathrooms and other facilities associated with their gender identity.

Public schools, meanwhile, will soon risk losing lawsuits if they let transgender students or employees use multi-person bathrooms or locker rooms that do not reflect their sex at birth. Lee also signed legislation to require school districts to alert parents 30 days before students are taught about sexual orientation or gender identity, letting them opt out of the lesson.

"Tennessee is taking the crown for the state of hate," said Sasha Buchert, a Lambda Legal senior attorney.

The governor recently defended the school-bathroom rule. "That bill provides equal access to every

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 48 of 65

student," he said.

Neighboring Arkansas is the only other state to ban gender-confirming care for minors, one of three new anti-transgender laws there. Montana has two new legal restrictions for transgender people. Sports bans have also passed in a handful of other states, including Alabama, Mississippi and West Virginia.

The decadeslong culture war over LGBTQ rights has focused on transgender Americans in recent years and has increasingly been a topic of discussion on conservative-leaning news outlets.

The recent wave of bills has had support from conservative groups including the Heritage Foundation and the Alliance Defending Freedom, with the latter offering model legislation for transgender athletics bills. The push in statehouses follows Democratic President Joe Biden's executive order prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity.

A survey by The Trevor Project showed 94% of LGBTQ youth said recent political debates over the issue had negatively affected their mental health. A separate question found more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year.

The Trevor Project has been contacted by Tennessee youths in crisis 2,400 times over the past year, according to Executive Director Amit Paley.

"Our son asks regularly, 'When can we move, or can you send me to boarding school?'" said Amy Allen, whose 8th grade transgender son is dreading changing from private to public school next fall.

Nashville's mayor warned that the business signage requirement for bathrooms and other facilities could be particularly detrimental for his growing, progressive-leaning city, which is often at odds with social policies coming from the GOP-dominated Capitol downtown.

"This law is part of an anti-LGBT political platform of hate and division," said Mayor John Cooper, a Democrat. "One of the risks for Nashville is that the hostility inherent to these signs can be the equivalent of hanging up another sign: a 'Do not come here' sign. We are an inclusive city, and that won't change."

Some of Tennessee's new laws face practical challenges.

The signage bill's sponsor said people could file lawsuits or district attorneys could ask a judge to force businesses to comply. But Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference President Amy Weirich says the bill "doesn't speak to anything having to do with enforcement," so her group remained neutral on the bill.

"The way it's written, I don't see anything that allows or provides me the responsibility or right to go to civil court and ask a judge to enforce it," said Weirich, Shelby County's district attorney.

Regarding the medical treatment ban, advocates say no doctor in Tennessee currently provides youth hormone therapy before puberty.

Supporters of sports-team bans have largely been unable to cite local cases — in Tennessee or nationwide — where trans athletes were seen to have a competitive advantage. They argue that the rules will ensure a level playing field.

The new laws send a bad signal, said Aly Chapman, mother of a transgender son and advocate.

"I don't know how to see it any other way than it's about oppression, control and power and telling people, 'You do not exist,'" she said.

Advocates say the next few years will be critical. Many fear the barrage of legislation may continue.

"The signaling is, 'Hey, look at what we've been able to do. Here's the road map,'" Chapman said. "They're not done."

## With tall Trump tale, Macron plays to France's young voters

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

LE PECQ, France (AP) — True or false: When he was the U.S. president, Donald Trump called French leader Emmanuel Macron from the White House to wish him happy birthday, but got the day wrong.

With great relish and a straight face, the French president told that story in a YouTube video that quickly went viral Sunday.

Filmed in the French presidential palace with two of France's most popular YouTube stars, the half-hour of banter, tall tales, and a grungy rendition of "La Marseillaise" by heavy-metal band "Ultra Vomit" represented Macron's most audacious effort yet to woo young voters.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 49 of 65

Macron, 43, hasn't yet said if he'll seek reelection in the presidential ballot next year. But one of the takeaways from his playful "anecdote contest" with YouTubers Mcfly and Carlito was that beneath the suit and tie and the buttoned-down trappings of his office, France's youngest president remains a political risk-taker who still gets a thrill and sees electoral capital in shaking up the French establishment and its norms.

Most certainly, he is the first French president to say "oh, merde" — crap — and another naughty word in a YouTube video that racked up 4 million views in eight hours.

His anecdote about Trump calling him on a secure line in 2018 to wish him happy birthday, but on the wrong day, turned out to be a fib, and was correctly identified as such by Carlito. Seeing Macron bending the truth so comfortably, even in jest, was eye-opening. The dude — on the strength of this oh-so-hip video, it seems fine to call Macron that — is a convincing white-liar.

"My birthday is December 21st, and this was December 19th," Macron said, looking the YouTubers direct in the eye. "He said, 'I know it's today,' et cetera. I said 'Merci' and pretended everything was fine. I couldn't say, 'It's in two days.'"

Likely to win the most cool points from the YouTubers' audience of 6.5 million subscribers was that Macron called up soccer megastar Kylian Mbappé on his mobile phone during the show. The World Cup winner is hugely popular in France. The icon's multitude of fans will have been stunned, as Mcfly and Carlito were, that Macron was able to reach Mbappé so readily, to get the Paris Saint-Germain player to back up another of his anecdotes.

That tale also turned out to be false. Macron claimed that Mbappé would soon leave PSG for its archrival Marseille, the French leader's favorite team. He called up the player and put him on speakerphone to get him to confirm the scoop.

Mbappé refused to play ball.

"Impossible to go to Marseille," the player told Macron, shooting down his story.

Awarded a point for each anecdote correctly identified as true or false, Macron and the YouTubing duo ended up tied with four points each.

That means both parties now have to complete dares that they committed to at the start of the show.

For Mcfly and Carlito, that means a stomach-churning ride with the French Air Force's formation flying team, the Patrouille de France.

For Macron, he promised that in a future televised address to the nation, he'll put photos of the YouTubers on his desk beside him.

A small price to pay if the stunt lures young voters.

## Gaza fishermen take to water again after cease-fire

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — The frenzied shouts of an auctioneer at Gaza City's main fishing port brought a welcome reprieve from the din of gunfire and explosions as life begins slowly returning to normal following 11 days of hostilities between Hamas and Israel.

Israeli security forces prevented fishermen from sailing during the conflict, but they began allowing a limited number of ships to set out beginning Saturday as Egyptian mediators worked to firm up a cease-fire that took effect Friday.

Gazans take pride in their seafood, and the return of fishing buoyed hopes that the ceasefire will hold.

After a night out on the water, fishermen unloaded their bounty of crabs, shrimp and other fish at first light Sunday at Gaza City's al-Mina port, where Hamas police were present to maintain order.

Buyers were already waiting to make their bids on boxes of fish arrayed on the ground after being unloaded from the boats, where young boys working as deckhands assisted older men in sorting and washing their catch.

The fish were then loaded onto horse-drawn carts for delivery to local markets.

Meanwhile Sunday, hundreds of municipal workers and volunteers began clearing rubble from Gaza's streets. The work began outside a high-rise building that was flattened by Israeli warplanes during the early days of airstrikes on Gaza, with workers loading rubble into donkey carts and small pickup trucks.

The recent war saw Israel unleash hundreds of airstrikes across Gaza at what it said were Hamas militant targets. Hamas and other armed groups fired more than 4,000 rockets toward Israel, most of which were intercepted or landed in open areas. At least 243 Palestinians were killed, as were 12 people in Israel.

## Experts or 'grifters'? Little-known firm runs Arizona audit

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

In early March, a Boston-based vote-counting firm called Clear Ballot Group sent a bid to Arizona's state Senate to audit the 2020 presidential election results in Maricopa County.

The firm has conducted more than 200 such audits over 13 years in business. "Our level of comparison data is unmatched," Keir Holeman, a Clear Ballot Group vice president, wrote to the Republican-controlled Senate. He never heard back, he says.

Instead, the state Senate hired a small Florida-based cybersecurity firm known as Cyber Ninjas that had not placed a formal bid for the contract and had no experience with election audits. Senate President Karen Fann says she can't recall how she found the firm, but her critics believe one credential stood out: Cyber Ninjas' chief executive officer had tweeted support for conspiracy theories claiming Republican Donald Trump, and not Democrat Joe Biden, had won Maricopa County and Arizona.

Now the untested, little-known cybersecurity firm is running a partly taxpayer-funded process that election experts describe as so deeply flawed it veers into the surreal. Its chief aim, critics say, appears to be testing far-fetched theories, rather than simply recounting votes — an approach that directly undermines the country's democratic traditions.

"If I give you 20 M&Ms, and you want 30, you can keep counting it, but you did not get 30 M&Ms," said David Becker of the Center for Election Innovation and Research, a former Department of Justice voting rights attorney and elections expert. "This is not an effort to find the truth."

Experienced vote counters have watched the process in shock. Arizona Secretary of State Katie Hobbs, a Democrat, said this week Maricopa County will need to replace all of its election machines because their security has been permanently compromised by the auditors. Experts note the review isn't following standard recounting procedures and, unlike with other election audits in Arizona, members of each major political party are not at each table observing the counting.

The auditors are checking for bamboo fibers to test a theory that tens of thousands of fake ballots were shipped from Asia. A onetime treasure hunter who claims to have invented a new method to automatically spot ballot fraud says his technology is being used in the review.

It's become too much for some Republicans. The Maricopa County Board of Supervisors, all but one of whom are Republicans, this week accused Republicans in the Senate of having "rented out the once-good name of the Arizona Senate" to "grifters."

"Your 'auditors' are in way over their heads," the board wrote in a letter.

Cyber Ninjas' defenders say they're creating a template for a re-examination of the election in every battleground state Biden won. Trump allies have already called for similar operations in Georgia. And criticisms about the firm's lack of election experience are hollow, its advocates argue, because the Arizona audit is unprecedented.

"This is an audit like none that has ever been performed," said Patrick Byrne, the former chief executive officer of Overstock.com who has been raising money for the audit. "This audit is an audit check for all forms of mischief."

The man running the operation, Cyber Ninjas chief executive officer Doug Logan, declined through his spokesman to be interviewed. He has only answered questions from reporters in public once, during a contentious press conference last month.

"There's a lot of Americans here, myself included, that are really bothered at the way our country's being ripped apart right now," Logan said. "If we go through here and we don't find any fraud, I will be ecstatic."

Maricopa County has already conducted two audits, which found no problems with the count in the state's most populous county. At the urging of Trump supporters, the Senate insisted on a third and subpoenaed

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 51 of 65

more than 2 million ballots from the county.

When the Senate leader went looking for an elections firm to do the work, she did not put together a formal request for proposal, as is typical for government contracts. Fann said she and her staff reached out to several firms and got two bids back — the one from Clear Ballot Group for \$450,000 and the other from a cybersecurity group called Intersec Worldwide. Fann said she preferred the Intersec proposal, but balked at an \$8 million price tag.

In an interview, she said she could not recall who had referred her to Cyber Ninjas. "To be honest with you I can't even tell you exactly what path led me there," Fann said.

But Fann had tapped into a loose network of computer security experts who had become active in pro-Trump election conspiracy theories. In a self-published book written this year, Byrne dubbed the group "cyber ninjas" — a term used by so-called "white hat" hackers who defend against online intrusions. Byrne told AP that, in December, he and Logan "crossed paths in a few places." But Byrne said he wasn't involved in the audit bid and does not know Logan well.

Logan, 42, in December had tweeted and retweeted references to the conspiracy theory that voting machines were hacked to switch votes from Trump. "The parallels between the statistical analysis of Venezuela and this year's election are astonishing," Logan tweeted, with a #StoptheSteal hashtag that referenced the pro-Trump movement seeking to overturn the election.

Logan also served as an expert witness in a pro-Trump lawsuit raising conspiracy theories about the election in Antrim County, Michigan. Another cybersecurity professional who filed an expert witness affidavit in that case, Ben Cotton, was a partner on the Intersec proposal. Cotton's own firm, CyFIR, which did not respond to a request for comment, is now a subcontractor on the Arizona audit.

The Senate agreed to pay Cyber Ninjas \$150,000 in state money, but it is not clear how much more the audit will cost and who is paying for it. The pro-Trump One America News Network raised \$150,000 in a single day in April and has continued to ask for donations. Byrne has also started a fundraising drive with a group that says it has raised \$1.7 million with a goal of \$2.8 million. Neither will have to disclose donors or account for how the money is spent, and Logan has declined to detail financial information.

Byrne's organization is also involved in recruiting volunteers. The audit's liaison with the Senate sent an email to local Republicans last week asking for more volunteers and referring them to the website of Byrne's organization's to apply. Byrne said his group simply refers volunteers to Cyber Ninjas for "vetting." The email was first reported by The Arizona Republic.

Logan started Cyber Ninjas in 2013 in Indiana after working for two years for a cybersecurity firm called Cigital, according to his LinkedIn profile and Cyber Ninja press releases. He moved his firm from Indiana to Sarasota in 2014, according to the Cyber Ninjas website, which quotes Logan describing the firm as a "Christian company." Last year, when Cyber Ninjas received \$98,000 in federal COVID relief money, it claimed five employees.

At a public presentation last week, Logan cited as part of his qualifications that his firm "worked with some of the largest names in the financial services space." Two of the companies he lists as former clients in his expert witness statement, Citibank and JP Morgan Chase, said through spokespeople that they have no record of hiring Cyber Ninjas.

Logan's scant public record before the audit was a history of volunteering for the U.S. Cyber Challenge, a training event for internet security amateurs and professionals. In 2015, Logan received an award from the security firm SANS for his volunteerism with the event,

John Pescatore, the SANS employee who oversees the award program, said Logan was cited mainly for designing an online "capture the flag" game where players try to hack into an opponent's base. "It takes a lot of work," said Pescatore of Logan's volunteering. He added he doesn't know Logan but Cyber Ninjas has a good reputation for testing companies' systems for vulnerabilities, its market niche.

A spokesman for the U.S. Cyber Challenge did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

Logan is not the only person associated with the effort to overturn the 2020 election who is working on the audit. Jovan Pulitzer, an inventor who unsuccessfully pushed for a post-election audit in Georgia, has said his technology is being used to detect altered ballots.

Pulitzer is also a former treasure hunter and author of a series of books on lost treasures, including one titled "How to Cut Off Your Arm and Eat Your Dog." In 2000, he developed a barcode scanner called Cuecat that purported to link print magazine ads to the internet. It was later named one of the 50 worst inventions of all time by Time magazine.

## COVID testing's value shrinks as vaccines beat back virus

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal health officials' new, more relaxed recommendations on masks have all but eclipsed another major change in guidance from the government: Fully vaccinated Americans can largely skip getting tested for the coronavirus.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said last week that most people who have received the full course of shots and have no COVID-19 symptoms don't need to be screened for the virus, even if exposed to someone infected.

The change represents a new phase in the epidemic after nearly a year in which testing was the primary weapon against the virus. Vaccines are now central to the response and have driven down hospitalizations and deaths dramatically.

Experts say the CDC guidance reflects a new reality in which nearly half of Americans have received at least one shot and close to 40% are fully vaccinated.

"At this point we really should be asking ourselves whether the benefits of testing outweigh the costs — which are lots of disruptions, lots of confusion and very little clinical or public health benefit," said Dr. A. David Paltiel of Yale's School of Public Health, who championed widespread testing at colleges last year.

While vaccinated people can still catch the virus, they face little risk of serious illness from it. And positive test results can lead to what many experts now say are unnecessary worry and interruptions at work, home and school, such as quarantines and shutdowns.

Other health specialists say the CDC's abrupt changes on the need for masks and testing have sent the message that COVID-19 is no longer a major threat, even as the U.S. reports daily case counts of nearly 30,000.

"The average Joe Public is interpreting what the CDC is saying as 'This is done. It's over,'" said Dr. Michael Mina of Harvard University, a leading advocate of widespread, rapid testing.

With more than 60% of Americans not fully vaccinated, he thinks screening of those without symptoms still has a role, particularly among front-line workers who have to deal with the public.

CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said the updated guidelines are based on studies showing the robust effectiveness of the vaccine in preventing disease in various age groups and settings. Even when vaccinated people do contract COVID-19, their infections tend to be milder, shorter and less likely to spread to others.

As a result, the CDC says vaccinated people can generally be excluded from routine workplace screening for COVID-19.

That change could eliminate testing headaches like the one recently reported by the New York Yankees, when one player and several staffers tested positive on a highly sensitive COVID-19 test, despite being vaccinated.

Baseball officials are discussing whether to drop or reduce testing of people who have no symptoms.

But widespread attempts to waive testing for vaccinated people could face the same dilemma seen with the CDC's new guidelines on masks: There's no easy way to determine who has been vaccinated and who hasn't.

Employers can legally require vaccinations for most workers, though few have tested that power, since the vaccines don't yet have full regulatory approval. Even asking employees to disclose their vaccination status is viewed as intrusive by many employment-law specialists.

For now, testing appears to be continuing unchanged in places that adopted the practice, from offices to meatpacking plants to sports teams.

Pork producer Smithfield Foods said it continues to conduct a combination of mandatory and optional

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 53 of 65

testing for employees, depending on conditions at work sites. Amazon said it will still offer regular, voluntary testing.

The NBA has indicated it plans to keep its testing system in place for now. The league has been praised for using rigorous testing to create COVID-19-free "bubbles" around players, coaches and staff.

On a national level, the supply of COVID-19 tests now vastly surpasses demand. U.S. officials receive reports of about 1 million tests per day, down from a peak of over 2 million in mid-January, though many rapid tests done at home and workplaces go uncounted.

Consumers can buy 15-minute, over-the-counter tests at pharmacies and other stores. That's on top of increased capacity from U.S. laboratories and hospitals, which ramped up testing after last year's crushing demand.

The U.S. will be capable of conducting 500 million monthly tests in June, according to researchers at Arizona State University.

As recently as this winter, many health experts were calling for a huge testing effort to safely reopen schools, offices and other businesses. But that was before it was known how effective the vaccine would be in the real world, how quickly it could be distributed and whether it would protect against variants.

"The vaccines overperformed, which is the best news possible," said Dr. Jeffrey Engel of the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists. "So now you can begin to peel back some of these other layers of mitigation like mask use and screening."

Congress set aside \$46 billion in the last pandemic relief package to boost testing, particularly in schools. But with all Americans 12 and older now eligible for shots, many middle and high school students will be fully vaccinated when they return to classrooms in the fall.

And many school systems have already rejected routine testing for elementary students, since children rarely become seriously ill and a positive test can trigger disruptive quarantines.

Some states have even returned federal testing funds, preferring simpler measures such as mask wearing and social distancing.

Many school officials, Engel said, "just see screening programs as a huge burden that's not going to help."

## Experts or 'grifters'? Little-known firm runs Arizona audit

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

In early March, a Boston-based vote-counting firm called Clear Ballot Group sent a bid to Arizona's state Senate to audit the 2020 presidential election results in Maricopa County.

The firm has conducted more than 200 such audits over 13 years in business. "Our level of comparison data is unmatched," Keir Holeman, a Clear Ballot Group vice president, wrote to the Republican-controlled Senate. He never heard back, he says.

Instead, the state Senate hired a small Florida-based cybersecurity firm known as Cyber Ninjas that had not placed a formal bid for the contract and had no experience with election audits. Senate President Karen Fann says she can't recall how she found the firm, but her critics believe one credential stood out: Cyber Ninjas' chief executive officer had tweeted support for conspiracy theories claiming Republican Donald Trump, and not Democrat Joe Biden, had won Maricopa County and Arizona.

Now the untested, little-known cybersecurity firm is running a partly taxpayer-funded process that election experts describe as so deeply flawed it veers into the surreal. Its chief aim, critics say, appears to be testing far-fetched theories, rather than simply recounting votes — an approach that directly undermines the country's democratic traditions.

"If I give you 20 M&Ms, and you want 30, you can keep counting it, but you did not get 30 M&Ms," said David Becker of the Center for Election Innovation and Research, a former Department of Justice voting rights attorney and elections expert. "This is not an effort to find the truth."

Experienced vote counters have watched the process in shock. Arizona Secretary of State Katie Hobbs, a Democrat, said this week Maricopa County will need to replace all of its election machines because their security has been permanently compromised by the auditors. Experts note the review isn't following

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 54 of 65

standard recounting procedures and, unlike with other election audits in Arizona, members of each major political party are not at each table observing the counting.

The auditors are checking for bamboo fibers to test a theory that tens of thousands of fake ballots were shipped from Asia. A onetime treasure hunter who claims to have invented a new method to automatically spot ballot fraud says his technology is being used in the review.

It's become too much for some Republicans. The Maricopa County Board of Supervisors, all but one of whom are Republicans, this week accused Republicans in the Senate of having "rented out the once-good name of the Arizona Senate" to "grifters."

"Your 'auditors' are in way over their heads," the board wrote in a letter.

Cyber Ninjas' defenders say they're creating a template for a re-examination of the election in every battleground state Biden won. Trump allies have already called for similar operations in Georgia. And criticisms about the firm's lack of election experience are hollow, its advocates argue, because the Arizona audit is unprecedented.

"This is an audit like none that has ever been performed," said Patrick Byrne, the former chief executive officer of Overstock.com who has been raising money for the audit. "This audit is an audit check for all forms of mischief."

The man running the operation, Cyber Ninjas chief executive officer Doug Logan, declined through his spokesman to be interviewed. He has only answered questions from reporters in public once, during a contentious press conference last month.

"There's a lot of Americans here, myself included, that are really bothered at the way our country's being ripped apart right now," Logan said. "If we go through here and we don't find any fraud, I will be ecstatic."

Maricopa County has already conducted two audits, which found no problems with the count in the state's most populous county. At the urging of Trump supporters, the Senate insisted on a third and subpoenaed more than 2 million ballots from the county.

When the Senate leader went looking for an elections firm to do the work, she did not put together a formal request for proposal, as is typical for government contracts. Fann said she and her staff reached out to several firms and got two bids back — the one from Clear Ballot Group for \$450,000 and the other from a cybersecurity group called Intersec Worldwide. Fann said she preferred the Intersec proposal, but balked at an \$8 million price tag.

In an interview, she said she could not recall who had referred her to Cyber Ninjas. "To be honest with you I can't even tell you exactly what path led me there," Fann said.

But Fann had tapped into a loose network of computer security experts who had become active in pro-Trump election conspiracy theories. In a self-published book written this year, Byrne dubbed the group "cyber ninjas" — a term used by so-called "white hat" hackers who defend against online intrusions. Byrne told AP that, in December, he and Logan "crossed paths in a few places." But Byrne said he wasn't involved in the audit bid and does not know Logan well.

Logan, 42, in December had tweeted and retweeted references to the conspiracy theory that voting machines were hacked to switch votes from Trump. "The parallels between the statistical analysis of Venezuela and this year's election are astonishing," Logan tweeted, with a #StoptheSteal hashtag that referenced the pro-Trump movement seeking to overturn the election.

Logan also served as an expert witness in a pro-Trump lawsuit raising conspiracy theories about the election in Antrim County, Michigan. Another cybersecurity professional who filed an expert witness affidavit in that case, Ben Cotton, was a partner on the Intersec proposal. Cotton's own firm, CyFIR, which did not respond to a request for comment, is now a subcontractor on the Arizona audit.

The Senate agreed to pay Cyber Ninjas \$150,000 in state money, but it is not clear how much more the audit will cost and who is paying for it. The pro-Trump One America News Network raised \$150,000 in a single day in April and has continued to ask for donations. Byrne has also started a fundraising drive with a group that says it has raised \$1.7 million with a goal of \$2.8 million. Neither will have to disclose donors or account for how the money is spent, and Logan has declined to detail financial information.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 55 of 65

Byrne's organization is also involved in recruiting volunteers. The audit's liaison with the Senate sent an email to local Republicans last week asking for more volunteers and referring them to the website of Byrne's organization's to apply. Byrne said his group simply refers volunteers to Cyber Ninjas for "vetting." The email was first reported by The Arizona Republic.

Logan started Cyber Ninjas in 2013 in Indiana after working for two years for a cybersecurity firm called Cigital, according to his LinkedIn profile and Cyber Ninja press releases. He moved his firm from Indiana to Sarasota in 2014, according to the Cyber Ninjas website, which quotes Logan describing the firm as a "Christian company." Last year, when Cyber Ninjas received \$98,000 in federal COVID relief money, it claimed five employees.

At a public presentation last week, Logan cited as part of his qualifications that his firm "worked with some of the largest names in the financial services space." Two of the companies he lists as former clients in his expert witness statement, Citibank and JP Morgan Chase, said through spokespeople that they have no record of hiring Cyber Ninjas.

Logan's scant public record before the audit was a history of volunteering for the U.S. Cyber Challenge, a training event for internet security amateurs and professionals. In 2015, Logan received an award from the security firm SANS for his volunteerism with the event,

John Pescatore, the SANS employee who oversees the award program, said Logan was cited mainly for designing an online "capture the flag" game where players try to hack into an opponent's base. "It takes a lot of work," said Pescatore of Logan's volunteering. He added he doesn't know Logan but Cyber Ninjas has a good reputation for testing companies' systems for vulnerabilities, its market niche.

A spokesman for the U.S. Cyber Challenge did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

Logan is not the only person associated with the effort to overturn the 2020 election who is working on the audit. Jovan Pulitzer, an inventor who unsuccessfully pushed for a post-election audit in Georgia, has said his technology is being used to detect altered ballots.

Pulitzer is also a former treasure hunter and author of a series of books on lost treasures, including one titled "How to Cut Off Your Arm and Eat Your Dog." In 2000, he developed a barcode scanner called Cuecat that purported to link print magazine ads to the internet. It was later named one of the 50 worst inventions of all time by Time magazine.

## **Black man's death in Mississippi: Lynching or suicide?**

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press/Report for America

SCOTT COUNTY, Miss. (AP) — On the night of Feb. 8, 2018, Willie Andrew Jones Jr. and Alexis Rankin argued in the car on the way to her parents' home in Scott County, Mississippi.

The couple were going through a rough patch in their relationship, but they had a 3-month-old child together, and the 21-year-old Jones wanted to reconcile.

They continued fighting when they arrived at the 19-year-old Rankin's home, where a group of her family members was staying. At some point, Jones walked out, leaving Rankin inside. Not long afterward, Rankin's stepfather was calling 911 to say Jones was dead.

The Black man was found hanging from a tree in the yard of his white girlfriend's home, 50 feet (15 meters) from the house and about 5 feet (1.5 meters) from the roadway.

The young man's feet were touching the ground and his knees were bent. His body was slumped under the young pecan tree, a blue and white cloth belt wrapped around his neck. A yellow nylon cord attached to the buckle was tied around a branch of the tree.

The sheriff's department ruled the hanging a suicide; Jones' family believes he was lynched. The case has touched a raw nerve in a state whose past is tainted by the frequent lynchings of Black people, and at a time of national reckoning over how law enforcement interacts with African Americans and other minorities.

Jones' family refuses to accept the sheriff's ruling and is asking that the case be reopened. After prosecutors initially declined to move forward with charges, the family filed a wrongful-death lawsuit alleging that Rankin's stepfather, Harold O'Bryant Jr., either killed Jones or failed to prevent Jones from killing

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 56 of 65

himself. O'Bryant never responded to the lawsuit, and in April, a Jackson-area judge awarded relatives close to \$11.4 million.

According to a police report, O'Bryant told an officer that Jones said he was going to kill himself just before he walked out. O'Bryant said he then saw Jones walk across the front yard with a rope in his hand, but he said he didn't take the threat seriously.

Jones' mother, Tammie Townsend, said her son had never expressed suicidal thoughts to her. She said he had a sports injury that prevented him from being able to lift his arm above his head, something she said would have made it physically impossible to hang himself.

Jones' family says O'Bryant was prejudiced against Jones because of his race and didn't approve of his stepdaughter dating a Black man. The lawsuit states that O'Bryant has a history of erratic and violent behavior and claims he made threatening comments about Jones in the past, as well as about another of Rankin's boyfriends, who is also Black.

O'Bryant adamantly denies the allegations.

"If they had seen anything even a little wrong, I'd have been thrown in jail," he said in an interview with The Associated Press. "They're trying to make it seem like I'm some big head white supremacist or something. I didn't touch him."

O'Bryant said he never responded to the lawsuit or defended himself in court because he never received a summons, though court records indicate the paperwork was mailed to him and also hand-delivered to a family member living at his house. O'Bryant said the relative was struggling with drug addiction at the time and never gave it to him.

He says he now wants to appeal but doesn't have the money to hire a lawyer.

Working as a car mechanic, O'Bryant said he can't put together \$11 some days. "I sure don't have \$11 million," he said.

At the same time, he said, his family has been forced to move from their home. He said that after Jones' death, a drive-by shooter sprayed his house with bullets while his grandchildren were inside.

But Jill Collen Jefferson, a civil rights attorney representing the family, described the case as "a modern-day lynching."

Similar allegations have arisen in other states. Just last week in Massachusetts, the family of a 16-year-old Black girl who was found dead in a wooded area in April were contesting a medical examiner's finding that she hanged herself from a tree.

And in the spring of 2020, family members and activists immediately called for further investigation after four Black people were found hanging from trees in the span of one month in California, New York and Texas. Authorities ruled every case to be a suicide.

Civil rights activists have asserted that Black people are less likely to take their own lives by hanging.

"Black men don't hang themselves," Jackson activist Nia Umoja told the Dutch newspaper *de Volkskrant* in 2019, after Jones' death. "We know our past."

There is understandable distrust of law enforcement within the Black community because of a long history in the U.S. of public officials using rulings of suicide to cover up lynchings, according to Jay Driskell, a consulting historian with The Civil Rights and Restorative Justice Project at Northeastern University.

"We legitimately do not trust the official transcripts of ... police and judges and investigators because they've proven so untrustworthy in the past," Driskell said.

From Reconstruction through 1950, when lynchings were at their highest, Mississippi had more than any other state, according to the Equal Justice Initiative. During that time, the state had 655 lynchings compared to 593 in Georgia and 549 in Louisiana.

Today, Sheriff Mike Lee noted, Scott County is a melting pot where people live and work together peacefully, largely because of the factories and mills in the area.

Lee, who is white, rejects the idea that Jones was lynched. He said he trusts the work of his investigators on the case, many of whom are Black. He noted that his office passed the case along to the Mississippi Bureau of Investigation and the FBI. A grand jury saw the evidence and did not think there was reason to prosecute, however.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 57 of 65

"My department — no ifs, ands or buts about it — if we felt that someone had been targeted because of race, not only would we make that arrest, it would be very public," he said.

One reason Lee said investigators felt Jones' death was a suicide is that O'Bryant himself comes from a multiracial family. He had a Black stepfather, has five biracial grandchildren and has lived in majority-Black neighborhoods all his life.

But Jefferson, the Joneses' lawyer, noted that being around Black people doesn't preclude someone from being racist. In fact, that could be more of a reason for O'Bryant to lash out, she said.

Among other allegations, the lawsuit alleges O'Bryant once charged at a different Black boyfriend of Rankin's with a broken bottle while shouting racial epithets. O'Bryant denies this.

He did acknowledge that when he was young, he was told in church that interracial dating was wrong. "I still feel that it's not right, but hey, it is what it is. I ain't against it," O'Bryant said. He added that he liked Jones, who was respectful and helped him on building projects.

Rankin is now married to a Black man. She said O'Bryant has never tried to dissuade her from dating someone of another race.

Townsend, Jones' mother, described her son as a "country boy," who loved dogs, chickens and most of all, his horse Fancy, which he rode every day. He was a talented sketch artist, played for the high school football team and had dreams of being a supervisor on an oil pipeline.

He met Rankin in eighth grade and they began dating in 2017. Their baby boy was born later that year. Jones stayed at the O'Bryants' house often, the family said.

Townsend said the night of her son's death, she received a call from the O'Bryants, who told her Jones and Rankin had been fighting and asked her to pick him up. She said they didn't say anything about him trying to hurt himself. When she called back not long afterward, someone on the other end of the line told her he had hanged himself.

"I knew that there's no possible way that he did this," she said.

By the time Townsend arrived at the home, the street was already cordoned off with crime scene tape.

When she was finally able to view his body, she saw what looked like scratch marks and cigarette burns. Her son's shoulder appeared dislocated, something that often happened when it became jostled, she said.

Investigators said the markings were from injections made when Jones' body was embalmed. An autopsy did not reveal signs of foul play, they said.

The past three years have been long for Townsend after losing her eldest son.

"I could get all the money in the world, but to have someone paying, like in jail time, locked up for killing my son, that's what I want," she said.

The District Attorney for Scott County, Steven Kilgore, said his office is open to pursuing a criminal case if new evidence is brought forward, but won't present a case to a grand jury with the same evidence.

"If we had a reason to reopen it, we would do it without hesitation," he said. "As of now, we don't have a reason to do that."

## Trump criminal investigation looms over Manhattan DA race

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Eight days after Donald Trump turns 75 next month, New York City voters will cast their last ballots in an election that's sure to have consequences for the former president.

It's not another White House run, but a vote in the Democratic Party primary for Manhattan's next district attorney — the person who would likely end up handling prosecution if an ongoing investigation of Trump's business finds criminal wrongdoing.

The current district attorney, Cyrus Vance Jr., is leaving office at the end of the year, meaning there's a good chance he'll pass the two-year probe to his successor.

The matter of who will take over has taken on new urgency after the announcement this week that the state attorney general's office had joined the DA's Trump criminal investigation — a sweeping look at hush-money payments, property valuations, tax strategies, executive compensation and other dealings.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 58 of 65

In a solidly Democratic borough, the party's June 22 primary is highly likely to decide the winner.

The eight candidates have made clear they're not afraid of taking on the former president, but most have been cautious to stay away from overtly anti-Trump rhetoric.

"While I can't say what I will specifically do without seeing all the facts and the evidence, if Donald Trump or any of the Trumps committed crimes in Manhattan, I will prosecute them," said candidate Eliza Orlins, a public defender who once appeared as a contestant on "Survivor."

"It is more vital now than ever, that the office of the district attorney be understood not to be a political office, that the district attorney not be perceived to be in bed with anyone," said another candidate, Lucy Lang, a former assistant district attorney and former director of John Jay College's Institute for Innovation in Prosecution.

The robust field includes three former prosecutors in the Manhattan district attorney's office — Lang, Liz Crotty and Diana Florence — and two former federal prosecutors, Tali Farhadian Weinstein and Alvin Bragg.

Three candidates have never been prosecutors, including Orlins, civil rights lawyer Tahanie Aboushi and state Assembly member Dan Quart.

No obvious frontrunner has emerged in the crowded field.

The Trump investigation, which the former president has decried as a "witch hunt," carries major implications for his political future and the fate of his company.

Trump isn't the only topic of discussion in the race, amid reignited concern over street crime and the ongoing debate about criminal justice and the role of prosecutors, renewed in the wake of the Minneapolis police killing of George Floyd a year ago.

"At the beginning of the race, maybe last year, a lot of folks thought that Trump would be a primary talking point, but he doesn't really seem to be the main issue in this crop of candidates," said Christina Greer, political science professor at Fordham University. "He's in a long list of issues, but crime and how the DA will prosecute particular cases seem to be the more prescient issues."

The city has seen more than 155 homicides since the start of the year, the highest number for that period since 2011. Other major crime categories, including robberies, burglaries and felonious assaults, remain largely where they were before the coronavirus pandemic.

The race could decide whether the next district attorney will continue criminal justice reforms, which in recent years have included scaling back drug prosecutions and locking up fewer defendants for long periods while they await trial.

Crotty has racked up endorsements from law enforcement unions, who see her as the candidate most focused on public safety. Other candidates have garnered support from reform-minded activists and organizations.

Vance's office said he will continue to lead the Trump investigation through the end of his term.

He has hired former mafia prosecutor Mark Pomerantz to assist in the probe and, in February, obtained eight years of Trump's tax returns, ending a lengthy legal fight.

Vance's former chief assistant district attorney Daniel R. Alonso, who is not a candidate, said it's vital that the Trump case is left "in the hands of somebody who knows what they're doing, who's competent, who's experienced, who has judgment and who doesn't think politically."

"Frankly I don't think the voters are focusing enough on this issue," said Alonso.

The candidates have, at the very least, sought to telegraph that they won't go easy on the powerful.

Orlins knocked Vance for declining to bring charges against Trump's two eldest children, Ivanka and Donald Jr., in 2012 after investigating allegations they defrauded clients in a Manhattan condominium project. Vance concluded there was insufficient evidence of a crime.

"I think that we might not be in this situation that we're in — we might never have had a President Donald J. Trump — if Cy Vance had done this earlier, if he had brought those cases and not declined to prosecute," Orlins told The Associated Press.

Vance's decision in the earlier Trump investigation was one of several cases in his 12-year tenure where critics say he caved to powerful interests.

Vance was criticized for dropping rape charges against French financier Dominique Strauss-Kahn in 2011,

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 59 of 65

declining a chance to prosecute Harvey Weinstein in 2015, five years before his eventual conviction, and striking a deal in 2016 with a well-connected gynecologist to avoid prison for allegedly sexually abusing patients.

Bragg said he would do away with what he deemed the office's "two systems of justice."

Aboushi said she'll "never put a badge or bank account above the law."

Crotty said: "It comes down to what are the facts of your case, and it doesn't matter how powerful the person is, it's how powerful your facts are."

Farhadian Weinstein has touted her experience taking on complex white collar cases. Florence has talked similarly about her record prosecuting real estate and construction fraud, saying she's in "best position" to continue the Trump investigation.

"I'm not intimidated by anyone," Farhadian Weinstein said in an interview. "We are all equal under the law and that doesn't change if you go on to occupy a position of power including the power of the presidency."

Quart said: "If there is evidence a serious crime has been committed, I would certainly prosecute, and that would be true for the president as much as it's true for anyone else."

## Floyd killing prompts some states to limit or ban chokeholds

By FARNOUSH AMIRI, COLLEEN SLEVIN and CAMILLE FASSETT Report for America/Associated Press  
Democratic Rep. Leslie Herod had no luck persuading her colleagues in the Colorado Legislature to ban police from using chokeholds after the death of a 23-year-old Black man in suburban Aurora in 2019.

She couldn't gather enough support to even introduce a police reform bill that included a ban. That changed when George Floyd died after being pinned under the knee of a Minneapolis police officer and the video set off a summer of protests over police killings and racial injustice.

Within a month of Floyd's death, Colorado lawmakers took the step they had avoided after the death of Elijah McClain and approved a ban on chokeholds as part of broader police reform legislation. The law overrode more limited chokehold restrictions that were put in place four years earlier.

"Making it clear that is completely banned in all circumstances has the potential to save lives," said Herod, who is Black.

Colorado is among several states to prohibit or severely limit the use of chokeholds and neck restraints by police officers in the year since the world watched Floyd plead for air as he was pinned under the knee of former officer Derek Chauvin, who was convicted of murder and manslaughter last month.

At least 17 states, including Minnesota, have enacted legislation to ban or restrict the practice, according to data provided to The Associated Press by the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Before Floyd was killed, only two states, Tennessee and Illinois, had bans on police hold techniques that restrict the airway or blood flow to the brain when pressure is applied to the neck.

A majority of the bans enacted over the past year are in states controlled politically by Democrats, as Colorado is. They include California, Illinois, Nevada, Oregon and Virginia, among others.

This past week, Washington Gov. Jay Inslee signed a broad legislative package that will implement numerous police accountability and reform measures, including an outright ban on chokeholds and neck restraints.

The efforts also have generated support among some Republicans. Bans or restrictions have been signed into law by GOP governors in Massachusetts and Vermont, which have Democratic legislatures, and have passed in fully Republican-controlled states such as Indiana, Iowa and Utah.

Just a month after Floyd's death, Utah lawmakers voted to ban knee-to-neck chokeholds, though the legislation stopped short of a ban on all types of neck restraints. The bill was sponsored by Democratic Rep. Sandra Hollins, the only Black member of the Utah Legislature.

"Our community is feeling unsafe," Hollins said at the time. "That's why you're seeing the protests. They are in fear of their lives. This bill sends a very powerful message as legislators saying, 'We hear you, and we're going to do something about it.'"

Many of the new laws include criminal penalties for officers if a chokehold or neck restraint leads to

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 60 of 65

death or injury, unless they can show it was necessary to protect their life or someone else's. In Vermont, officers can face up to 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$50,000.

Those consequences are important to gain compliance, said Lorenzo Boyd, director of the Center for Advanced Policing at the University of New Haven in Connecticut.

"If we say chokeholds are prohibited, police will still use chokeholds," he said. "If we say, 'Chokeholds are now felonies and if you use a chokehold we can now prosecute you,' I think that would change the narrative."

Floyd's death was not the first police case involving a neck restraint to capture wide public attention.

In 2014, a New York City police officer put Eric Garner in what appeared to be a chokehold while arresting him on suspicion of illegally selling cigarettes on Staten Island. On amateur video, Garner can be heard saying "I can't breathe."

While the city had previously banned chokeholds, no statewide legislation followed Garner's death. It wasn't until the Floyd killing that the New York Legislature passed a bill to effectively ban police use of chokeholds and make it a felony.

The lawmaker who pushed the ban said a similar bill introduced in 2014, shortly after Garner died, failed to gain traction.

"When I came to the Senate, I came looking for this bill," state Sen. Brian Benjamin said of the legislation he introduced in 2019. "But it wasn't until George Floyd's murder occurred that the nationwide, global energy around 'We've got to do something,' really changed the dynamics in New York."

When asked to speculate why the Legislature didn't act after the Garner death, Benjamin said there was room for detractors to give the officer the benefit of the doubt. He said what happened in Minneapolis was different.

"With the Floyd video, there's absolutely no wiggle room of any kind around the evilness of what was happening there," he said.

The legislation related to chokeholds and neck restraints is part of a broader effort in many states to address police procedures, training and discipline since Floyd's death.

Since May 2020, at least 67 police reforms have been signed into law in 25 states related to specific topics the National Conference of State Legislatures analyzed at the AP's request. In addition to neck restraints and chokeholds, the laws address police-worn body cameras; disciplinary and personnel records; independent investigations of officer conduct; use of force restrictions; qualified immunity; and no-knock warrants.

At least 13 states enacted restrictions on officer use-of-force and at least eight have implemented laws beefing up officer reviews and investigations, according to the NCSL data.

While the Floyd killing prompted reforms in many states, legislatures elsewhere took no action or went the other direction and gave police even more authority. City police and county sheriff's departments also have wide leeway to set many of their own rules, including around use-of-force.

A number of large cities and police departments banned or restricted the use of chokeholds even before Floyd was killed. But officers still employed the technique and used it disproportionately against Black men, said Paul Weber, a former federal prosecutor and author of the book, "Chokehold: Policing Black Men."

"Even in jurisdictions where restraints and chokeholds are banned, as a practical matter there's no consequence when officers engage in those bad practices," Weber said. "A statewide ban would apply to more departments -- but again, the policies aren't going to be more effective than the enforcement."

## **Pandemic has fueled eating disorder surge in teens, adults**

By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer

Many hospital beds are full. Waiting lists for outpatient treatment are bulging. And teens and adults seeking help for eating disorders are often finding it takes months to get an appointment.

The pandemic created treacherous conditions for eating disorders, leading to a surge of new cases and relapses that is not abating as restrictions are loosened and COVID-19 cases subside in many places,

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 61 of 65

doctors and other specialists say.

"We are absolutely seeing massive increases," said Jennifer Wildes, an associate psychiatry professor and director of an outpatient eating disorders program at the University of Chicago Medicine. Some patients are waiting four to five months to get treatment such as psychotherapy and sometimes medication. Waits usually lasted only a few weeks pre-pandemic, Wildes said.

Her program is treating about 100 patients, a near doubling since before the pandemic, she said.

The Emily Program, a University of Minnesota-affiliated eating disorders treatment program, is experiencing the same thing.

Daily calls from people seeking treatment have doubled, from roughly 60 in 2019 to up to 130 since the pandemic began, said dietitian Jillian Lampert, the program's chief strategy officer.

"We know that anxiety and isolation are typically very significant components of eating disorders," she said.

Some patients say "my life feels out of control" because of the pandemic and they resort to binge eating as a coping mechanism, Lampert said. Others have taken the message "don't gain the pandemic 15" to the extreme, restricting their diets to the point of anorexia.

The program offers in-patient treatment and outpatient programs in several states, which switched to teletherapy when the pandemic began. That has continued, although some in-person treatment has resumed.

"We've seen an increase across the board," in patients of all races, adult, teens and sometimes even young kids, she said. That includes LGBTQ people, who tend to have higher rates of eating disorders than other groups. Women and girls are more commonly affected than men.

Peyton Crest, an 18-year-old from Minnetonka, Minnesota, says she developed anorexia before the pandemic but has relapsed twice since it began.

She was already anxious and under pressure when school went online and social distancing began last year.

"It was my junior year, I was about to apply for college," she said. Suddenly deprived of friends and classmates, her support system, she'd spend all day alone in her room and became preoccupied with thoughts of food and anorexic behavior.

With her parents' prodding, she got local treatment in June, but relapsed again in September and spent almost two months in a residential treatment center in Arizona.

Her school recently returned to in-person classes, she was accepted at Rhodes College in Memphis, and Crest says she's doing much better.

"My mental health has improved immensely," she said.

Wildes said her program has not seen a slow-down.

"People haven't really gotten back to their routines," she said, predicting that the surge in patients won't subside until the fall.

The Alliance for Eating Disorders Awareness, which started offering virtual therapist-led support groups for adults during the pandemic, has also seen a surge. Since January more than 7,000 people from every state and 32 countries have attended their support groups, said alliance CEO Johanna Kandel.

"It's like nothing we've seen before," she said.

Hospitalizations are also up among teen girls with severe complications from eating disorders, mostly anorexia.

Eating disorders affect at least 9% of people worldwide. They will affect nearly 30 million Americans in their lifetimes and cause about 10,000 U.S. deaths each year, according to data cited by the National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders.

Anorexia, one of the more common eating disorders, typically involves restrictive eating habits and extreme thinness. It can cause abnormally low blood pressure and organ damage.

Bulimia, another eating disorder, includes eating large amounts of food followed by self-induced vomiting. Signs can include frequent use of laxatives and immediate trips to the bathroom after meals.

People of all races and ethnicities can be affected although there's evidence doctors less frequently

question people of color about eating disorders, according to the association.

An analysis of electronic medical records data from about 80 U.S. hospitals found a 30% increase starting after March 2020, compared with data from the previous two years. There were 1,718 admissions for girls aged 12 to 18 through February, but no increase among boys.

The analysis was published in April in the Epic Health Research Network journal.

"The COVID pandemic has presented society and in particular adolescents with very, very significant psychological challenges. This has been a big event that has disrupted a lot of people's lives in many ways and it may be months or years before we see all of the true impacts," said Dr. Dave Little, a family physician and researcher at Epic who led the analysis.

He said the data should put parents and health care providers on the alert.

"Talk to your kids, talk to your patients. Ensure that eating behaviors remain healthy and the sooner you get an indication that there may be an issue ... the sooner you respond the better," Little said.

## Louisville pins hopes on Justice Dept. review of policing

By DYLAN LOVAN Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — For the people marching in the streets for more than a year after the killing of Breonna Taylor, a wide-ranging new federal investigation of policing in Louisville is seen as one more chance for justice.

The demonstrations big and small have led to lawsuits and complaints that police are abusing the people out protesting abuse. Most are still upset that no officers have been directly charged in the killing of Taylor on March 13, 2020.

"It's been insult to injury the whole time for many of us protesting," said Shameka Parrish-Wright, a Louisville mayoral candidate who has been arrested during protests. "They've started this civil unrest. We're out here because of them and we've been treated like trash."

The broadened "patterns and practices" probe announced last month by U.S. Attorney Merrick Garland could soon be led by a veteran Black civil rights lawyer who has criticized the handling of the Taylor case. Kristen Clarke is the Biden administration's choice to lead the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. Her nomination narrowly advanced through a Senate committee this week.

Federal investigators are likely to review instances in which Louisville demonstrators were beaten and shot with pepper balls, as well as the killing of a popular barbecue stand owner as police and the National Guard, brought in to enforce a curfew, descended on his property.

Barbecue cook David McAtee thought he was under attack, his family said. Surveillance video showed authorities arriving at his restaurant and unleashing pepper balls without warning, striking around his grill and inside his kitchen. McAtee didn't realize they were non-lethal weapons fired by law enforcers, his family's lawyer said. He fired two rounds from a handgun through the door of his eatery, and was shot dead by a National Guard member.

The chief of police was later fired because Louisville officers on the scene failed to turn on their body cameras.

"There was nothing going on at his place, no protesting going on," the family's attorney, Steve Romines, said in an interview. "People were standing around eating barbecue."

Romines said he trusts the civil rights division to conduct "a good faith review of the multiple bad actors in LMPD."

The Justice Department had already begun an investigation last year into the officers involved in the Taylor shooting and their chain of command for civil rights violations.

The pattern or practice investigation reflects a shift in priorities under the new Democratic administration, which opened a similar probe of the Minneapolis Police after the death of George Floyd. In both cases, the announced scope includes any violations of First Amendment rights and questions about illegal searches and seizures and equal protection under the law.

Louisville's city leaders and new police chief — the fourth since Taylor's death — welcomed the Justice

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 63 of 65

Department's promise to examine the "root causes" of potential civil rights violations going back about five years.

"I think our officers at LMPD really want to have the very best police department in the country," said David James, a city council member and former police officer. But "I think there has to be some cultural change to take place in order for that to happen."

Police Chief Erika Shields, hired from Atlanta as a reformer, said Louisville's officers "want to get it right." "They want the community to be proud of them," Shields said after the probe was announced in April.

The city has banned controversial no-knock warrants, paid Taylor's family \$12 million to settle a wrongful death lawsuit and fired two of the officers who shot at her. One of the fired officers has been charged for shooting recklessly into Taylor's neighbor's apartment. But after state officials declined to pursue criminal charges for Taylor's death, demands for justice have persisted, as have clashes with police.

Parrish-Wright was arrested in September — on felony riot charges that were later dropped — after Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron announced that his grand jury process led to no officers being charged in Taylor's killing. After enduring pepper balls, tear gas and rough arrests, she said she and other protesters are glad to see the federal response.

"I think the DOJ is giving people hope that we'll see something positive happen," said Parrish-Wright, who leads the local chapter of the Bail Project, which has helped protesters get released from jail.

Clarke, who has been president of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and previously managed the Civil Rights Bureau of the New York State Attorney General's Office, criticized Cameron's handling of the case last year as "a full-scale denial of justice."

The conflict continues: Just days before the new federal investigation was announced, a protester was recorded being beaten by a Louisville officer during an arrest downtown. Denver Garret was demonstrating when officers ordered him to move out of the street. Then they put him on the ground and an officer punched him in the head and face.

"I don't fear them, and I'm not going to stop protesting," said Garret, who is suing the officer. "I have the right to protest and I'm going to keep doing it. I could've been a George Floyd yesterday."

Many Black Louisville residents say the police department has a long history of heavy-handed tactics in its dealings with their community. In Taylor's case, detectives secured a narcotics warrant and knocked her door down, but a search for drugs and cash alleged by the warrant turned up nothing. Taylor's mother, Tamika Palmer, tweeted that with federal investigators now involved, she "can't wait for the world to see Louisville Police Department for what it really is."

An audit conducted by a consulting firm hired by the city in the wake of the Taylor shooting said police have had "generations of problematic relations" with the city's Black community. It found issues with the department's warrant process and morale so low that many officers have considered quitting.

Louisville's police union, River City FOP, expressed confidence that federal investigators won't find "systemic violations of constitutional or federal statutory rights by the officers of the LMPD."

Instead, the union blames police and city leaders for officer shortages that have led to a spike in violent crime.

"We look forward to meeting with DOJ investigators and assisting in this process in any way possible," the FOP statement said.

## 21 die in extreme weather in China ultramarathon

BEIJING (AP) — Twenty-one people running a mountain ultramarathon have died in northwestern China after hail, freezing rain and gale-force winds hit the high-altitude race, state media reported Sunday.

After an all-night rescue operation in freezing temperatures involving more than 700 personnel, rescuers were able to confirm that 151 people were safe, out of a total of 172 participants. Twenty-one had died, according to the official Xinhua News Agency, which said the runners suffered from physical discomfort and the sudden drop in temperature.

The runners were racing on an extremely narrow mountain path at an altitude reaching 2,000-3,000

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 64 of 65

meters (6,500-9,800 feet). The 100-kilometer (60-mile) race was held Saturday in the Yellow River Stone Forest tourist site in Baiyin city in Gansu province.

Participants were not rookies. One of the deceased was a well-known runner Liang Jing, who had won a 100-kilometer (62-mile) race in Ningbo, reported the Paper, a state-backed newspaper based in Shanghai.

A woman who worked for the race organizer, Gansu Shengjing Sports Culture Development Co., said there were no predictions of extreme weather for the day of the race, according to Beijing News, a paper owned by the Beijing city government.

However, Baiyin city's local branch of the National Early Warning Information Center had warned for the past three days of hail and strong winds.

The race also followed a relatively established course, having been held four times, according to an account posted online by a participant in the race who quit and managed to make his way to safety.

But the weather caught them off guard, and on the morning of the race Saturday, he already sensed things were not normal. The runners were not dressed for winter-like conditions, many wearing short-sleeved tops.

"I ran 2 kilometers before the starting gun fired to warm up ... but the troublesome thing was, after running these 2 kilometers, my body still had not heated up," the competitor said in a first-person account that has been viewed more than 100,000 times on his WeChat account "Wandering about the South."

He later told the Paper that the forecast the day prior to the race did not predict the extreme weather they encountered.

The most difficult section, from kilometer 24 (mile 15) to kilometer 36 (mile 22), climbed 1,000 meters (3,280 feet). There, he said the path was just a mix of stones and sand, and his fingers grew numb from the cold.

When he finally decided to turn back, he already felt dazed. He said he was able to make it to safety and met a rescue crew. He did not respond to a request for comment left on his social media account.

Some runners farther along the course had fallen off the trail into deep mountain crevices, according to a reporter for state broadcaster CCTV. It was not clear how many of them survived.

Video footage showed rescuers in winter jackets in the pitch-dark night searching with flashlights along steep hills and narrow paths. Search operations ended by noon Sunday, rescuers told Xinhua.

Online, some wondered what, if any preparations organizers had made in the event of an emergency. The race organizer did not immediately respond to calls seeking comment Sunday.

Baiyin city Mayor Zhang Xuchen held a news conference later Sunday and profoundly apologized as the organizer of the event. The government promised a full investigation.

"We express deep condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims and the injured," the mayor said.

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, May 24, the 144th day of 2021. There are 221 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 24, 1935, the first major league baseball game to be played at night took place at Cincinnati's Crosley Field as the Reds beat the Philadelphia Phillies, 2-1.

On this date:

In 1844, Samuel F.B. Morse transmitted the message "What hath God wrought" from Washington to Baltimore as he formally opened America's first telegraph line.

In 1883, the Brooklyn Bridge, linking Brooklyn and Manhattan, was dedicated by President Chester Alan Arthur and New York Gov. Grover Cleveland.

In 1941, the German battleship Bismarck sank the British battle cruiser HMS Hood in the North Atlantic, killing all but three of the 1,418 men on board.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 24, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 321 ~ 65 of 65

In 1961, a group of Freedom Riders was arrested after arriving at a bus terminal in Jackson, Mississippi, charged with breaching the peace for entering white-designated areas. (They ended up serving 60 days in jail.)

In 1962, astronaut Scott Carpenter became the second American to orbit the Earth as he flew aboard Aurora 7.

In 1974, American jazz composer and bandleader Duke Ellington, 75, died in New York.

In 1976, Britain and France opened trans-Atlantic Concorde supersonic transport service to Washington.

In 1980, Iran rejected a call by the World Court in The Hague to release the American hostages.

In 1991, the feminist film drama "Thelma & Louise," starring Susan Sarandon (as Louise) and Geena Davis (as Thelma), was released by MGM.

In 1994, four Islamic fundamentalists convicted of bombing New York's World Trade Center in 1993 were each sentenced to 240 years in prison.

In 1995, former British Prime Minister Harold Wilson died in London at age 79.

In 2001, 23 people were killed when the floor of a Jerusalem wedding hall collapsed beneath dancing guests, sending them plunging several stories into the basement.

Ten years ago: Egyptian authorities ordered former President Hosni Mubarak tried on charges of corruption as well as conspiracy in the deadly shooting of protesters who'd driven him from power. (An appeals court cleared Mubarak in the deaths of the protesters; he would be sentenced to three years in prison on the corruption charges.) President Barack Obama was honored with a state dinner in London as he continued his visit to Britain. Oprah Winfrey taped the final episode of her long-running talk show.

Five years ago: Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton and presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump each won primaries in Washington state. Protests outside a Donald Trump rally in Albuquerque, New Mexico, turned violent as demonstrators threw burning T-shirts, plastic bottles and other items at police officers, overturned trash cans and knocked down barricades.

One year ago: The White House broadened its travel ban against countries hard hit by the coronavirus, saying it would deny admission to foreigners who had recently been in Brazil. The New York Times devoted its Sunday front page to a long list of names of those who had died of the coronavirus in the United States. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu went on trial on corruption charges, becoming the country's first sitting prime minister to be tried. (The trial resumed in April.)

Today's Birthdays: Actor-comedian-impressionist Stanley Baxter is 95. Jazz musician Archie Shepp is 84. Comedian Tommy Chong is 83. Singer Bob Dylan is 80. Actor Gary Burghoff is 78. Singer Patti LaBelle is 77. Actor Priscilla Presley is 76. Country singer Mike Reid is 74. Actor Jim Broadbent is 72. Actor Alfred Molina is 68. Singer Rosanne Cash is 66. Actor Cliff Parisi is 61. Actor Kristin Scott Thomas is 61. Rock musician Vivian Trimble is 58. Actor John C. Reilly is 56. Actor Dana Ashbrook is 54. Actor Eric Close is 54. Actor Carl Payne is 52. Rock musician Rich Robinson is 52. Former MLB pitcher Bartolo Colon is 48. Actor Dash Mihok is 47. Actor Bryan Greenberg is 43. Actor Owen Benjamin is 41. Actor Billy L. Sullivan is 41. Actor-rapper Jerod Mixon (aka Big Tyme) is 40. Rock musician Cody Hanson (Hinder) is 39. Dancer-choreographer-singer Mark Ballas is 35. Country singer Billy Gilman is 33. Rapper/producer G-Eazy is 32. Actor Brianne Howey is 32. Actor Cayden Boyd is 27.