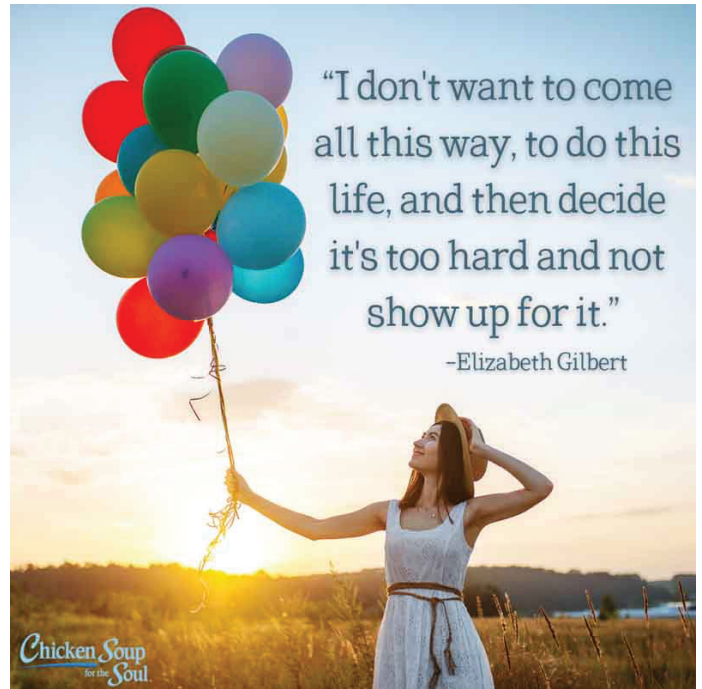


# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 1 of 86

- [1- Memorial Day Ad](#)
- [2- Guthmiller is state-bound in golf](#)
- [3- Groton Transit Fundraiser Ad](#)
- [4- Service Notice: Dale Wolter](#)
- [4- City Council Agenda](#)
- [5- 'Good, Bad and Invasive Plant Tour' set for June 3](#)
- [6- Lake Area Technical College announces graduates receiving degrees](#)
- [6- Governors to DOJ: Continue Investigation into Anti-Competitive Practices in the Meatpacking Industry](#)
- [7- Turning Your Life Around](#)
- [8- Spotlight on Groton Area Staff: Becky Erickson](#)
- [9- Miss South Dakota Competition Returns to Brookings June 3, 4 and 5](#)
- [10- Truss Pros/Precision Wall Systems Hiring Ad](#)
- [10- Help Wanted at Groton Area](#)
- [11- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [12- Weather Pages](#)
- [15- Daily Devotional](#)
- [16- 2021 Community Events](#)
- [17- News from the Associated Press](#)



**MEMORIAL DAY**  
Honoring All Who Served  
\*\*\*\*\*

The Groton American Legion Post #39 will perform Military Honors at the following times and cemeteries:

7:30	Huffton
8:15	James
8:45	Verdon
9:15	Bates/Scotland
10:00	Ferney
11:00	Andover Protestant Cemetery
12:00	Groton

**A program will be held at Groton starting at 12:00 with the speaker being a 1960 Groton graduate Brig. Gen. Ronald W Mielke (ret). After the Groton service a meal will be served at the Legion Post.**

**MEMORIAL DAY**  
Honoring All Who Served  
\*\*\*\*\*

**Coming up on GDILIVE.COM**  
Groton's Memorial Day Program  
Monday, May 31, 2021, Noon  
Groton Union Cemetery  
Will also be broadcast locally on 89.3 FM



**OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton  
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.



## Guthmiller is state-bound in golf

Carly Guthmiller placed 6th at Regions. She will go and play at state golf in Spearfish June 7th and 8th. The Region 1A Tournament was held Friday in Sisseton. Guthmiller shot a 101. Also participating in the regional tournament was Shaylee Peterson with a score of 142 (Courtesy Photo)

# Groton Transit

## FUNDRAISER

**Thursday, June 17, 2021**

**4 p.m. to 7 p.m.**

**Groton Community Transit**

**Downtown Groton**

*Tables will be set up outside*

*as in previous years!*

**We will be offering DRIVE-THRU**

**Service again on the  
south side of the transit.**

*Please join us and help  
support Groton Transit!*

**FREE WILL OFFERING!**

**\* Food \* Fun \* Door Prizes \***

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 4 of 86

## Service Notice: Dale Wolter

Services for Dale Wolter, 80, of Groton will be 10:00 a.m., Thursday, June 3rd at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Groton. Pastor Kari Foss will officiate. Inurnment with military honors will follow in Union Cemetery, Groton under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held on Wednesday at the church from 5-7 p.m. with a prayer service at 7:00 p.m. Family requests casual dress for the services.

Dale passed away May 27, 2020 at his home in Groton.

In lieu of flowers, memorials are requested to begin a scholarship.

[www.paetznick-garness.com](http://www.paetznick-garness.com)

## Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

June 1, 2021 – 7:00pm

120 N Main Street

(NOTICE ADDRESS)

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1

(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)

2. Minutes

3. Bills

4. Department reports

5. Write off uncollectable utility bill

6. Airport land contract

7. Resolution for Kolker First Subdivision to the City of Groton, SD

8. 1<sup>st</sup> Reading of Ordinance #747 Revising Water Rates

9. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)

10. Family Crisis Assistance Procedure

11. Adjournment

## 'Good, Bad and Invasive Plant Tour' set for June 3

Brookings, S.D. - Since South Dakota State University (SDSU) Extension Range Field Specialist Pete Bauman advises on grassland management for a living, his neighbors often approach him, asking about pasture management and his use of poly wire, grazing, fire and rest. Eventually, he says the conversation shifts from general grassland considerations to managing individual types of plants.

"Grasslands are comprised of individual plants. This sounds obvious, but we often don't think too deeply about the types of plant categories in a pasture or grassland, such as exotic, cool season, warm season, broadleaf, grasses, sedges, etc.," says Bauman, who is based out of the Watertown Regional Extension Center. "Nor do we necessarily consider the individual species, such as the brome, big bluestem or sunflower."

One of Bauman's neighbors recently commented to him that he has never really thought about "managing" his grass.

"I told him he wasn't alone, and that most producers often focus attention on their cropland and give little thought to their grassland systems, which are much more complex," Bauman says. "In a crop field we often focus on helping one plant survive and eliminating the rest. In a grassland, we have dozens of plants to consider, and our management actions can either help or hinder entire plant communities."

So, where can producers begin the learning process? Baumann says one opportunity is to attend the upcoming "Good, Bad and Invasive Plant Tour." Hosted by The Nature Conservancy; South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks; South Dakota County Weed and Pest Departments; and SDSU Extension, the annual tour in northeast South Dakota has become a widely-attended event.

"The tour is a one-day, free, public event, where anyone can come and learn about various plants and their function in the system," Bauman says. "Over the years, the tour has been attended by farmers, ranchers, gardeners, county weed supervisors, agency staff, children and others that are just curious. Tour leaders are very knowledgeable about plants and their value and function, and often there are interesting tidbits about how any particular plant functions in the system for positive or negative impacts to livestock and wildlife."

This year's tour will take place on June 3 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. (CST) at Sica Hollow State Park near Sisseton. The group will meet in the park's east picnic area. For directions from Sisseton, attendees should head west on Highway 10 for two miles. Then turn north on 455th Ave. for seven miles. Finally turn west on 112th St. and go west until you reach the park.

RSVPs are required for planning logistics. Contact Joe Blastick at 605-880-6541 or [jblastick@tnc.org](mailto:jblastick@tnc.org) or Owen McElroy at 605-520-1935 or [owen.mcelroy@state.sd.us](mailto:owen.mcelroy@state.sd.us).

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 6 of 86

## Lake Area Technical College announces graduates receiving degrees

The Fifty-Fourth Annual Lake Area Technical College Commencement ceremony was held Friday, May 14, 2021 with 842 graduates receiving degrees. The commencement address was given by South Dakota Secretary of Labor and Regulation, Marcia Hultman and congratulations were shared by South Dakota State Board of Technical Education Executive Director, Nick Wendell.

The following students were presented their diplomas by Lake Area Technical College President, Michael Cartney:

Name	Hometown	Major
Clark S Gibbs	Groton SD	Agriculture
Jeremy R Johnson	Groton SD	Agriculture
Hannah K Lewandowski	Groton SD	Business Associate
Taryn K Rossow	Groton SD	Business Associate
Cole G Johnson	Bristol SD	Custom Paint & Fabrication
Peyton B Johnson	Groton SD	Custom Paint & Fabrication
Emily K Blocker	Bath SD	Financial Services
Brenna E Johnson	Groton SD	Financial Services

## Governors to DOJ: Continue Investigation into Anti-Competitive Practices in the Meatpacking Industry

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem and five other governors wrote to the United States Department of Justice (DOJ), asking them to continue their investigation into anti-competitive practices in the meatpacking industry. The DOJ had originally sent investigative demands to the nation's four largest meatpackers in May 2020.

"Perhaps no person embodies the independent and untamable spirit of the United States better than the cattle producer," wrote Governor Noem and the other governors. "But this way of life is under threat. Decades of consolidation in meatpacking has significantly limited the options that producers have to market their cattle and has created a situation where one segment of the beef industry has near total control over the entire market."

The governors highlighted the threat to consumers as prices of meat at the grocery store continue to rise, all while beef producers are struggling to make ends meet.

"The consistently high prices realized on the boxed beef side are not being reflected on the producer side, forcing consumers to pay a premium for beef while threatening many of our producers with the loss of their business," wrote the governors.

Governor Noem was joined in signing the letter by Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds, Montana Governor Greg Gianforte, Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts, North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum, and Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt.

## Turning Your Life Around

By Bryan Golden

It's never too late to change direction. Regardless of past mistakes, you can decide today to take a different path. Here are some suggestions to help you.

The first step is to understand why you are where you are and what went wrong. You can't turn your life around until you take responsibility for your actions. If you blame other people or circumstances, you inhibit your ability to make changes.

Next, identify exactly what actions you took, or decisions you made, that led to your current situation. It may not be obvious at first, but there is always a cause and effect. It may be hard to face what you have done, but it's essential before you can turn things around.

What challenges do you have to overcome in order to turn things around? Some examples are education, time, money, bad habits, relationships, and attitude. Having this understanding allows you to begin to develop an action plan.

Identify negative self-talk. What you say to yourself programs your mind for either success or failure. In order to turn your life around, you have to believe you can and tell yourself you can. Many people have become so used to negative self-talk that they accept it as normal. Telling yourself that you can't do something prevents you from accomplishing it.

Identify automatic negative behavior patterns. For example, do you avoid making major decisions? Do you make impulsive decisions? Are you prone to doing things you know are wrong? These behaviors must be corrected.

Look for sabotaging behavior patterns. Are you doing anything that either sabotages your success or attracts failure? Some examples might be the type of people you associate with, abrasive personality traits, spending money beyond your means, repelling people who can help you, alienating those who are a good influence, or engaging in needlessly risky behavior that has no benefit.

Find and use a proven plan. Whatever mistakes you have made, you are not the first. There are many others before you who have travelled the same path. There are also numerous examples of how these people managed to turn their lives around. Look for these success stories and study the approach they used. There's no need for you to reinvent the wheel. It's a lot more efficient to utilize the same plan that has been proven to work for others than to figure everything out on your own.

Reevaluate your needs and expectations. You change over time. You change as a result of your experiences. You don't want to make decisions based on outdated needs and expectations. Your goals have to fit you where you are today. Fulfilling a goal which is externally imposed, rather than emanating from your own desires, rarely leads to satisfaction, if it is attained at all.

Part of this process involves distinguishing needs from wants. People get into trouble, especially financially, when they don't accurately separate the two. Anything you can get along without is a want. Be honest in this assessment. Don't use what others have acquired as a gauge; you are not in a competition.

Copy successful people who are where you want to be. Whatever your goals may be, there are others who have already attained them. How did they do it? What approach did they take? You will avoid a lot of mistakes by emulating their successful behavior. Learning from their mistakes is much more efficient than learning from your own.

These steps will help you turn your life around. While you can't undo or change the past, you can take steps to get onto as positive a path as possible. You are never too old, and it's never too late to start turning your life around.

Bryan is the author of "Dare to Live Without Limits." Contact Bryan at [Bryan@columnist.com](mailto:Bryan@columnist.com) or visit [www.DareToLiveWithoutLimits.com](http://www.DareToLiveWithoutLimits.com) Copyright 2021 Bryan Golden

## Spotlight on Groton Area Staff



**Name:** Becky Erickson

**Position:** 6-12 Special Education Teacher / Junior High Basketball & Volleyball Coach

**Length of Employment:** 2011-Present

As part of the Groton Area School District's Special Education program, there are several teachers who work to help students with special needs succeed in their classes. This is done by giving them access to special accommodations and teaching them necessary skills in preparation for the transition into independent life.

In accordance with the school's Special Education policies, each student with special needs is given an Individual Education Plan, otherwise known as an IEP. Each IEP is different depending on the student's needs and goals, and gives teachers a guideline to follow for giving the student accommodations for classes. Whether it be a quiet place to work, an extended period for

taking tests, or help with comprehending the coursework, the faculty who work in the Special Education department are ready and willing to provide students with assistance. One of these faculty members is Becky Erickson, who works as a Special Education teacher for students in Grades 6-12 and a Junior High Basketball and Volleyball Coach.

Ms. Erickson obtained her degree in Elementary Education and Coaching from Northern State University in 2009, along with her certification for Special Education, Middle School Science, Social Studies, and Math. She later obtained her Master's Degree in Teaching and Learning from NSU in 2015. Before starting her work at Groton Area High School, she worked at the local Elementary School in the CARE classroom for a year. She also worked at Deubrook as a 6th Grade Teacher for a year.

In addition to providing accommodations for Special Needs students, Ms. Erickson also sets up and monitors apprenticeships for her students through the Project Skills program. She enjoys seeing her students grow and change throughout their time in her classes.

When Ms. Erickson is not working at the school or coaching Basketball and Volleyball, she can be found working on projects for her house, travelling, or spending time with her family.

**Editor's Note:** This is a continuing series compiled by Benjamin Higgins. Higgins who is working for the Groton Independent through the Project Skills program.



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 9 of 86

## Miss South Dakota Competition Returns to Brookings June 3, 4 and 5



**Kaitlin O'Neill**  
**Daughter of Robin O'Neill**  
**and Steve O'Neill**

Fifteen young women from across the state will compete June 3 - 5, for thousands of dollars in scholarships and the role of Miss South Dakota. The new Miss South Dakota will take home at least \$8,000 in scholarship money and will represent South Dakota at the Miss America Competition. Nearly \$35,000 will be awarded in scholarship funds to the women competing this year.

Preliminary competitions will be June 3 and 4, and finals will be held June 5, all at 6:00 p.m. The pageant finals on June 5 will be livestreamed. The Miss South Dakota's Outstanding Teen competition will be held June 5 at 1:00 p.m. All competitions are at the Oscar Larson Performing Arts Center, on the South Dakota State University campus in Brookings.

The theme this year is "C'mon Get Happy." The competition celebrates its 74th anniversary and returns to Brookings after a one-year hiatus caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pageant will feature Amber Hulse of Hot Springs, Miss South Dakota 2019. Amber represented South Dakota at the Miss America Competition in December 2019 at the Mohegan Sun in Connecticut. She spent the year advocating for her social impact initiative, "Operation Overload" – focused on guiding youth through the career planning process by helping students meet their full potential and realize opportunities for further education and career goals.

The pageant's ever-popular silent auction, which raises funds for scholarships, has gone online this year, and is available at: <http://bit.ly/2021SDauction>.

The candidates will be judged on a private interview with the judges (35%), talent (35%), evening wear/red carpet (15%) and on-stage interview (15%).

The young women competing are (name, age, title, hometown, talent, and social impact initiative):

Annie Woodmansey, 24, Miss State Fair, Pierre, Talent: Flute, Social Impact Initiative: Fine Arts for All Hearts

Baylee Dittman, 25, Miss Central States Fair, Spearfish, Talent: Musical Theatre, Social Impact Initiative: Breaking the Barcode: Ending Human Trafficking

Breanna Bossman, 19, Miss Rapid City, Humboldt, Talent: Dance, Social Impact Initiative: Drive Smart, Drive Safe, Drive Secure

Breanna Remington, 18, Miss Fall River Balloon Festival, Hot Springs, Talent: Pop Vocal, Social Impact Initiative: Get Involved: Encouraging Kids to Become Great Leaders

Calli Mah, 21, Miss Hot Springs, Mitchell, Talent: Vocal, Social Impact Initiative: Harmony in Humanity

Carly Goodhart, 25, Miss Brookings, Sisseton, Talent: Vocal, Social Impact Initiative: Women's Health: The Industry and Everyday

Courtney Remick, 23, Miss Siouxland, Prior Lake, MN, Talent: Original Monologue, Social Impact Initiative: Prepared Not Scared: Emergency Education

Emma Salzwedel, 20, Miss USD, Sioux Falls, Talent: Stand-up Comedy, Social Impact Initiative: The Stereo-

type Effect: Embracing You

Hunter Widvey, 22, Miss Missouri Valley, Rapid City, Talent: Vocal, Social Impact Initiative: More than Four: Childhood Cancer Awareness

Kaitlin O'Neill, 24, Miss Dakota Plains, Groton, Talent: Ballet, Social Impact Initiative: Healthy Mind, Healthy Body, Healthy You

Maleah Eschenbaum, 21, Miss Railroad Junction, Aberdeen, Talent: ASL Translated Song, Social Impact Initiative: More Than Looks

Margaret Samp, 19, Miss Rushmore, Sioux Falls, Talent: Classical Vocal, Social Impact Initiative: Beyond Dyslexia

Megan Clark, 19, Miss Christmas in the Hills, Huron, Talent: Vocal, Social Impact Initiative: IVF for "ECK": National Infertility Awareness

Miranda O'Bryan, 23, Miss Rolling Plains, Martin, Talent: Musical Theatre, Social Impact Initiative: Page Turners: Fall in Love with Reading

Sylvie Larson, 24, Miss SDSU, Harrisburg, Talent: Clarinet, Social Impact Initiative: Mindset Matters: Applying the Strength You Already Possess

Showtime is 6:00 p.m. on June 3-5 at the Oscar Larson Performing Arts Center, on the South Dakota State University campus in Brookings.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 10 of 86



**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**

Day shift  
and night  
shift  
assemblers!



## Help Wanted at Groton Area

The Groton Area School District is seeking qualified and motivated individuals for the following position for the 2021-2022 school year.

**Transportation Director.** The Groton Area School District has an opening for the position of Transportation Director. This position is full-time year round with a comprehensive benefits package and salary dependent on education and experience. Criminal background check and pre-employment drug test required. Applicant must hold valid South Dakota Commercial Driver License with School Bus and Passengers endorsements and clean driving record. Interested parties should complete and submit the auxiliary staff application form. Open until filled.

**Elementary Special Education Paraprofessional.** The Groton Area School District is seeking applicants for the position of Special Education Paraprofessional. Starting salary is \$12.10/hour and position includes comprehensive benefits package. Criminal background check required. Interested parties should complete and submit the auxiliary staff application form. Open until filled.

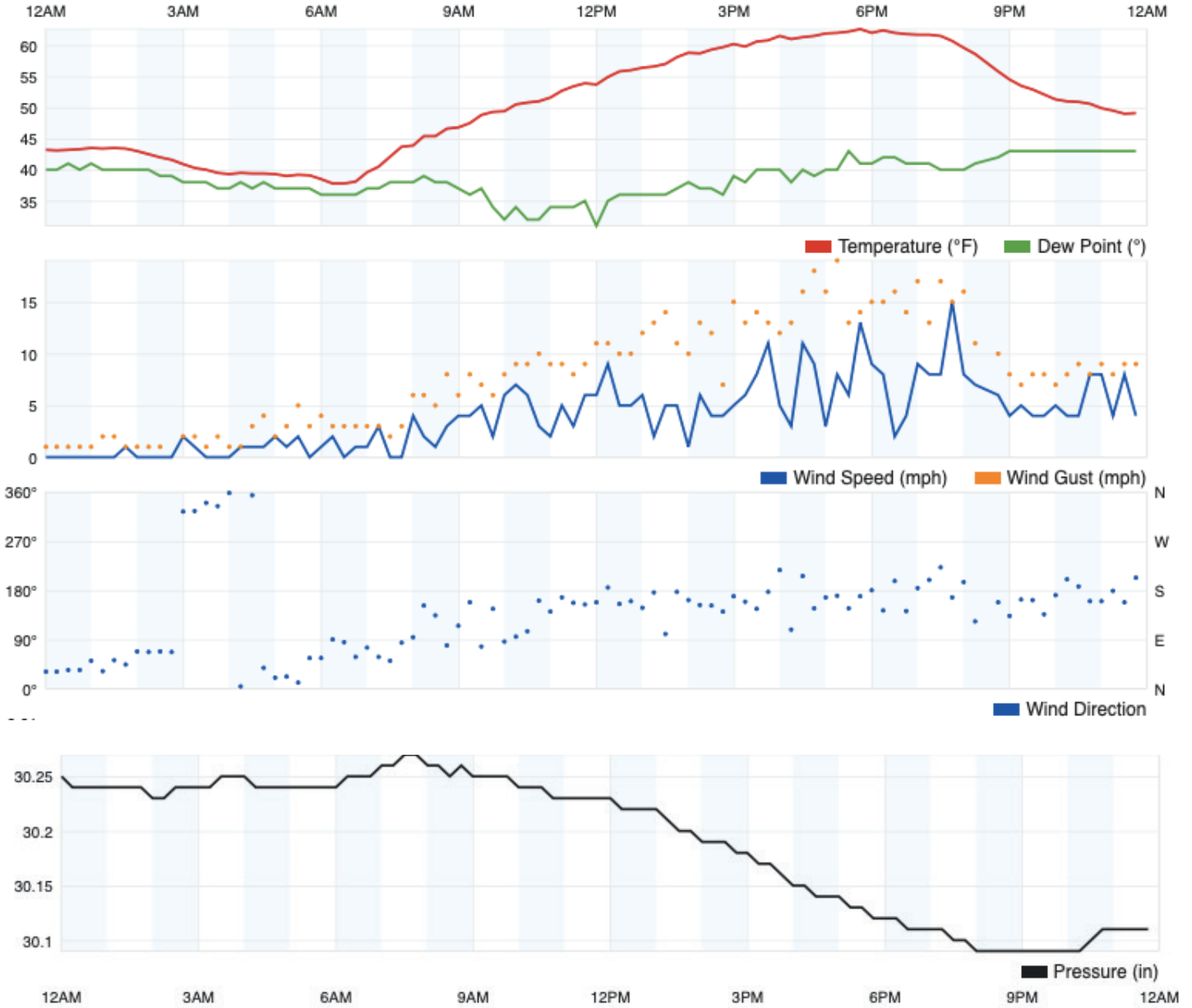
**MS/HS Special Education Paraprofessional.** The Groton Area School District is seeking applicants for the position of Special Education Paraprofessional. Starting salary is \$12.10/hour and position includes comprehensive benefits package. Criminal background check required. Interested parties should complete and submit the auxiliary staff application form. Open until filled.

Applications are available at [www.grotonarea.com](http://www.grotonarea.com) or at the district office – 502 N 2nd Street, Groton.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 11 of 86

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 12 of 86

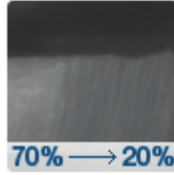
Today



Partly Sunny  
then Chance  
Showers

High: 59 °F

Tonight



Showers  
Likely then  
Slight Chance  
Showers

Low: 46 °F

Sunday



Mostly Sunny

High: 72 °F

Sunday  
Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 47 °F

Memorial  
Day



Sunny


High: 74 °F

## Memorial Weekend Forecast

**Today** 57 to 67°, warmest over central SD  
**Scattered Showers.** A few rumbles of thunder. Over the Missouri River Valley, shifting to mainly around the James River Valley by early afternoon, then spreading into eastern SD & western MN from mid afternoon into the evening hours.

**Sunday** 70s  
**Isolated showers.** A few rumbles of thunder. Across southeastern SD & western MN

**Monday** mid to upper 70s  
**Dry**

 National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

[weather.gov/abr](http://weather.gov/abr)

Graphic Created  
5/29/2021 2:38 AM

Scattered Showers over the Missouri River Valley will shift to the James River Valley by early afternoon, and spread into far eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota from mid afternoon into the evening hours. A few rumbles of thunder will be possible. Dry weather will then take hold through at least Tuesday morning. A significant warming trend is ahead, with highs in the 80s and low 90s by the end of the work week!

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 13 of 86

## Today in Weather History

May 29, 1953: An auditorium was almost entirely unroofed, and barns, along with outbuildings were destroyed in McLaughlin by a tornado. Seven businesses and two homes were also damaged. Estimate of property damage at \$100,000. This tornado was estimated to have F2 strength.

May 29, 2004: Hail, with the largest a quarter sizes, fell in many parts of north-central South Dakota. Lightning struck a house in Veblen and caused some damage. Glass from a broken window hit a man, and some debris from the ceiling hit a woman. They were taken to the hospital and treated for minor injuries. The torrential rains of 3 to 6 inches fell between Westport and Columbia with cropland and many roads flooded. Also, some basements were flooded. Four, weak F0 tornadoes, also were reported. The first two touched down near Bath causing no damage. The other two occurred near Ipswich, also causing no damage.

1947: An unprecedented late-spring snowstorm blasts portions of the Midwest from eastern Wyoming to eastern Upper Michigan. The heavy snow caused severe damage to power and telephone lines and the already-leafed-out vegetation.

1951 - A massive hailstorm, from Wallace to Kearney County in Kansas, caused six million dollars damage to crops. (David Ludlum)

1953 - A tornado, 600 yards wide at times, killed two persons on its 20 mile path from southwest of Fort Rice ND into Emmons County. Nearly every building in Fort Rice was damaged. The Catholic church was leveled, with some pews jammed four feet into the ground. (The Weather Channel)

1982: Two significant tornadoes ripped through southern Illinois. The most severe was an F4 that touched down northeast of Carbondale, Illinois then moved to Marion. The twister had multiple vortices within the main funnel. Extensive damage occurred at the Marion Airport. A total of 10 people were killed, and 181 were injured. 648 homes and 200 cars were damaged or destroyed, with total damages around \$100 million.

1986: Hailstones over 3 inches in diameter pounded South Shore in Montreal, Quebec Canada causing over \$65 million in damage.

1987 - Thunderstorms in West Texas produced softball size hail at Lamesa, and hail up to twelve inches deep east of Dimmitt. Thunderstorms also spawned seven tornadoes in West Texas, including one which injured three persons at Wolfforth. Thunderstorms deluged the Texas Hill Country with up to eleven inches of rain. Severe flooding along the Medino, Hondo, Seco, Sabinal and Frio rivers caused more than fifty million dollars damage. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - A powerful cold front brought snow and high winds to parts of the western U.S. Austin, NV, was blanketed with ten inches of snow, and winds gusted to 75 mph at the Mojave Airport in California. Strong southerly winds and unseasonably warm weather prevailed in the north central U.S. Glasgow, MT, equalled their record for the month of May with a high of 102 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Wintry weather gripped parts of the northwestern U.S. for the second day in a row. Great Falls, MT, was blanketed with 12 inches of snow, which pushed their total for the winter season to a record 117.4 inches. Six inches of snow whitened the Cascade Mountains of Oregon. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather from north central Colorado to the northern half of Texas. Severe thunderstorms spawned four tornadoes, and there were seventy reports of large hail or damaging winds. Midday thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 90 mph at Hobart, OK, and produced up to three and a half inches of rain in eastern Colorado in four hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

# Groton Daily Independent

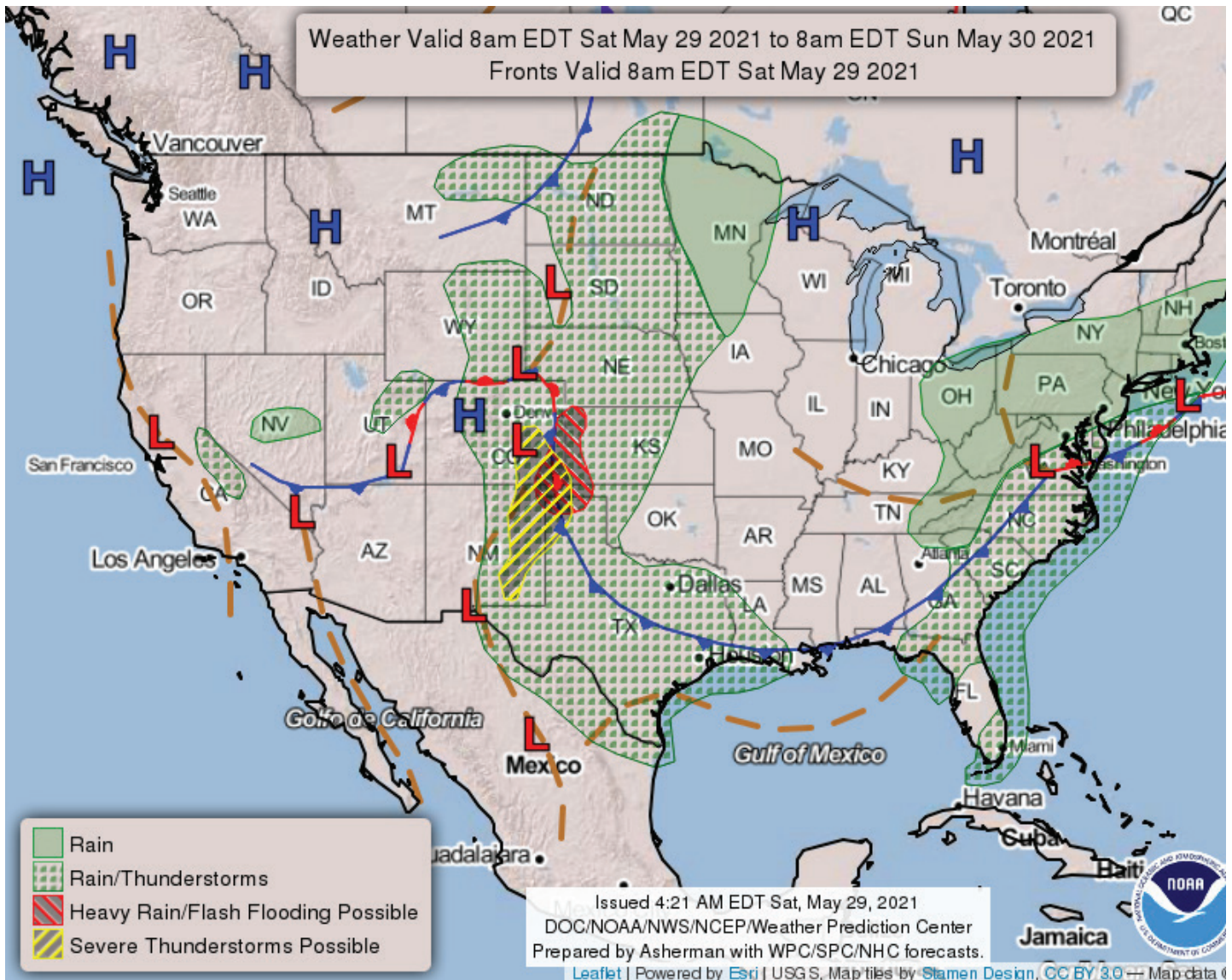
Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 14 of 86

## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 62.6 °F**  
**Low Temp: 37.8 °F**  
**Wind: 19 mph**  
**Precip: .01**

## Today's Info

**Record High:** 99° in 1934  
**Record Low:** 23° in 1947  
**Average High:** 75°F  
**Average Low:** 50°F  
**Average Precip in May.:** 2.98  
**Precip to date in May.:** 1.03  
**Average Precip to date:** 6.95  
**Precip Year to Date:** 3.80  
**Sunset Tonight:** 9:13 p.m.  
**Sunrise Tomorrow:** 5:50 a.m.



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 15 of 86



## SEEKING A SAFE SHELTER

It was a stormy day. Fierce winds and heavy rains made the windows of his office shake intensely. Suddenly one of the panes came loose and the wind and rain came rushing in and soaked the desk and papers of the great hymn writer, Charles Wesley.

Suddenly, he was startled by the sounds of a bird chirping. He looked around and discovered that a small bird had been carried into his room with the wind and the rain and had taken refuge in his coat that he had laid across a chair near his desk.

Noticing that the bird was frightened, he silently made his way to the chair and began to softly stroke the feathers of the bird to calm its fast-beating heart. The bird did not respond to his gentleness. Then he noticed that a hawk was perched on a bookcase, carefully watching the proceedings. He walked from his office with the bird, holding it carefully and compassionately as God does us. When the rain ceased, he released it into the sky, went back to his desk and wrote the hymn, "Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to Thy bosom fly."

David had fierce "storms" in his life. There were many times in his life when he had no place to go or any person he could turn to for help. But he had God and he knew that he could turn to Him at any moment in any of the storms of his life and be safe and ultimately saved when the storm passed.

"Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me," he wrote. "For in You my soul takes refuge. I take refuge in the shadow of Your wings until the disaster passes."

Prayer: Thank You, Heavenly Father, for being our refuge when the storms of life arise, winds are strong, and waves swirling around us. May we find Your protection for our problems. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me. For in You my soul takes refuge. I take refuge in the shadow of Your wings until the disaster passes. Psalm 57:1

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 16 of 86

## 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

### Virus pandemic helps convince salon stylists to go it alone

By SONYA SWINK SIOUX FALLS Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Being one's own salon boss became a trend during the pandemic, for those in the beauty industry renting out boutique suites has been their path to better work.

Veteran hairstylists as well as nail, lash and eyebrow technicians are all going solo in Sioux Falls.

They rent out suites — little rooms that are about 130 square feet or more — in buildings like 4700 S. Technopolis Drive, just one of many new strips of buildings outfitting their spaces for one-person businesses. Rensberger Private Investments owns and leases it out.

"There was a demand in the market for this," said property owner Ron Rensberger. "It offers independence and flexibility for them. And I had a building perfect for it."

Rensberger's business pays \$10,000 to \$25,000 of the cost to renovate each suite into what the boutique operator needs, and then the boutique operator pays it off during their lease.

Cassie Thompson saw a moment to start her own business to support her four kids, the Sioux Falls Argus Leader reported.

"It's like having your own business without the expense of it," Thompson said. Her suite is being renovated now and won't open until June.

She and other boutiques in the building once worked for places like Cost Cutters, or Supercuts, dubbed "fast service salons."

"Fast service is why I left," said Rubi Stevens, a nail technician with 11 years of experience and now owner of Rubi's Nails in the building.

Salons take a commission, sometimes about 40% or so of each person's work, Stevens said. Now she's making more money with less visits and better service.

"I've seen scraping tools still have pieces of skin on them at the chains I worked at. Oh, and they rust," said Stevens.

Stevens set up shop in December 2020 and took all her own clients with her. She used a loan from family to start and to get better tools of her own.

For people like Rose Brown, only her clients saved her from the pandemic, when salon appointments were scarce. Now she's back to being busy, but once worried.

"We didn't get any assistance since we're sole proprietors of our work and we stayed open, but I didn't have a boss telling me to stay home either," Brown, owner of Your Unique Salon in the building and a veteran of the hair industry for over 30 years, said.

Most owners of the boutiques have a clientele they built up before quitting their jobs in established salons.

But when they do quit, they don't go back. On the other side of the building Judy Jorgenson and Tesa Schwans have been running their own boutiques together since 2001. They're busy as ever at their two-woman band known as J.T. Lox.

"We're staying like this," Schwans said. "It's so flexible for us and clients."

For Brown, she'll end her career being her own boss and predicts more life coaches, chiropractors and others will go it alone.

"I can't really see it going back to being different, because your commission you work hard for and someone else is getting how much of your income? No one is going back to that," Brown said.

### SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Friday:

Mega Millions

10-14-20-47-70, Mega Ball: 15, Megaplier: 2

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 18 of 86

(ten, fourteen, twenty, forty-seven, seventy; Mega Ball: fifteen; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$22 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$253 million

## Plea deal reached in assaults made to fraudulently get drugs

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Pine Ridge woman accused of smashing the fingers of her victims with a rock in order to get opioids from their pain prescriptions has reached a plea deal with prosecutors.

Frenchone One Horn, also known as Frenchone Kills In Water, plans to plead guilty Friday at the federal courthouse in Rapid City to health care fraud, fraudulently obtaining drugs and two counts of assault resulting in a serious injury.

One Horn is entering the pleas in connection with two victims after originally being charged with injuring five people. According to the indictment, three of the victims had a finger or two fingers amputated because of their injuries, the Rapid City Journal reported.

One Horn injured the hand of a 17-year-old relative in September 2018 in order to obtain pills and then walked the girl to the Indian Health Service Hospital in Pine Ridge where the victim received oxycodone, morphine and other drugs. One Horn took the drugs once they left, ingested some of them and sold the rest, prosecutors said.

One Horn repeated the scheme with her boyfriend in September 2019 when she used a football-sized rock to smash the 34-year-old's fingers and told him to make up a story about how he hurt himself so he could get pills. The man had one of his fingers amputated after it got infected, the indictment said.

A factual basis document signed by One Horn said a previous boyfriend had earlier injured her, himself and others in order to get prescription drugs from medical providers.

## Sanford Health closes mass vaccination center

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sanford Health has closed its mass vaccination clinic on its Medical Center campus in Sioux Falls.

The health care system opened the clinic in the Sanford Imagenetics building in December.

"And five and a half months later we've seen over 102,000 patients at this location alone," said Terri Carlson, executive director at Sanford Health.

On the mass vaccination clinic's final day Thursday, 14-year-old Rayna Goehring got her first dose, KELO-TV reported.

"It feels good, hopefully it'll stop me from getting COVID too," Goehring said. "It shocked me how old they will allow people to get vaccinated."

She's looking forward to when things are back to normal, especially at school.

"It was around February, or March, where we got called off and we had to isolate for the rest of the year," Goehring said. "And finally it's kind of starting to get back to normal, but it's the new normal people will say."

Carlson said Sanford still offers the vaccines at its primary care facilities in the Sioux Falls area.

Getting to this point where the clinic can be closed is surreal, Carlson said.

"It's emotional when I think about it," Carlson said. "What we've been able to accomplish is very humbling and it's very rewarding to be able to see people being able to start living their lives again and seeing hugs again and families together and hearing all those good stories."

## More than 200 bodies found at Indigenous school in Canada

KAMLOOPS, British Columbia (AP) — The remains of 215 children, some as young as 3 years old, have been found buried on the site of what was once Canada's largest Indigenous residential school — one of the institutions that held children taken from families across the nation.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 19 of 86

Chief Rosanne Casimir of the Tk'emlups te Secwépemc First Nation said in a news release that the remains were confirmed last weekend with the help of ground-penetrating radar.

More bodies may be found because there are more areas to search on the school grounds, Casimir said Friday.

In an earlier release, she called the discovery an "unthinkable loss that was spoken about but never documented at the Kamloops Indian Residential School." It was the once the site of Canada's largest residential school.

From the 19th century until the 1970s, more than 150,000 First Nations children were required to attend state-funded Christian schools as part of a program to assimilate them into Canadian society. They were forced to convert to Christianity and not allowed to speak their native languages. Many were beaten and verbally abused, and up to 6,000 are said to have died.

The Canadian government apologized in Parliament in 2008 and admitted that physical and sexual abuse in the schools was rampant. Many students recall being beaten for speaking their native languages; they also lost touch with their parents and customs.

Indigenous leaders have cited that legacy of abuse and isolation as the root cause of epidemic rates of alcoholism and drug addiction on reservations.

A report more than five years ago by a Truth and Reconciliation Commission said at least 3,200 children had died amid abuse and neglect, and it said it had reports of at least 51 deaths at the Kamloops school alone between 1915 and 1963.

"This really resurfaces the issue of residential schools and the wounds from this legacy of genocide towards Indigenous people," Terry Teegee, Assembly of First Nations regional chief for British Columbia, said Friday.

British Columbia Premier John Horgan said he was "horrified and heartbroken" to learn of the discovery, calling it a tragedy of "unimaginable proportions" that highlights the violence and consequences of the residential school system.

The Kamloops school operated between 1890 and 1969, when the federal government took over operations from the Catholic Church and operated it as a day school until it closed in 1978.

Casimir said it's believed the deaths are undocumented, although a local museum archivist is working with the Royal British Columbia Museum to see if any records of the deaths can be found.

"Given the size of the school, with up to 500 students registered and attending at any one time, we understand that this confirmed loss affects First Nations communities across British Columbia and beyond," Casimir said in the initial release issued late Thursday.

The leadership of the Tk'emlups community "acknowledges their responsibility to caretake for these lost children," Casimir said.



**The former Kamloops Indian Residential School is seen on Tk'emlups te Secwépemc First Nation in Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada on Thursday, May 27, 2021. The remains of 215 children have been found buried on the site of the former residential school in Kamloops.** (Andrew Snucins/

The Canadian Press via AP)

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 20 of 86

Access to the latest technology allows for a true accounting of the missing children and will hopefully bring some peace and closure to those lives lost, she said in the release.

Casimir said band officials are informing community members and surrounding communities that had children who attended the school.

The First Nations Health Authority called the discovery of the children's remains "extremely painful" and said in a website posting that it "will have a significant impact on the Tk'emlúps community and in the communities served by this residential school."

The authority's CEO, Richard Jock, said the discovery "illustrates the damaging and lasting impacts that the residential school system continues to have on First Nations people, their families and communities."

Nicole Schabus, a law professor at Thompson Rivers University, said each of her first-year law students at the Kamloops university spends at least one day at the former residential school speaking with survivors about conditions they had endured.

She said she did not hear survivors talk about an unmarked grave area, "but they all talk about the kids who didn't make it."

Australia also apologized for its so-called Stolen Generations - thousands of Aborigines forcibly taken from their families as children under assimilation policies that lasted from 1910 to 1970.

Canada offered those who were taken from their families compensation for the years they attended the residential schools. The offer was part of a lawsuit settlement.

## The Latest: Europeans plan summer vacations as cases plummet

By The Associated Press undefined

ROME — Coronavirus infections, hospitalizations and deaths are plummeting across the continent, after Europe led the world in new cases last fall and winter in waves that cost hundreds of thousands of lives, forced more rolling lockdowns and overwhelmed intensive care units.

Now, vaccination rates are accelerating across Europe, and with them, the promise of summer vacations on Ibiza, Crete or Corsica. There are hopes for a rebirth of a tourism industry that in Spain and Italy alone accounts for 13% of gross domestic product but was wiped out by the pandemic.

"We don't speak of 2020. We speak of from today onward," said Guglielmo Miani, president of Milan's Montenapoleone luxury shopping district, where European and American tourists have started trickling back. The hope is that Asian tourists will follow next year.

Europe saw the largest decline in new COVID-19 infections and deaths this week compared with any other region, while also reporting about 44% of adults had received at least one dose of vaccine, according to the World Health Organization and European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

Europe's seven-day rolling average for new cases per 100,000 people had been higher than any other region from mid-October through the beginning of December, then from early February through April, according to an Associated Press analysis of data from Johns Hopkins University.

Now, no European country is among the top 10 for new cases per 100,000 people.

### MORE ON THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:

- Just in time to plan summer vacations, Europe sees dramatic drop in coronavirus cases
- In visions of post-pandemic life, Roaring '20s beckon again
- US, Britain seek new WHO look into COVID origins in China
- European regulator recommends Pfizer shot for children 12-15
- Coronavirus infections in the U.K. are near a two-month high, due to the variant first identified in India, and speculation is mounting that it could delay Britain's June 21 reopening.
- Hundreds of climbers are making the final push to the Mount Everest summit, undeterred by a coronavirus outbreak in base camp.
- Malaysia's prime minister says a near-total coronavirus lockdown will be imposed for two weeks to contain a worsening outbreak.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 21 of 86

Follow more of AP's pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic> and <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-vaccine>

**HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:**  
**MANILA, Philippines** — The Philippines has lifted a ban on the deployment of workers to Saudi Arabia, which it imposed after receiving reports that workers were being asked to shoulder COVID-19 test and quarantine costs in the oil-rich kingdom.

Philippine Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III said that after Saudi Arabia formally notified his country Saturday that recruitment agencies and Saudi employers would bear the costs of tests and 10 days of quarantine for Filipinos, he decided to lift the ban.

The ban, which Bello imposed Thursday, prevented more than 400 Filipino workers from boarding their Philippine Airlines flights for Saudi Arabia on Friday. Many were stranded at the Manila airport, with some begging in tears for the government to immediately lift the ban.

"I apologize for the inconvenience and momentary anguish that it may have caused our dear overseas Filipino workers," Bello said, but added "our Saudi-bound workers will no longer be disadvantaged."

The Philippines is a leading source of global labor. Its regulations require recruitment agencies and foreign employers to cover the costs of COVID-19 tests and quarantines, which would be a financial burden to the mostly poor workers.

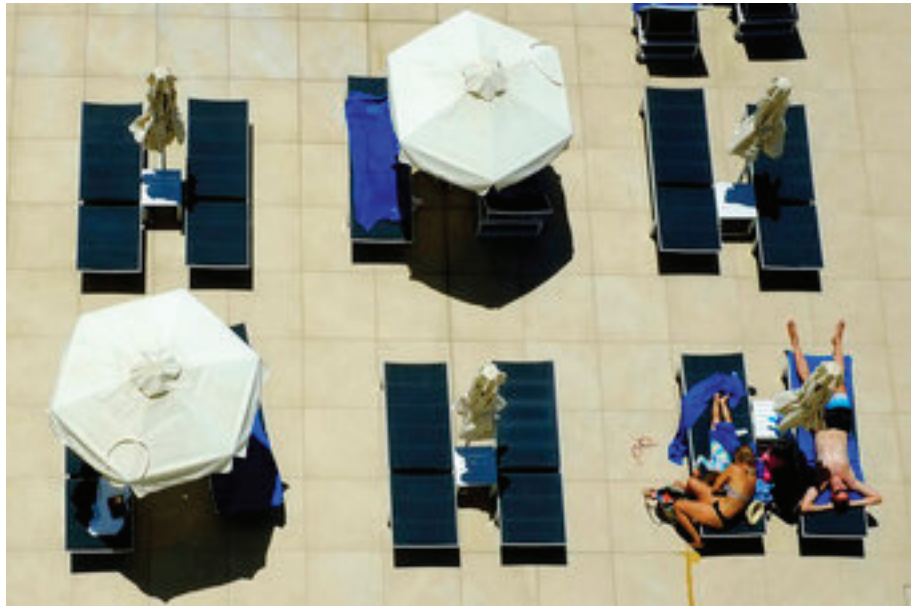
**KABUL, Afghanistan** — Afghanistan's Health Ministry announced the shutdown of all public and private universities and schools in the country's 16 provinces, including Kabul, for at least two weeks starting Saturday.

The decision follows a surge in cases. On Friday, 977 people tested positive for COVID-19 and 18 died, most of them in Kabul. Only 3,800 were tested.

Over 600,000 people have received a first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine, the ministry said, without counting the armed forces. The vaccination drive has been put on hold due to shortages and the remaining stocks are reserved for those who got the first shot.

**BEIJING** — China on Saturday reported 16 new confirmed coronavirus cases including two authorities said were believed to have been acquired locally.

The two locally transmitted cases were in Guangdong province in the south, adjacent to Hong Kong, the National Health Commission reported. It said the other infections are believed to have been acquired abroad.



**FILE - In this May 22, 2021, file photo, a family on vacations lounges at the pool of Nissi Blue hotel in southeast resort of Ayia Napa, in the eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus. Coronavirus infections, hospitalizations and deaths are plummeting across much of Europe. Italy and Cyprus are due to let restaurants reopen for indoor dining June 1, with discos — a big summertime moneymaker for southern European beach resorts — scheduled soon thereafter.** (AP

Photo/Petros Karadjias)

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 22 of 86

Mainland China's death toll stands at 4,636 out of 91,061 confirmed cases, according to the NHC.

NEW YORK — Kids at summer camps can skip wearing masks outdoors, with some exceptions.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention posted the guidance Friday. Children who aren't fully vaccinated should still wear masks outside when they're in crowds or in sustained close contact with others — and when they are inside.

But fully vaccinated kids need not wear masks, indoors or outside. It's the first in a wave of guidance updates that seek to incorporate recent CDC decisions to tell Americans they don't have to be as cautious about using masks and social distancing outdoors.

PHILADELPHIA -- The Philadelphia Phillies will soon be able to pack their ballpark.

The city said Friday it will lift nearly all of its pandemic restrictions more than a week ahead of schedule, as new coronavirus infections decline to their lowest point since September.

Capacity limits for businesses and events and social distancing rules will go away on Wednesday.

The city had planned to eliminate the restrictions on June 11, but officials said the relatively low number of new cases and a test positivity rate of less than 3% made it possible to do it sooner than planned.

The city's indoor mask mandate and an 11 p.m. last call at bars and restaurants will continue until at least June 11, the city said.

After the city's announcement Friday, the Phillies announced that seating at Citizens Bank Park will be increased to 100% capacity starting June 4, the club's next home series.

ATLANTA — Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp declared Friday that public schools no longer have his permission to require masks for coronavirus protection, though his executive order fell short of banning such mandates outright.

The Republican governor's written order came two days after Kemp declared: "The time for mandates is over."

"We're not going to have a mask mandate for our kids," Kemp said. "Our teachers have had the ability to get vaccinated. It certainly doesn't keep anyone from wearing a mask."

The actual order adjusting Georgia's few remaining coronavirus restrictions isn't so strongly worded.

Instead, Kemp's order says Georgia school districts can no longer claim their authority to require masks comes from the governor.

It's unclear how many Georgia districts ever required employees and students to wear masks. While a number of Atlanta school districts enforced the requirement, many districts in outer suburbs and rural areas only strongly recommended masks.

Anthony Michael Kreis, a constitutional law professor at Georgia State University, said school boards can likely require teachers and staff to wear masks without the governor's permission, much like they impose dress codes.

LONG BEACH, Calif. — Crew members of ships arriving at the California ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach are being offered COVID-19 vaccinations.

The vaccinations are administered without charge to international crews aboard ships visiting San Pedro Bay.

The Port of Long Beach said in a statement Friday that more than 450 crewmembers from 27 ships have received the one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Nearly 480 more sailors on 29 ships are booked for vaccinations.

"It's great to see our city helping these sailors who serve on the ships that carry the world's cargo across the oceans and keep this industry moving," said Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero. "These men and women are an important part of the supply chain, and they travel all over the world."

The vaccinations are a joint effort of the Port of Long Beach, the Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services and the National Guard.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 23 of 86

BOISE, Idaho — Idaho Gov. Brad Little on Friday issued an executive order repealing a mask mandate prohibition put in place while he was out of the state by the lieutenant governor, describing her actions as a tyrannical abuse of power and an “irresponsible, self-serving political stunt.”

The Republican governor up to now had been reserved in his comments about Republican Lt. Gov. Janice McGeachin, a member of the far-right who has worked to undermine Little’s handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

Last week she announced her run for governor, challenging the first-term incumbent Little. Her executive order Thursday banning mask mandates in schools and public buildings is widely seen as part of that campaign.

Little has never issued a statewide mask mandate, but counties, cities and schools have issued their own directives. Many have been lifted as more Idaho residents have been vaccinated, but two counties and 10 cities still have them in place, as do multiple schools.

DENVER -- Two sheriff’s deputies who contracted COVID-19 have died in less than two weeks.

The Denver Sheriff’s Department announced the death of Deputy Daniel “Duke” Trujillo on Thursday. The former Marine was a seven-year department veteran who worked for the city’s downtown jail. His death followed the death of Deputy James Herrera. Herrera worked for the department for 25 years and was also assigned to the downtown jail.

After Trujillo’s death was announced, criticism of some of his social media posts that seemed to express skepticism about coronavirus vaccinations surfaced. Like other workplaces, the department says employees aren’t required to be vaccinated.

## Since the nose doesn’t know pot is now legal, K-9s retire

By DENISE LAVOIE Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Asking dogs to follow their noses won’t work anymore in states that have legalized marijuana.

As Virginia prepares to legalize adult possession of up to an ounce of marijuana on July 1, drug-sniffing police dogs from around the state are being forced into early retirement, following a trend in other states where legalization has led to K-9s being put out to pasture earlier than planned.

In Virginia, the rush to take marijuana-detecting dogs out of service began even before lawmakers voted last month to accelerate the timetable for legalization. A separate law that went into effect in March prohibits police from stopping or searching anyone based solely on the odor of marijuana.

Virginia state police are retiring 13 K-9s, while many smaller police departments and sheriff’s offices are retiring one or two dogs. Most are in the process of purchasing and training new dogs to detect only illicit drugs, including cocaine, heroin and methamphetamines. Some departments are unable to afford up to \$15,000 to buy and train a new dog, so they are disbanding their K-9 units.

The dogs trained on multiple drugs alert in the same way for all of them, so it’s impossible to tell whether they are indicating the presence of marijuana or an illicit drug. The dogs also cannot distinguish between a small, legal amount of marijuana or a larger, still-illegal amount of the drug. For police, that means they can no longer be used to establish probable cause for a search.

“We won’t use our dogs trained in marijuana because that could be a defense an attorney would raise for a client, to say, ‘Which odor did the K-9 alert on — was it marijuana or was it an illegal drug?’” said Bedford County Sheriff Mike Miller.

Using a dog that has been trained to detect all drugs except marijuana can help “guarantee he didn’t hit on marijuana, that he found heroin or something else,” Miller said.

Miller’s office retired one dog and is now using a second dog for tracking and apprehension duties only, not for drug detection. His office also bought a new dog not trained on the scent of marijuana; that dog will be used to detect other drugs. Miller said he’d like to purchase a second drug-sniffing dog, but isn’t

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 24 of 86

sure when he will find the money in his budget.

Other states that legalized marijuana earlier have had to make similar adjustments.

"The trend is everywhere," said Don Slavik, executive director of the United States Police Canine Association.

"Once you train a behavior in a dog, that never goes away. They don't want any mistakes, so that is why they want to bring in new dogs," he said.

A 2017 ruling from the Colorado Court of Appeals solidified concerns that using marijuana-trained dogs in places where the drug is legal may not withstand legal challenges.

Kilo, a Moffat County Sheriff's Office dog trained on multiple drugs, alerted on a man's truck during a 2015 traffic stop. Officers found a methamphetamine pipe containing white residue. The court found that Kilo's alert was not a reliable indicator of illegal activity because the dog could not differentiate between marijuana and an illegal drug. The court overturned the man's drug possession conviction, finding that police did not have legal grounds to search his truck. The ruling was later upheld by the Colorado Supreme Court.

In Massachusetts, where recreational marijuana became legal in 2016, the Quincy Police Department shifted two dogs from drug detection to patrol work, then retired them about 18 months later.

Lt. Bob Gillan, the department's K-9 Unit Supervisor, said drug traffickers quickly figured out how to raise doubt about the legality of a search by a dog trained to detect marijuana.

"Usually, when they're delivering their illegal drugs, they will always have marijuana burning in the car. Any defense attorney worth his or her salt will say, 'Well, your dog hit on a legal substance,' (not the illegal drugs)," he said.

Sgt. Scott Amos, the canine training coordinator for Virginia State Police, said that with the July 1 legalization date approaching, police are busy training new dogs to detect MDMA, also known as ecstasy; cocaine, heroine and methamphetamines, while also getting 13 dogs ready for retirement. Apollo, Aries, Bandit, Blaze, Jax, Kane, Mater, Nina, Reno, Sarge, Thunder, Zeus and Zoey are being adopted by their handlers, Amos said.

Cumberland County Sheriff Darrell Hodges said his office recently had to retire its drug-detecting K-9, a Belgian Malinois named Mambo. He said his 17-person department doesn't have the money to purchase and train a new dog.

"You work with them day in and day out, and they become part of you, and to just take it away is kind of tough," he said.

Hodges said all turned out well for Mambo, who was adopted by his handler.

"The dog is actually living a wonderful life," he said. "He has his own bedroom in a house and is getting spoiled rotten."



**Virginia State Police K-9 officer Tyler Fridley, works his dog Aries at State Police headquarters in Richmond, Va., Monday, May 10, 2021. Drug-sniffing police dogs from around Virginia are being forced into early retirement as the state prepares to legalize adult recreational use of marijuana on July 1.** (AP Photo/Steve Helber)



## Rioters blame their actions on 2020 election misinformation

By DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press  
PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — Falsehoods about the election helped bring insurrectionists to the Capitol on Jan. 6, and now some who are facing criminal charges for their actions during the riot hope their gullibility might save them or at least engender some sympathy.

Lawyers for at least three defendants charged in connection with the violent siege tell The Associated Press that they will blame election misinformation and conspiracy theories, much of it pushed by then-President Donald Trump, for misleading their clients. The attorneys say those who spread that misinformation bear as much responsibility for the violence as do those who participated in the actual breach of the Capitol.

"I kind of sound like an idiot now saying it, but my faith was in him," defendant Anthony Antonio said, speaking of Trump. Antonio said he wasn't interested in politics before pandemic boredom led him to conservative cable news and right-wing social media. "I think they did a great job of convincing people."

After Joe Biden's victory in last year's presidential election, Trump and his allies repeatedly claimed that the race was stolen, even though the claims have been repeatedly debunked by officials from both parties, outside experts and courts in several states and his own attorney general. In many cases, the baseless claims about vote dumps, ballot fraud and corrupt election officials were amplified on social media, building Trump's campaign to undermine faith in the election that began long before November.

The tide of misinformation continues to spread, U.S. District Judge Amy Berman Jackson wrote Wednesday in a decision denying the release of a man accused of threatening to kill U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.

"The steady drumbeat that inspired defendant to take up arms has not faded away," Berman wrote in her ruling ordering Cleveland Grover Meredith Jr. to remain in custody. "Six months later, the canard that the election was stolen is being repeated daily on major news outlets and from the corridors of power in state and federal government, not to mention in the near-daily fulminations of the former president."

The defendants represent only a fraction of the more than 400 people charged in the failed attempt to disrupt the certification of Biden's victory. But their arguments highlight the important role that the falsehoods played in inspiring the riot, especially as many top Republicans try to minimize the violence of Jan. 6 and millions of others still wrongly believe the election was stolen.



**FILE - In this Jan. 6, 2021 file photo, supporters of President Donald Trump, including Jacob Chansley, right with fur hat, are confronted by U.S. Capitol Police officers outside the Senate Chamber inside the Capitol in Washington. Many of those who stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6 cited falsehoods about the election, and now some of them are hoping their gullibility helps them in court. Albert Watkins, the St. Louis attorney representing Chansley, the so-called QAnon shaman, likened the process to brainwashing, or falling into the clutches of a cult. Repeated exposure to falsehood and incendiary rhetoric, Watkins said, ultimately overwhelmed his client's ability to discern reality.** (AP Photo/

Manuel Balce Ceneta, File)

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 26 of 86

At least one of those charged plans to make misinformation a key part of his defense.

Albert Watkins, the St. Louis attorney representing Jacob Chansley, the so-called QAnon shaman, likened the process to brainwashing, or falling into the clutches of a cult. Repeated exposure to falsehood and incendiary rhetoric, Watkins said, ultimately overwhelmed his client's ability to discern reality.

"He is not crazy," Watkins said. "The people who fell in love with (cult leader) Jim Jones and went down to Guyana, they had husbands and wives and lives. And then they drank the Kool-Aid."

Similar legal arguments failed to exonerate Lee Boyd Malvo, who at age 17 joined John Allen Mohammed in a sniper spree that killed 10 people in the Washington, D.C., area in 2002. His lawyers tried to argue that Malvo wasn't responsible for his actions because he had been deluded by the older Mohammed.

Attorneys for newspaper heiress Patty Hearst also argued, unsuccessfully, that their client had been brainwashed into participating in a bank robbery after being kidnapped by the radical Symbionese Liberation Army group.

"It's not an argument I've seen win," said Christopher Slobogin, director of Vanderbilt Law School's Criminal Justice Program, a psychiatry professor and an expert on mental competency.

Slobogin said that unless belief in a conspiracy theory is used as evidence of a larger, diagnosable mental illness — say, paranoia — it's unlikely to overcome the law's presumption of competence.

"I'm not blaming defense attorneys for bringing this up," he said. "You pull out all the stops and make all the arguments you can make," he said. "But just because you have a fixed, false belief that the election was stolen doesn't mean you can storm the Capitol."

From a mental health perspective, conspiracy theories can impact a person's actions, said Ziv Cohen, a professor of psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medical College of Cornell University. Cohen, an expert on conspiracy theories and radicalization, often performs mental competency exams for defendants.

"Conspiracy theories may lead people to commit unlawful behavior," Cohen said. "That's one of the dangers. Conspiracy theories erode social capital. They erode trust in authority and institutions."

Lawyers for Bruno Joseph Cua, a 19-year-old accused of shoving a police officer outside the U.S. Senate chamber, attributed his client's extremist rhetoric before and after the riot to social media. Attorney Jonathan Jeffress said Cua was "parroting what he heard and saw on social media. Mr. Cua did not come up with these ideas on his own; he was fed them."

In a Parler posting a day after the riot, Cua wrote: "The tree of liberty often has to be watered from the blood of tyrants. And the tree is thirsty."

Cua's attorney now characterizes such comment as bluster from an impressionable young person and said Cua regrets his actions.

Antonio, 27, was working as a solar panel salesman in suburban Chicago when the pandemic shut down his work. He and his roommates began watching Fox News almost all day long, and Antonio began posting and sharing right-wing content on TikTok.

Even though he'd never been interested in politics before — or even voted in a presidential election — Antonio said he began to be consumed by conspiracy theories that the election was rigged.

Court records portray Antonio as aggressive and belligerent. According to FBI reports, he threw a water bottle at a Capitol police officer who was being dragged down the building's steps, destroyed office furniture and was captured on police body cameras yelling "You want war? We got war. 1776 all over again" at officers.

Antonio, who wore a patch for the far-right anti-government militia group The Three Percenters, is charged with five counts, including violent entry and disorderly conduct on Capitol grounds and obstruction of law enforcement during civil disorder.

Joseph Hurley, Antonio's lawyer, said he won't use his client's belief in false claims of election fraud in an attempt to exonerate him. Instead, Hurley will use them to argue that Antonio was an impressionable person who got exploited by Trump and his allies.

"You can catch this disease," Hurley said. Misinformation, he said, "is not a defense. It's not. But it will be brought up to say: This is why he was here. The reason he was there is because he was a dumbass and believed what he heard on Fox News."

## Ex-premier's graft case a test of justice in oil-rich Kuwait

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press  
DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP)  
— Where is Sheikh Jaber? Kuwait was abuzz with the question as citizens on social media demanded to know the whereabouts of their 79-year-old former prime minister. He'd been ordered detained pending trial in an unprecedented move last month over the alleged embezzlement of millions of dollars from a military aid fund.

When the scandal involving the sheikh and another royal family member erupted into public view nearly two years ago, it unleashed a rare wave of street protests. It prompted the Cabinet's resignation and forced a reckoning in the Gulf Arab state about endemic corruption that has entrapped ministers and stained the country's sprawling bureaucracy for generations.

Activists believe corruption runs rampant through the region of oil-rich Gulf Arab sheikhdoms, but public criminal cases against senior officials and royal family members remain rare, typically playing out behind palace doors.

That may be changing, however, with recent explosive feuds over money laundering in Kuwait, a major corruption sweep in Saudi Arabia and last week's arrest of Qatar's powerful finance minister in an embezzlement probe.

Now, Kuwait's justice system is testing government pledges to hold ministers accountable for \$790 million gone missing from the Defense Ministry fund years ago.

The ministerial court ordered two former ministers and royal family members, Sheikh Jaber al-Mubarak Al Sabah and his ally, former Defense and Interior Minister Sheikh Khalid al-Jarrah Al Sabah, detained last month in Kuwait's Central Prison over their suspected misuse of the ministry's funds. The court also sent lower-ranking officials to jail pending trial and imposed a travel ban on Sheikh Jaber, according to a statement widely published in Kuwaiti media.

But Sheikh Jaber has not been spotted in public since the criminal prosecution began, and speculation has swirled about his fate. Many doubt the former prime minister is, in fact, languishing at the notorious prison on the dusty outskirts of Kuwait City riddled with reported coronavirus outbreaks.

That doubt reveals the deep-rooted distrust among Kuwaitis that authorities are pursuing the case in earnest. Social media has been ablaze in rumors in recent weeks even after the court accepted the defense team's request to ban news and social media from publishing details about the trial sessions.

Kuwaiti newspapers — still reporting despite the court order — said the defense team maintained the former prime minister's innocence during the most recent hearings. Sheikh Jaber's legal team did not respond to repeated requests for comment amid the gag rule. Kuwait's Information Ministry declined to



**FILE - In this Tuesday, June 3, 2014, file photo, Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheik Jaber Al Mubarak Al Sabah, center, talks during a meeting in Beijing, China. Kuwait was abuzz with the question as citizens on social media demanded to know the whereabouts of their 79-year-old former prime minister. He'd been ordered detained in an unprecedented move last April 2021, over the alleged embezzlement of millions of dollars from a military aid fund.** (AP Photo/Wang Zhao,

Pool, File)

comment on the case, citing the court's secret investigation.

Soon, WhatsApp groups crackled with leaks that while other officials remained in detention, Sheikh Jaber's version of state custody was a special hospital wing decorated like a palace with hotel service. A doctor at Kuwait's state-run al-Amiri Hospital confirmed to The Associated Press that Sheikh Jaber, who skipped the last court session due to reported health problems, was receiving treatment there. The doctor declined to give details and spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals, like most people interviewed.

"It wouldn't be the first time," a Kuwaiti anti-corruption activist said. "We are waiting and watching to see if this case ends up like the rest."

The case of the missing military money is one of several scandals that have surfaced in Kuwait in recent years, damaging public confidence in its political establishment. Parliament has since shot down a public debt law that would raise billions of dollars for the government to solve its worst liquidity crisis since the 1991 Gulf War, in part over corruption fears.

In the fall of 2019, late defense minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al Sabah pressed for an investigation into the missing millions, triggering the downfall of the government when ministers refused to stand for questioning in parliament. Other schemes that later came to light have tainted Kuwait's reputation, including a massive scandal at Malaysia's state investment fund that ensnared Sheikh Jaber's son, now released on bail.

Under pressure, the government created a new Anti-Corruption Authority and a dozen similar committees. The late emir, Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, vowed on state TV at the time that "no one, no matter his position, will escape punishment if convicted for public fund-related crimes."

Yet modest hopes for accountability have dimmed, with various investigations stagnating over the years. In the nation flush with petrodollars, critics describe a culture of corruption extending from everyday "wasta," or political connections, to bloated public works projects. Lawmakers have blamed that on Kuwait falling behind neighbors like Dubai in terms of development and foreign investment.

"Much more needs to be done to resolve Kuwait's problems. For one, the judicial system is in need of a major overhaul," said Bader al-Saif, an assistant professor of history at Kuwait University. "Without all of the embezzled money returned and prison sentences given if those implicated are at fault, the corruption will continue."

Others more optimistic say the pre-trial detention of such powerful officials marks a pivotal moment in Kuwait's drive to root out graft — and note it already has borne fruit.

Earlier this month, a leaked court document revealed that Sheikh Jaber had paid back 53.9 million Kuwaiti dinars (\$180.7 million) to the state, which prosecutors had accused him personally of misappropriating. A lawyer at the court confirmed the authenticity of the receipt, calling it an important precedent.

"Former officials at court in jail clothes is not something you see often here," he said.

## Chinese city locks down neighborhood after virus upsurge

BEIJING (AP) — The southern Chinese city of Guangzhou shut down a neighborhood and ordered its residents to stay home Saturday for door-to-door coronavirus testing following an upsurge in infections that has rattled authorities.

Guangzhou, a business and industrial center of 15 million people north of Hong Kong, has reported 20 new infections over the past week. The number is small compared with India's thousands of daily cases but alarmed Chinese authorities who believed they had the disease under control.

The spread of infections was "fast and strong," the official Global Times newspaper cited health authorities as saying.

Saturday's order to stay home applied to residents of five streets in Liwan District in the city center.

Outdoor markets, child care centers and entertainment venues were closed. Indoor restaurant dining was prohibited. Grade schools were told to stop in-person classes.

People in parts of four nearby districts were ordered to limit outdoor activity.

The city government earlier ordered testing of hundreds of thousands of residents following the initial

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 29 of 86

infections. The government said some 700,000 people had been tested by Wednesday.

China reports a handful of new cases every day but says almost all are believed to be people who were infected abroad. The mainland's official death toll stands at 4,636 out of 91,061 confirmed cases.

On Saturday, the National Health Commission reported two new locally transmitted cases in Guangzhou and 14 in other parts of the country that it said came from abroad.

Most of the latest infections in Guangzhou are believed to be linked to a 75-year-old woman who was found May 21 to have the variant first identified in India, state media say. Most of the others attended a dinner with her or live together.

That infection spread to the nearby city of Nanshan, where one new confirmed case and two asymptomatic cases were reported Saturday after people from Guangzhou were tested, according to The Global Times.



**A resident gets tested for coronavirus in the Liwan District in Guangzhou in southern China's Guangdong province on Wednesday May 26, 2021. The southern Chinese city of Guangzhou shut down a neighborhood and ordered its residents to stay home Saturday, May 29, for door-to-door coronavirus testing following an upsurge in infections that has rattled authorities.**(AP Photo)

## In time for summer, Europe sees dramatic fall in virus cases

By NICOLE WINFIELD, FRANK JORDANS and COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

ROME (AP) — When Italy won the Eurovision Song Contest with an over-the-top glam-rock performance, the victory signaled more than just a psychological boost for one of the countries hardest hit by COVID-19: Held before a live, indoor audience of 3,500, the annual kitsch fest confirmed that Europe was returning to a semblance of normalcy that was unthinkable even a few weeks ago.

Coronavirus infections, hospitalizations and deaths are plummeting across the continent, after Europe led the world in new cases last fall and winter in waves that cost hundreds of thousands of lives, forced more rolling lockdowns and overwhelmed intensive care units.

Now, vaccination rates are accelerating across Europe, and with them, the promise of summer vacations on Ibiza, Crete or Corsica. There are hopes for a rebirth of a tourism industry that in Spain and Italy alone accounts for 13% of gross domestic product but was wiped out by the pandemic.

"We don't speak of 2020. We speak of from today onward," said Guglielmo Miani, president of Milan's Montenapoleone luxury shopping district, where European and American tourists have started trickling back, wooed in part by in-person meetups with design teams and free breakfasts at iconic cafes. The hope is that Asian tourists will follow next year.

Europe saw the largest decline in new COVID-19 infections and deaths this week compared with any other region, while also reporting about 44% of adults had received at least one dose of vaccine, according to the World Health Organization and European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

Europe's seven-day rolling average for new cases per 100,000 people had been higher than any other region from mid-October through the beginning of December, ceding the unwanted top spot to the Americas

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 30 of 86

over the new year before reclaiming it from early February through April, according to an Associated Press analysis of data from Johns Hopkins University.

Now, no European country is among the top 10 for new cases per 100,000 people. And only Georgia, Lithuania and Sweden are in the top 20.

But the virus is spiking in Southeast Asia and much of Latin America and hitting the Maldives and Seychelles particularly hard this week. Dr. Michael Ryan, WHO's chief of emergencies, warned that with the global situation still "fragile and volatile," Europe is by no means out of the woods.

"Relaxing measures prematurely has contributed to the surge we have seen throughout 2020 and during the first quarter of 2021," he warned. "We must stay the course while striving to increase vaccination coverage."

The biggest concern for Europe is the highly contagious variant first detected in India, which has brought that country to its knees and found a growing foothold in Britain.

The British government warned Thursday that the variant from India accounts for 50% to 75% of all new infections and could delay its plans to lift remaining social restrictions on June 21.

"If we've learned anything about this virus, it's that once it starts to spread beyond a few cases, it becomes very difficult to contain," said Lawrence Young, a virologist at the University of Warwick. "Only extremely stringent local lockdowns soon after a few cases are detected will prevent the virus from spreading."

Rising British cases linked to the variant prompted Germany and France this week to require U.K. passengers to quarantine.

Vaccines appear still to be highly effective against the variant detected in India, but it is important for people to get both doses to ensure full immunity, said Ravindra Gupta, professor of clinical microbiology at the University of Cambridge.

"In populations where there's partial immunity, either from previous infection or low levels of antibody (from a single shot), then the virus will have that nice sort of sweet spot of an advantage of immune evasion, plus greater transmission," he said.

But that hasn't stopped countries from trying to woo back tourists, even from Britain.

At least 12,000 people from Britain began descending Friday on Porto, Portugal, for the Champions League final between Manchester City and Chelsea. Visitors have to show a negative COVID-19 test to get into the stadium for Saturday's match, but no quarantines are required on either end of the trip.

"Luckily I've had two vaccines," said Casper Glyn, a 51-year-old lawyer from London who came to Porto to cheer on Chelsea with his two young sons. "They are young and healthy, so I feel good."

On Monday, Spain lifted entry requirements — including the need for a negative virus test — for visitors from 10 countries, including the U.K. British travelers are highly sought after at Spanish beach resorts because they tend to spend the most.

Spain lifted the measures after its two-week contagion rate dropped below 130 new infections per 100,000 people, down from a record of 900 at the end of January.



**FILE - In this May 28, 2021, file photo, customers sit in a terrace bar in downtown Barcelona, Spain. Coronavirus infections, hospitalizations and deaths are plummeting across much of Europe. Vaccination rates are accelerating, and with them, the promise of summer vacations.** (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti, File)

Emilio Morenatti, File)

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 31 of 86

Fernando Simón, head of Spain's health emergency coordination center, said he would prefer authorities "shouted that Spain is open to tourism in 20 days, not now, when we still need to be cautious."

"I think we should lower the tone of euphoria a little," he said.

Greece, too, was voicing caution even after it recently allowed domestic travel and reopened most economic activity. About a third of the Greek population has received at least one vaccine dose, but new infections and deaths remain high.

"Yes, hospitalizations are dropping, yes, deaths and intubations are down, (but) there are still people entering hospital who could have been vaccinated and weren't," Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said, encouraging Greeks to get their shots.

"And some, unfortunately, are losing their lives. It's a tragedy," he said.

But elsewhere, the euphoria is real. There is a palpable sense of relief and hope as summer approaches in Poland, where the number of new daily infections has plummeted from over 35,000 in late March and early April to lows in the few hundreds. More than 19 million vaccine doses have been administered in the nation of 38 million.

This week, North Macedonia closed all but one of its COVID-19 treatment centers and field hospitals following a dramatic 90% decline in confirmed cases. Italy and Cyprus are due to let restaurants reopen for indoor dining on Tuesday with discos — a big summertime moneymaker for southern European beach resorts — scheduled soon thereafter.

The party was already underway in the Dutch city of Rotterdam last weekend when Maneskin — an Italian rock band that got its start singing on Rome's central shopping street — won the Eurovision Song Contest.

"The whole event was a relief," lead singer Damiano David said. "This Eurovision means a lot, I think, to the whole of Europe. It's going to be a lighthouse."

## Belarusians increasingly cornered after EU cuts air links

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — As fear of repression rises among Belarusians following the arrest of a dissident journalist whose plane was forcibly diverted to Minsk, those who want to leave the country are feeling increasingly cornered.

Its land borders already were under tight restrictions, and now the European Union has banned flights from Belarus after a jetliner was diverted to Minsk earlier this week and authorities arrested a dissident journalist who was aboard.

That leaves opposition-minded Belarusians with few options to get out from under the authoritarian rule of President Alexander Lukashenko.

"Shutting the borders turns Belarus into a can of rotting preserves. We are being turned into hostages," said Tatsiana Hatsura-Yavorska, who leads a rights group that helps those released from prison adapt to life and also organizes documentary film festivals.

"The authorities have scaled up repressions in recent months to incite the atmosphere of fear," she told The Associated Press.

Hatsura-Yavorska said most of her friends and associates have faced detention, searches and brutal beatings, and many have fled Belarus.

She served 10 days in jail after organizing a photo exhibition about medical workers in the coronavirus pandemic that authorities decided leaned toward the opposition. She faces charges that could land her in prison for three years.

Lukashenko, who has led the former Soviet nation of 9.3 million for more than a quarter century, has faced unprecedented protests after his reelection to a sixth term in an August 2020 vote that the opposition rejects as rigged. He has responded to the demonstrations with a fierce clampdown that has left more than 35,000 people arrested and thousands of them beaten.

Hatsura-Yavorska said following her arrest last month, she was put in an ice cold cell for two days without

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 32 of 86

a mattress and was forced to wake up every two hours at night.

The authorities released her after 10 days on the condition she not leave the city pending a criminal investigation on charges of "organizing actions that violate public order."

"Who would like to remain in such a country?" she said by phone. "The authorities have divided all citizens into loyalists and enemies, and treat us accordingly."

Hatsura-Yavorska's Ukrainian husband was ordered to leave Belarus along with their 9-year-old son and was barred from returning for 10 years.

"They used my son to blackmail me. They beat me during interrogations and threatened to put me in jail and pushed me out of the country in the end," Volodymyr Yavorskyy told the AP in Kyiv. "I couldn't imagine that I would find myself in hell in the middle of Europe. Belarus is being shut closed right before our eyes, and millions of Belarusians are finding themselves hostage."

He communicates with his wife via the internet, but fears the Belarusian authorities will move to tighten controls over it.

"Public protest has continued, and so the authorities ... close everything they can reach — borders, organizations and websites," he said. "They are turning Belarus into a scorched land."

Belarus tightened restrictions at its land border in December. Those willing to cross must explain their reason, such as work, medical care or education, and can only do it once every six months.

On Sunday, a Ryanair plane traveling from Greece to Lithuania with dissident journalist Raman Pratasevich aboard was diverted to Minsk after Belarusian flight controllers told the jet's crew to land there because of a bomb threat. Authorities then arrested Pratasevich, who ran a channel on a messaging app that was used to organize demonstrations against Lukashenko.

EU leaders denounced it as akin to air piracy and responded by barring Belarusian carriers from the bloc's airspace and airports.

"The air boycott has hurt not only the regime but ricocheted against its opponents willing to leave the country," said Artyom Shraybman, a Minsk-based independent political analyst.

While Belarusian carriers have been banned from EU airspace, they are allowed to fly to other destinations.

Arriving in Tbilisi, Georgia, on a flight from Belarus, a man said "people are trying to leave and those who can go to Europe are trying to do so."

The traveler, who asked to be identified only by his first name, Anatoly, for fear of reprisal, said the Ryanair flight's diversion has deepened his concerns about his country's course, noting that "people can't guarantee their future, can't guarantee the future of their children."

Alena, another Belarusian traveler who similarly asked for her last name to be withheld, said people who can afford to leave Belarus will try to do so amid what she described as a "brutal" government response



**Volodymyr Yavorskyy and his son, Danila, speak to journalists in Kyiv, Ukraine, Friday, May 28, 2021. Yavorskyy and the youth were ordered to leave Belarus and were barred from returning for 10 years. His wife, Tatsiana Hatsura-Yavorska, was arrested in Belarus on charges of "organizing actions that violate public order," and cannot leave the country.** (AP Photo/Efrem Lukatsky)



to protests.

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the main opposition challenger in the August vote, urged the EU to ramp up sanctions and banish Belarus from Interpol and the International Civil Aviation Organization to increase pressure on Lukashenko's regime.

But she also demanded that the country's land borders be open.

"I understand the EU's decision to halt flights over Belarus as it's a matter of security for all Europeans," said Tsikhanouskaya, who fled to neighboring Lithuania under pressure from the government shortly after the election. "But we demand to open the land borders for free travel of Belarusian citizens, because we can't allow the regime to turn our country into a prison for 9 million people."

## California mass killer had arsenal of guns, ammo at his home

By JANIE HAR and STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The gunman who nursed a seething hatred of his California workplace amassed an arsenal and 25,000 rounds of ammunition at the home he tried to burn down before killing nine co-workers at a rail yard, authorities said after searching the residence.

Samuel James Cassidy's home in San Jose was a hoarder's nest of clutter and weaponry that included 12 guns, nearly two dozen cans of gasoline and a dozen or more suspected Molotov cocktails, Santa Clara County sheriff's officials said Friday.

The cache was in addition to the three 9 mm handguns that Cassidy, 57, brought Wednesday to the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority in San Jose, authorities said. He also had packed a duffle bag with 32 high-capacity magazines and fired 39 shots before killing himself as law enforcement closed in.

While witnesses have said Cassidy appeared to target certain people, the Sheriff's Office said Friday that "it is clear that this was a planned event and the suspect was prepared to use his firearms to take as many lives as he possibly could."

Cassidy also rigged his home to burn down before leaving for his workplace several miles away by putting bullets in a cooking pot on a stove that apparently detonated, igniting fire accelerants that were placed in the kitchen, sheriff's officials said.

At an afternoon news conference, city police spokesman Steve Aponte described the home as "very cluttered, lots of materials blocking passageways and entrance ways."

Guns were stashed near doorways and in crawl spaces.

They may have been placed there so Cassidy could grab them in an emergency such as law enforcement arriving, sheriff's Sgt. Joe Piazza said.

Cassidy's locker at the rail yard had "materials for bombs, detonator cords, the precursors to an explosive," Sheriff Laurie Smith said.



**This undated photo provided by the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office shows approximately 25,000 rounds of ammunition found at the residence of Samuel Cassidy, the suspect in the Wednesday May 26, 2021 shooting at a San Jose rail station.** (Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office via AP)

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 34 of 86

Questions remained about what might have set off Cassidy's lethal rampage and whether there were warning signs.

Patrick Gorman, special agent in charge of the San Francisco field division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, said he was not aware of any information about Cassidy, such as tips from the public, being shared with his division before the shooting.

U.S. customs officers who detained him in 2016 on his return from the Philippines found books about terrorism and fear as well as a memo book filled with notes about how much he hated the Valley Transportation Authority. But he was let go, and a resulting Department of Homeland Security memo on the encounter was not shared with local authorities.

Cassidy had worked for the Valley Transportation Authority for more than 20 years but he had expressed hatred and resentment of his workplace for at least a decade, according to his ex-wife. A co-worker described him as an outsider who didn't mingle with others.

Meanwhile, the president of the union that represents transit workers at the rail yard sought Friday to refute reports that Cassidy was scheduled to attend a workplace disciplinary hearing with a union representative Wednesday over racist comments.

John Courtney, president of the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 265, said in a statement that union officials "were not, repeat not" there to attend any such hearing "or to respond to any jobsite or racial-oriented complaints."

KGO-TV reported Friday that the Valley Transportation Authority had confirmed Cassidy wasn't facing a disciplinary hearing the day of the shooting and no future hearings were scheduled.

Neighbors and former lovers described Cassidy as moody, unfriendly and prone to angry outbursts at times, especially after drinking. But they expressed shock he would kill.

Cassidy's elderly father, James, told the Mercury News in San Jose that his son was bipolar. He said that was no excuse for the shooting and apologized to the victims' families.

"I don't think anything I could say could ease their grief," he said.

## WH legislative team pursues 'politics is personal' strategy

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The calls can come late in the day, over the weekend, really any time a question pops into the mind of a legislator or aide. The meetings may dispense pleasantries from Team Biden — or get testy. The topic can be one arcane fact or a deep dive into the nuances of policy.

While President Joe Biden pitches his infrastructure plan to the American public with events at an Ohio college, a Ford plant in Michigan or an aging Louisiana bridge, this is where the real work of delivering his legislative agenda takes place: in phone calls to Capitol Hill, over Zoom meetings and during the occasional cup of coffee with members of his legislative affairs team.

Biden's legislative team of 15 is charged with maneuvering and mapping out the process of actually getting his agenda passed on Capitol Hill. Led by Louisa Terrell, a Capitol Hill veteran, the team has had a vast footprint over the course of Biden's first months in office, holding over 553 phone calls or meetings with lawmakers, their chiefs of staff and staff directors focused on the American Jobs Plan alone, Biden's infrastructure package, as of May 21.

Their work on the massive coronavirus relief bill that passed in March helped Biden keep both progressives and moderates on board, with no defections and few public complaints.

They're facing much bigger hurdles now trying to usher Biden's infrastructure bill through Congress, with lots of other difficult issues stacked up in the queue behind it. Just recently, the legislative team, which tries to keep a low profile, got caught in the negotiating crossfire as Republicans accused White House aides of contradicting Biden's commitment in private meetings to back a much smaller counteroffer.

"It went poorly," Republican Sen. Roger Wicker of Mississippi said of one meeting with Biden's legislative team, "because it didn't have any relation to the meeting we had with the chief executive of the land."

The outcome seemed to further dampen prospects for a bipartisan agreement on the bill. And the outlook

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 35 of 86

didn't seem to improve heading into the holiday weekend despite a flurry of offers and counteroffers.

Biden's decades of experience as a senator and vice president make him well suited to steer negotiations with Capitol Hill, but also leave him keenly aware of the limitations that come with narrow Democratic majorities in the House and Senate.

Overall, though, the attentiveness of his legislative team has won plaudits from lawmakers.

Virginia Democratic Sen. Mark Warner, who calls himself a "fairly tough taskmaster" on legislative discussions, says he's had numerous late-night and weekend calls with the team about various bills.

"I'm a fairly intense member, so I want more than talking points," he said.

Warner took note of his long-standing relationships with a number of members of the team — he said he tried to hire Terrell once and used to play basketball with Biden aide Steve Ricchetti.

Terrell worked as Biden's deputy chief of staff in the Senate and as a special assistant to President Barack Obama for legislative affairs, and two of her deputies — Reema Dodin and Shuwanza Goff — had long careers with Democratic leaders on Capitol Hill.

In an interview, Terrell said those relationships have helped finesse the sometimes difficult task of bringing a skeptical lawmaker along, because when a member of the team has to "give extra love and attention" to a lawmaker, "it's not coming out of left field."

"It's really coming from a place of someone who knows them or has been around and has a reputation of credibility and authenticity," she said.

The active engagement with lawmakers comes from an ethos set by the president himself, who spent nearly four decades in the Senate. Terrell said the president has advised the team to follow his own personal philosophy that "politics is personal" and "you have to make investments in building a real relationship — you don't just call people when you need them."

Biden, she said, has a hand in all of their legislative strategy and in thinking about potential "leverage points" with legislators.

"There is no one who knows Congress better than the president," she said.

Biden is known to take an active role in the wrangling, taking the temperature of legislators on issues and trying to help smooth negotiations. He recently invited two key moderate Democrats, Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, to the White House for individual meetings on his infrastructure package.

He maintains a particularly close relationship with Manchin, who remains perhaps the most significant swing vote in the Senate. Manchin has said that he's spoken with Biden over the phone more than half a



**FILE - In this April 6, 2021, file photo traffic moves over the George Washington Bridge as seen from Fort Lee, N.J. While President Joe Biden pitches his infrastructure plan to the American public, the real work of delivering his legislative agenda takes place behind the scenes. Biden's 15-person legislative is charged with maneuvering and mapping out the process of actually getting his agenda passed on Capitol Hill.** (AP Photo/Seth Wenig, File)

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 36 of 86

dozen times since he became president, and that the two exchange calls "as often as is needed." Beyond that, the senator's wife, Gayle Manchin, received an appointment from Biden to co-chair the Appalachian Regional Commission, an economic development partnership involving the federal government and 13 states.

Terrell said the president's personal relationships with lawmakers, coupled with his knowledge of past legislative fights, offer the team an "astounding advantage" as they seek out agreement on thorny issues.

"He remembers and knows well about all the different kinds of iterations, and when there were floor fights and when there were breakthroughs and what caused them, and what really motivates a lot of these members," she said.

In addition to Terrell and the legislative affairs team out of the White House, Biden has deputized a number of his Cabinet secretaries — dubbed his Jobs Cabinet — to help him sell his infrastructure plan. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and others are sometimes brought in to work with a particular legislator or address a specific concern.

Many of Biden's top aides are heavily involved in selling his plans to lawmakers. One White House aide said that economic adviser Brian Deese talks with lawmakers so frequently that he might as well have his own office in the Capitol.

That broad team has its advantages and disadvantages. While Warner said he can get his calls and questions answered quickly, he added that even after months of working with the White House, "I'm not 100% sure who are the decisionmakers" in the administration.

"So that probably further empowers the legislative team because it's not like you can go around them," he suggested.

While Terrell's team has the benefit of years of experience on Capitol Hill, they've faced one major handicap: the COVID-19 pandemic that barred in-person meetings and social gatherings, where traditionally the most important legislative work gets done.

Phil Schiliro, who served as Obama's director of legislative affairs, remembers holding social events every week for lawmakers, including a candlelit dinner at the White House for committee chairs, ranking members and their spouses and a White House picnic where he sat in a dunk tank while members threw balls to sink him.

"If it helped get votes, I was happy to do it," he said.

"So much of the job is interacting with members of Congress and staff, face to face, exchanging information. And not being able to do that is a little bit like working your way through a maze with a blindfold on, and mittens," he said.

Terrell remembers her work in the Obama White House bringing her up to Capitol Hill "every day from 10 to 3," where "you were able to really have all these one-on-one and spontaneous and authentic conversations."

Now, "it's a big deal to not have the Senate Chef be open," she said, referencing a cafe in the basement of the Hart Senate Office Building.

"That's the place where you could grab a Senate staff director or chief, or a member, and say, 'Hey, let's grab a cup of coffee for two seconds. I know you're in between meetings. I want to know what you're thinking about X.' Or, 'What can we do to help you on Y?'" she recounted.

Now, she said, the interactions with staff and members "are very deliberate" and largely done over the phone and Zoom, which "are much harder to do."

Finally, though, as pandemic-era public health restrictions ease, some of that face-to-face activity is returning. Biden recently was able to flex one of the traditional trappings of the presidency when he invited six lawmakers to stand around him as he signed a bill tackling hate crimes against Asian Americans.

They huddled close, masks off and smiles on, as Biden grinned and handed each one a signing pen — the presidential symbol of a job well done.

## **GOP blocks Capitol riot probe, displaying loyalty to Trump**

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Republicans blocked creation of a bipartisan panel to investigate the deadly Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol, displaying continuing party loyalty to former President Donald Trump and firm determination to shift the political focus away from the violent insurrection by his GOP supporters.

The Senate vote on Friday was 54-35 — six short of the 60 needed — to take up a House-passed bill that would have formed an independent 10-member commission evenly split between the two parties. It came a day after emotional appeals for the commission from police who fought the mob, the family of an officer who died and lawmakers in both parties who fled Capitol chambers in the worst attack on the building in two centuries.

The Republicans were mostly but not totally united: Six voted with Democrats to move forward. Eleven senators — nine Republicans and two Democrats — missed the vote, an unusually high number of absentees for one of the highest-profile votes of the year. At least one of the missing Republicans would have voted in favor of considering the commission, according to his office.

The GOP opposition means that questions about who should bear responsibility for the attack could continue to be filtered through a partisan lens — in congressional committees — rather than addressed by an outside, independent panel modeled after the commission that investigated the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks.

“The investigations will happen with or without Republicans,” declared Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, one of the Republicans who voted to move forward. “To ensure the investigations are fair, impartial and focused on the facts, Republicans need to be involved.”

The vote was in part a GOP attempt to placate Trump, or avoid his reprisals, as he has kept a firm hold on the party since his defeat by Democrat Joe Biden. The former president told his supporters to “fight like hell” to overturn his defeat before the siege and continues to falsely say he won the election — claims shouted by his supporters as they stormed the building. Trump called the commission legislation a “Democrat trap.”

Friday’s vote — the first successful use of a Senate filibuster in the Biden presidency — was emblematic of the profound mistrust between the two parties since the siege, especially among Republicans, with some in the party downplaying the violence and defending the rioters.

The vote also is likely to galvanize Democratic pressure to do away with the filibuster, a time-honored procedure typically used to kill major legislation. It requires 60 votes to move ahead, rather than a simple majority in the 100-member Senate. With the Senate evenly split 50-50, Democrats needed support from 10 Republicans to move to the commission bill.

Speaking to his Republican colleagues, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said after the vote



**Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., walks to the chamber for final votes before the Memorial Day recess, at the Capitol in Washington, Friday, May 28, 2021. Senate Republicans successfully blocked the creation of a commission to study the Jan. 6 insurrection by rioters loyal to former President Donald Trump.** (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 38 of 86

they were "trying to sweep the horrors of that day under the rug" out of "fear or fealty" to Trump. He left open the possibility of another vote in the future on establishing a bipartisan commission, declaring, "The events of Jan. 6 will be investigated."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi echoed that commitment, saying Democrats "will find the truth."

Though the bill to form the commission passed the House earlier this month with the support of almost three dozen Republicans, most GOP senators said they believed the bipartisan panel would eventually be used against them politically. While initially saying he was open to the idea, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell turned firmly against it in recent days, arguing that the panel's investigation would be partisan despite the even split among party members.

McConnell, who once said Trump was responsible for provoking the mob attack on the Capitol, said dismissively of Democrats, "They'd like to continue to litigate the former president, into the future."

Still, six in McConnell's caucus defied him, arguing that an independent look was needed, and Pennsylvania's Pat Toomey would have brought the total to seven but for a family commitment, his office said. In addition to Cassidy, the Republicans who voted to move forward were Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Susan Collins of Maine, Ben Sasse of Nebraska, Rob Portman of Ohio and Mitt Romney of Utah.

Murkowski said Thursday evening that she needed to know more about what happened before and on the day of the attack, and why.

"Truth is hard stuff, but we've got a responsibility to it," she said. "We just can't pretend that nothing bad happened, or that people just got too excitable. Something bad happened. And it's important to lay that out."

Some Republican colleagues strongly disagree, defending the rioters who supported Trump and his false insistence that the election was stolen from him. A House Republican said this month that one video of the insurrection looked like "a normal tourist visit."

In reality, the attack was the worst on the Capitol in 200 years. The protesters interrupted the certification of Biden's win over Trump, constructed a mock gallows in front of the Capitol and called for the hanging of Vice President Mike Pence, who was overseeing the proceedings inside. Lawmakers hid on the floor of the House balcony as the rioters tried to break in, and senators evacuated their chamber mere minutes before it was ransacked.

Four of the protesters died that day, including a woman who was shot and killed by police as she tried to break into the House chamber. Dozens of police officers were injured, and two took their own lives in the days afterward.

Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick collapsed and died after engaging with the rioters, and video showed two men spraying Sicknick and another officer with a chemical. The Washington medical examiner said he suffered a stroke and died from natural causes.

Senate Democrats angrily questioned how the Republicans could vote against an independent investigation.

"An insurrection without consequences — without even a proper investigation — is a dress rehearsal for another insurrection," said Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin, the No. 2 Democrat in Congress. "When the Capitol police, who protect us with their lives, ask for this commission, we are ingrates to refuse."

The Republicans' political arguments over the violent siege — which is still raw for many in the Capitol, almost five months later — have frustrated not only the Democrats and some of their Republican colleagues but also those who fought off the rioters. Sicknick's mother, girlfriend and two police officers who battled the rioters alongside him went office to office and asked Republicans to support the commission.

Michael Fanone, a Metropolitan Police Department officer who responded to the attack, joined Sicknick's family on Capitol Hill Thursday. In between meetings with Republican senators, he said a commission is "necessary for us to heal as a nation from the trauma that we all experienced that day." Fanone has described being dragged down the Capitol steps by rioters who shocked him with a stun gun and beat him.

Sicknick's mother, Gladys Sicknick, suggested those who opposed the panel visit her son's grave.

In interview on CNN after the vote, she asked of the Republicans: "What kind of country do they want?"

## Virus fails to deter hundreds of climbers on Mount Everest

By BINAJ GURUBACHARYA Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — A year after Mount Everest was closed to climbers as the pandemic swept across the globe, hundreds are making the final push to the summit with only a few more days left in the season, saying they are undeterred by a coronavirus outbreak in base camp.

Three expedition teams to Everest canceled their climb this month following reports of people getting sick. But the remaining 41 teams decided to continue with hundreds of climbers and their guides scaling the 8,849-meter (29,032-foot) top in the season that ends in May, before bad weather sets in.

"Even though the coronavirus has reached the Everest base camp, it has not made any huge effect like what is being believed outside of the mountain," said Mingma Sherpa of Seven Summit Treks, the biggest expedition operator on Everest. "No one has really fallen seriously sick because of COVID or died like the rumors that have been spreading."

With 122 clients from 10 teams on Everest, the company led the biggest group but there were no serious illnesses among them, he said.

Nepalese officials have downplayed reports of coronavirus cases on Mount Everest, apparently out of concern of creating chaos and confusion in the base camp. After a gap year of no income from climbers, Nepal has been eager to cash in on this year's season.

"Many people made it to the base camp and it is possible that the people who went there from here could have been infected," Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli said. "But that does not mean that it (coronavirus) has reached the entire mountain, maybe a part of the base camp or the area below that."

In April, a Norwegian climber became the first to test positive at the Everest base camp. He was flown by helicopter to Kathmandu, where he was treated and later returned home.

Prominent guide Lukas Furtenbach of Austria decided to halt his expedition this month and pull out his clients because of an outbreak among team members.

After returning from the mountain, Furtenbach estimated more than 100 climbers and support staff have been infected. He said in an interview last week that it was obvious there were many cases at the base camp because he could see people were sick and could hear them coughing in their tents.

"I think with all the confirmed cases we know now — confirmed from (rescue) pilots, from insurance, from doctors, from expedition leaders — I have the positive tests so we can prove this," Furtenbach told The Associated Press.

China last week canceled climbing from its side of Everest due to fears the virus could spread from Nepal. The climbing season was accompanied by a devastating surge in coronavirus cases in Nepal, with record



**FILE-** In this Nov. 12, 2015 file photo, Mount Everest is seen from the way to Kalapatthar in Nepal. A year after Mount Everest was closed to climbers as the pandemic swept across the globe, hundreds are making the final push to the summit with only a few more days left in the season, saying they are undeterred by a coronavirus outbreak in base camp. (AP Photo/Tashi Sherpa, File)

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 40 of 86

numbers of daily infections and deaths. On Friday, Nepal reported 6,951 new confirmed cases and 96 deaths, bringing the nation's totals since the pandemic began to more than 549,111 infections and 7,047 deaths.

Another expedition, by the Telluride, Colorado-based company Mountain Trip, also announced it was pulling out of Everest.

"While it's a difficult decision to make when considering all of the work, years of preparation, sacrifice and resources that have went into the expedition, it's the only sensible outcome from a risk management standpoint," a statement by the company said.

Six Sherpa guides working for the company have been evacuated to Kathmandu with COVID-19 symptoms, it said.

A total of 408 foreign climbers were issued permits to climb Everest this season, aided by several hundred Sherpas and support staff who have been stationed at base camp since April.

Since Everest was first conquered on May 29, 1953, thousands of people have scaled the peak and many Nepalese Sherpas have done it multiple times. Veteran Sherpa guide Kami Rita scaled the summit a record 25th time this month.

## Biden's \$6T budget: Social spending, taxes on business

By ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is proposing a \$6 trillion budget for next year that's piled high with new safety net programs for the poor and middle class, but his generosity depends on taxing corporations and the wealthy to keep the nation's spiking debt from spiraling totally out of control.

Biden inherited record pandemic-stoked spending and won a major victory on COVID-19 relief earlier this year. Friday's rollout adds his recently announced infrastructure and social spending initiatives and fleshes out his earlier plans to sharply increase spending for annual Cabinet budgets.

This year's projected deficit would set a new record of \$3.7 trillion that would drop to \$1.8 trillion next year — still almost double pre-pandemic levels. The national debt will soon breach \$30 trillion after more than \$5 trillion in already approved COVID-19 relief. As a result, the government must borrow roughly 50 cents of every dollar it spends this year and next.

With the deficit largely unchecked, Biden would use proposed tax hikes on businesses and high-earning people to power huge new social programs like universal prekindergarten, large subsidies for child care and guaranteed paid leave.

"The best way to grow our economy is not from the top down, but from the bottom up and the middle out," Biden said in his budget message. "Our prosperity comes from the people who get up every day, work hard, raise their family, pay their taxes, serve their Nation, and volunteer in their communities."

The budget incorporates the administration's eight-year, \$2.3 trillion infrastructure proposal and its \$1.8 trillion American Families Plan and adds details on his \$1.5 trillion request for annual operating expenditures



**President Joe Biden delivers remarks on the economy at the Cuyahoga Community College Metropolitan Campus, Thursday, May 27, 2021, in Cleveland.** (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 41 of 86

for the Pentagon and domestic agencies.

Acting White House budget chief Shalanda Young said the Biden plan "does exactly what the president told the country he would do. Grow the economy, create jobs and do so responsibly by requiring the wealthiest Americans and big corporations to pay their fair share."

Biden's budget is sure to give Republicans fresh ammunition for their criticisms of the new Democratic administration as bent on a "tax and spend" agenda that would damage the economy and impose a crushing debt burden on younger Americans. Republicans also say he's shorting the military.

"It is insanely expensive. It dramatically increases nondefense spending and taxes" and would weaken the Pentagon, said South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, top Republican on the Budget Committee and a generally pragmatic GOP voice on spending bills. "There will be serious discussions about government funding. But the Biden budget isn't serious and it won't be a part of those discussions."

Veteran GOP Sen. Richard Shelby, whose help is needed to pass annual agency budget bills, blasted Biden's plan as "a blueprint for the higher taxes, excessive spending" that also "shortchanges our national security."

Biden is a veteran of a long-gone Washington that fought bitterly in the 1980s and 1990s to wrestle the deficit under control. But there hasn't been any real effort to stem the flow of red ink since a tea party-driven moment in 2011 that produced unpopular automatic spending cuts that were largely reversed over the ensuing decade.

Huge deficits have yet to drive up interest rates as many fiscal hawks have feared, however, and genuine anti-deficit sentiment is difficult to find in either political party.

The unusual timing of the budget rollout — the Friday afternoon before Memorial Day weekend — indicates that the White House isn't eager to trumpet the bad deficit news.

Under Biden's plan, the debt held by the public would quickly match the size of the economy and soon eclipse record levels of debt relative to gross domestic product that have stood since World War II. That's despite more than \$3 trillion in proposed tax increases over the decade, including an increase in the corporate tax rate from 21% to 28%, increased capital gains rates on top earners and returning the top personal income tax bracket to 39.6%.

Like all presidential budgets, Biden's plan is simply a proposal. It's up to Congress to implement it through tax and spending legislation and annual agency budget bills. With Democrats in control of Capitol Hill, albeit barely, the president has the ability to implement many of his tax and spending plans, though his hopes for awarding greater increases to domestic agencies than to the Pentagon are sure to hit a GOP roadblock.

Some Democrats are already balking at Biden's full menu of tax increases, imperiling his ability to pay for his ambitious social spending. And his plan to increase spending on domestic agencies by 16% while limiting defense to a 1.7% rise is politically impossible in the 50-50 Senate.

A top Senate ally, Appropriations Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., called Thursday for bipartisan talks to start the annual appropriations bills. There's incentive for both GOP defense hawks and liberal Democrats like Leahy to bargain since the alternative is a long-term freeze at current spending levels.

The Biden plan comes as the White House is seeking an agreement with Senate Republicans over infrastructure spending. But winning gains that would even begin to meet his social spending goals would require him to rely solely on support from his narrow Democratic majorities in Congress.

Biden's spending proposals include numerous new programs to strengthen the "caring economy" with large programs aimed at child and elder care: \$437 billion over 10 years to provide free preschool to all 3- and 4-year-olds and two years of free community college to all Americans. Also, \$225 billion would subsidize child care to allow many to pay a maximum of 7% of their income for all children under age 5.

Another \$225 billion over the next decade would create a national family and medical leave program, while \$200 billion would make recently enacted subsidy increases under the Obama health care law permanent.

Tax hikes, Biden claims, would pay for his initiatives over the next 15 years, including \$2 trillion from corporations from curbing overseas tax preferences and raising rates to 28%. Unrealized capital gains would be taxed at death, a problem for some Democrats, and the Biden plan would significantly stiffen IRS enforcement, which the budget claims would raise \$700 billion over a decade otherwise lost to cheat-

ing and dodging.

Rep. Richard Neal, the top Democratic House tax writer, praised Biden's new spending and tax cuts but was silent on his tax hikes, saying he'll "consider the administration's proposals carefully."

Biden's budget calls for a roughly 10% bump in foreign affairs funding from 2021, with top increases for climate change, global health and humanitarian aid. Biden's \$58.5 billion request would support the administration's return to international groups, like the World Health Organization and others, from which former President Donald Trump had withdrawn.

Last year's \$3.1 trillion budget deficit under Trump more than doubled the previous record, as the coronavirus pandemic shrank revenues and sent spending soaring.

Council of Economic Advisers Chair Cecelia Rouse told reporters Friday that the economy is likely to outperform the administration's official prediction, forged in February, of 5.2% economic growth this year.

## DA won't seek new death sentence against Scott Peterson

By DON THOMPSON Associated Press  
SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — A California district attorney said in a court filing Friday that she won't seek a new death sentence against Scott Peterson, convicted in 2005 of murdering his pregnant wife.

The Stanislaus County district attorney's office said it would drop efforts to restore the penalty thrown out last year by the state Supreme Court. The DA said the decision was made in consultation with Laci Peterson's family.

The California justices ruled the death sentence couldn't stand because potential jurors were excluded after saying they disagreed with the death penalty.

The family has "no doubt" Peterson killed his wife and unborn son Conner and deserves the death penalty but doesn't want to pursue that punishment because "this process is simply too painful to endure once again," District Attorney Birgit Fladager said her filing in San Mateo Superior Court.

Peterson, now 48, was convicted in the San Mateo court after his trial was moved from Stanislaus County due to the massive pre-trial publicity that followed the Christmas Eve 2002 disappearance of 27-year-old Laci, who was eight months pregnant.

Investigators say Peterson took the bodies from their Modesto home and dumped them from his fishing boat into San Francisco Bay, where they surfaced months later.

Peterson maintains his innocence and a judge is considering whether to grant a new trial because a juror failed to disclose that she had sought a restraining order in 2000 against her boyfriend's ex-girlfriend. She



**FILE - In this March 17, 2005 file photo, Scott Peterson is escorted by two San Mateo County Sheriff deputies to a waiting van in Redwood City, Calif. A California district attorney won't seek a new death sentence against Scott Peterson, convicted in 2005 of murdering his pregnant wife Laci. In a filing Friday, May 28, 2021, the Stanislaus County district attorney's office said it would drop efforts to restore the penalty thrown out last year by the state Supreme Court.** (Justin Sullivan via AP, Pool, File)

said in seeking the order that she feared for her unborn child. The judge must decide if that amounted to juror misconduct, and if so, whether it was so prejudicial that a new trial is warranted.

If no new trial is granted, he will be sentenced to life imprisonment.

One of Peterson's attorneys said the announcement is not a precursor to a plea deal and that his client will seek a new trial if a judge decides his first one was tainted by juror misconduct.

Superior Court Judge Anne-Christine Massullo said she hopes to make a decision this year whether Peterson merits a new trial.

It's not clear if prosecutors could again seek the death penalty if there is a new trial and he was again convicted, said defense attorney Pat Harris, who is handling the death sentence portion of the case.

A different attorney, Andras Farkas, is representing Peterson on the issue of whether he gets a new trial. Farkas did not respond to an email requesting comment.

"It's not clear to me that they're saying no matter what, we're taking the death penalty off the table ... or they're saying if we go back to trial we're reserving the right to put the death penalty back up again," Harris said. "It sounds like they're kind of holding back that if the judge orders a new trial, they could put the death penalty back on the table."

That could be cleared up at what was supposed to be procedural hearing on Tuesday, he said.

The district attorney's office did not comment.

Harris noted that prosecutors had earlier said the family supported again seeking the death penalty, and contended that their new motion is a gambit to avoid a new airing of the case.

"The truth of the matter is they have determined ... that the handwriting is on the wall and if we go back to trial we're going to prove Scott's innocence," he said.

He said he can prove that there was a nearby burglary the day Peterson disappeared, aiding the defense's contention that someone else killed her when she stumbled upon the crime.

If prosecutors were to proceed with a new penalty phase, they would essentially have to retry the entire case before a new jury — so that new evidence would come out even if jurors could not acquit him and could only recommend a sentence of death or life in prison, he said.

"The truth will have come out. Bottom line is people will know what happened" even if he doesn't receive a new trial on his guilt or innocence, Harris said.

Scott Peterson's family and supporters made a similar argument in a Facebook post, that Harris' request last week for evidence in the hands of prosecutors triggered their decision.

"We are grateful that Stanislaus County is no longer seeking to put Scott to death, but it's #Time4aNew-Trial," the post said.

## Sheriff: Rail yard shooter stockpiled guns, ammo at his home

By JANIE HAR and STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The gunman who killed nine of his co-workers at a California rail yard had stockpiled weapons and 25,000 rounds of ammunition at his house before setting it on fire to coincide with the bloodshed at the workplace he seethed about for years, authorities said Friday.

Investigators found 12 guns, multiple cans of gasoline and suspected Molotov cocktails at Samuel James Cassidy's house in San Jose, the Santa Clara County sheriff's office said in a news release.

He also rigged an unusual time-delay method to ensure the house caught fire while he was out, putting "ammunition in a cooking pot on a stove" in his home, Deputy Russell Davis told The Associated Press. The liquid in the pot — investigators don't yet know what was inside — reached a boiling point, igniting an accelerant and potentially the gunpowder in the bullets nearby.

The cache at the home the 57-year-old torched was on top of the three 9 mm handguns he brought Wednesday to the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority in San Jose, authorities said. He also had 32 high-capacity magazines and fired 39 shots.

The handguns found at the site were legally registered to Cassidy, Davis said, without elaborating on how he obtained them. Davis did not specify what type of guns officers found at his home, nor if they

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 44 of 86

were legally owned.

Authorities described a home filled with clutter, with items piled up to the point where it appeared Cassidy might be a hoarder, and weapons stored near the home's doorways and in other spots.

Sgt. Joe Piazza told reporters the variety of spots where Cassidy stashed the guns might be so he could "access them in a time of emergency," such as if law enforcement came to his house.

Cassidy killed himself as sheriff's deputies rushed into the rail yard complex in the heart of Silicon Valley, where he fatally shot nine men ranging in age from 29 to 63. He had worked there for more than 20 years.

What prompted the bloodshed remains under investigation, officials said.

While witnesses and Santa Clara County Sheriff Laurie Smith have said Cassidy appeared to target certain people, the sheriff's office said Friday that "it is clear that this was a planned event and the suspect was prepared to use his firearms to take as many lives as he possibly could."

Cassidy's elderly father, James, told the Mercury News in San Jose that his son was bipolar. He said that was no excuse for the shooting and apologized to the victims' families.

"I don't think anything I could say could ease their grief. I'm really, really very sorry about that."

Neighbors and former lovers described him as moody, unfriendly and prone to angry outbursts at times. But they expressed shock he would kill.

Cassidy's ex-wife, Cecilia Nelms, said he had talked about killing people at work more than a decade ago, describing him as resentful and angry over what he perceived as unfair assignments.

U.S. customs officers even caught him in 2016 with books about terrorism and fear as well as a memo book filled with notes about how much he hated the Valley Transportation Authority. But he was let go, and a resulting Department of Homeland Security memo on the encounter was not shared with local authorities.

It's not clear why customs officers detained Cassidy on his return from the Philippines. The contents of the memo, first reported by the Wall Street Journal, were described to The Associated Press by a Biden administration official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

The memo notes that Cassidy was asked whether he had issues with people at work, and he said no. It refers to a "minor criminal history," citing a 1983 arrest in San Jose and charges of "misdemeanor obstruction/resisting a peace officer."

San Jose police said they sought an FBI history on Cassidy and found no record of federal arrests or convictions.

Mayor Sam Liccardo, a former prosecutor, said that while he has not seen the Homeland Security memo, it's not a crime to hate your job.

"The question is, how specific was that information?" he said. "Particularly, were there statements made suggesting a desire to commit violence against individuals?"

The president of the union that represents transit workers at the rail yard sought Friday to refute a report that Cassidy was scheduled to attend a workplace disciplinary hearing with a union representative Wednesday over racist comments.

John Courtney, president of the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 265, said in a statement that he was at the facility "simply to check on working conditions and the continual safety of the dedicated men and women who work there."

The attack comes amid an uptick in mass shootings following coronavirus shutdowns in much of the country last year. Since 2006, there have been at least 14 workplace massacres in the United States that killed at least four people and stemmed from employment grievances, according to a database on mass killings maintained by the AP, USA Today and Northeastern University.

Patrick Gorman, special agent in charge of the San Francisco field division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, said he was not aware of any information about Cassidy, such as tips from the public, being shared with his division before the shooting. He said the entire San Jose field office responded to the crime scenes, along with other regional special agents.

Kirk Bertolet, 64, was just starting his shift when shots rang out, and he saw some of his co-workers take their last breaths.

Bertolet, a signal maintenance worker who worked in a separate unit from Cassidy, said he is convinced Cassidy targeted his victims because he didn't hurt some people he encountered.

"He was pissed off at certain people. He was angry, and he took his vengeance out on very specific people. He shot people. He let others live," he said.

Video footage showed Cassidy calmly walking from one building to another with a duffel bag filled with guns and ammunition to complete the slaughter, authorities said.

Bertolet said Cassidy worked regularly with the victims, but he always seemed to be an outsider.

"He was never in the group. He was never accepted by anybody there. He was always that guy that was never partaking in anything that the people were doing," Bertolet said.

## Organizers: Dispute over survivors scrapped Tulsa event

By SEAN MURPHY The Associated Press

Organizers who called off a headline commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Tulsa Race Massacre said Friday the event was canceled after an agreement couldn't be reached over monetary payments to three survivors of the deadly attack by a white mob, highlighting broader debates over reparations for racial injustice.

Attorney Damarion Solomon-Simmons told The Associated Press that he submitted a list of requests to the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission in order to have the survivors attend the "Remember & Rise" event Monday at ONEOK Field in Tulsa. The commission had enlisted Grammy-award-winning singer and songwriter John Legend to headline the event, and voting rights activist Stacey Abrams was to deliver the keynote address.

"After months of zero communication and under immense pressure that John Legend and Stacey Abrams may no longer participate if the survivors were not centered, a meeting was scheduled for Saturday," Solomon-Simmons said in a text message to the AP. "Immediately following that call, our legal team submitted a list of seven requests to ensure the survivors' participation with the commission's scheduled events."

"The agreement was to have answers on each of the requests by (Tuesday). That didn't happen."

Solomon-Simmons is representing the survivors and their descendants in a lawsuit against the city of Tulsa and other defendants seeking reparations for the destruction of the city's once thriving Black district.

State Sen. Kevin Matthews, the chairman of the commission, said after meeting with Solomon-Simmons and other representatives of the survivors, the commission agreed to provide \$100,000 to each of the three survivors, along with \$2 million in seed money for a reparations fund.

"We raised the money and we were excited the survivors were going to accept these gifts," Matthews



**Tulsa race massacre survivors Hughes Van Ellis Sr., left, Lessie Benningfield Randle, center, and Viola Fletcher, right, wave and high-five supporters from a horse drawn carriage before a march Friday, May 28, 2021, in Tulsa, Okla.** (AP Photo/Sue Ogrocki)

# Tulsa Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 46 of 86

said Friday. "Unfortunately, on Sunday they reached out and increased the amount of the \$100,000-per-survivor gifts to \$1 million, and instead of \$2 million, they asked for \$50 million — \$50 million — in seed money. We could not respond to those demands."

"To be clear, I absolutely want the survivors, the descendants and others that were affected to be financially and emotionally supported. However, this is not the way."

Solomon said the \$50 million figure was never a non-negotiable demand.

Messages left with representatives for Legend and Abrams seeking comment were not returned.

Reparations for Black Americans whose ancestors were enslaved and for other racial discrimination has been debated in the U.S. since slavery ended in 1865. Now they are being discussed by colleges and universities with ties to slavery and by local government s looking to make cash payments to Black residents amid the ongoing national reckoning over the killing of George Floyd.

The Tulsa Race Massacre — which left up to 300 people dead and burned the city's prosperous Black neighborhood known as Greenwood to the ground — is one of the starkest examples of Black wealth being decimated, leaving parents nothing to pass down and forcing generations to start from scratch.

Over the last five years, Matthews says the Centennial Commission has raised more than \$30 million, including \$20 million for the construction of the Greenwood Rising museum. Other funds have been raised for art projects, commemoration activities and renovations to the Greenwood Cultural Center.

But some of Tulsa's Black residents question whether the money for the construction of the Greenwood Rising museum in an increasingly gentrified part of the city could have been better spent helping Black descendants of the massacre or residents of the city's predominantly Black north side several miles away from Greenwood.

Disagreements among Black leaders in Tulsa over the handling of commemoration events and millions of dollars in donations have led to two disparate groups planning separate slates of events marking the massacre's 100-year anniversary. In addition to the Centennial Commission, the Black Wall Street Legacy Festival has scheduled a series of events over the next several days, and they will continue as planned. Solomon-Simmons is associated with the Legacy Festival, along with City Councilwoman Vanessa Hall-Harper and Tiffany Crutcher, the twin sister of Terence Crutcher, an unarmed Black man who was shot and killed by a Tulsa police officer in 2016.

President Joe Biden is scheduled to be in Tulsa on Tuesday to commemorate the anniversary.

But the disagreement between the two Tulsa groups has grown especially testy in recent months. In April, Solomon-Simmons sent a cease-and-desist letter to Armstrong, the commission's project director, over the use of one of the survivor's name and likeness in promoting the Greenwood Rising project, a 7,000-square-foot museum being constructed in Greenwood to tell the story of the massacre.

The commission also booted Oklahoma's Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt from the panel after he signed a bill that prohibits the teaching of certain race concepts in public school, and U.S. Sen. James Lankford also stepped down from the commission in recent weeks. Lankford's office cited "a drift from the original goals of the commission to a more partisan political agenda" as the reason for his decision.

"It is just a mess," said former state Sen. Judy Eason-McIntyre, a member of the commission who says she believes the overarching dispute is both about a struggle for power and control over some of the millions of dollars that have flowed into the community from private foundations. "I've seen stink before ... and it's all about money."

Many Black Tulsans say they're upset the two separate factions couldn't work out their differences and reach an agreement that benefitted the city, particularly its Black residents.

"I'm just disappointed," said Marq Lewis, a Black activist in Tulsa who said he's not associated with either group. "I'm disappointed that adults could not come to the table and not air out our dirty laundry nationally."

"We all have disagreements ... but in some way we have to look at the bigger picture."

## Biden marks vaccine progress, thanks troops ahead of holiday

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (AP) — President Joe Biden started the Memorial Day weekend by visiting a rock climbing gym in northern Virginia as the state lifted all COVID-19 distancing and capacity restrictions at private businesses and much of the nation pushes toward a greater sense of normalcy.

Biden sought to use the stop on Friday at Sportrock Climbing Centers — an 18,000-square-foot (1,670-square-meter) space of climbing and bouldering walls, a gym, and yoga studios — to celebrate progress made as the country looks to turn the corner on the coronavirus pandemic, which has killed more than 593,000 Americans and 3.5 million people worldwide.

The president, who later paid tribute to the armed forces with an address at an Air Force base elsewhere in Virginia, used the day to thank Americans who have already received vaccinations — about 51% of Americans are now fully vaccinated — and again urged Americans who haven't to get their shot.

"All over the country we've gone from pain and stagnation of a long dark winter to an economy on the move," Biden said. He added, "Americans of every party, race, creed have come together and rolled up their sleeves — literally — and done their part."

This year, the long holiday weekend that marks the unofficial start to summer comes at a moment when the federal government and state governments are relaxing masking and social distancing rules now that a majority of Americans are vaccinated and more people are looking to return to their pre-pandemic routines.

Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam lifted coronavirus-related restrictions on capacity and social distancing in the state on Friday. He had already lifted Virginia's indoor mask mandate for fully vaccinated people on May 15 for most indoor settings, though businesses can still require masks if they want to.

Biden appeared enthralled by the Sportrock climbers, who seemed unfazed as the president watched them climb. Asked by a reporter if he'd like to give it a go, Biden responded that he would "like to" but suggested he start with one of the easier walls.

"I'm not gonna try the angle wall. I'd try that wall," Biden said with a grin, pointing to a flatter climbing wall.

The visit came as Biden is pressing Republican lawmakers to back a massive infrastructure bill to rebuild roadways and bridges, replace millions of lead waterpipes and more — something that the White House is pitching as a salve for an economy as the U.S. turns the corner on the worst public health crisis in more than a century.

"The American people are more ready to come together, I believe, than the Congress and the elected people," Biden said.

Biden later traveled to Joint Base Langley Eustis, in the state's Tidewater region, to thank U.S. troops for their service. After beginning with an emotional remembrance of his late son Beau, a veteran, Biden acknowledged the unheralded sacrifices made by the service members and their families.



**President Joe Biden speaks at Sportrock Climbing Centers, Friday, May 28, 2021, in Alexandria, Va.** (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

"You are the very best of what America has to offer," Biden said.

Biden also underscored his recent decision to pull troops out of Afghanistan later this year, expressing gratitude to service members who took multiple tours of duty in America's longest war.

"My message for you is simple: Thank you," the president said, adding that they were "1% of the population defending 99% of the rest of us. You're incredible."

The president was then scheduled to travel to his home in Wilmington, Delaware, where he is expected to spend most of the holiday weekend. He was slated to participate in a Memorial Day event there on Sunday before returning to Washington and visiting Arlington National Cemetery on Monday.

## Travel numbers climb as Americans hit the road for holiday

By DAVID KOENIG Associated Press  
Americans hit the road in near-record numbers at the start of the Memorial Day weekend, as their eagerness to break free from coronavirus confinement overcame higher prices for flights, gasoline and hotels.

More than 1.8 million people went through U.S. airports Thursday, and the daily number was widely expected to cross 2 million at least once over the long holiday weekend, which would be the highest mark since early March 2020.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas warned people to expect long lines at airports and appealed for travelers to be patient.

The rise in travel appears to be fueled by an increase in COVID-19 vaccinations as well as an improving economy. The U.S. Commerce Department said consumer spending increased in April, although not as much as in March, showing how consumers are driving a recovery from last year's pandemic recession.

At Miami International Airport, officials expected crowds equal to pre-pandemic levels. It was a similar story in Orlando, where airport traffic has reached 90% of 2019 levels as tourists flocked to theme parks that have recently loosened restrictions.

Along the Florida coasts and around Orlando, many hotels were booked solid through the weekend.

"We are going into off-season, and it has not slowed down," said Cathy Balestriere, general manager of Crane's Beach House, a boutique hotel in Delray Beach, Florida.

Vacation destinations like Las Vegas, Hawaii and Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, were among the top destinations for holiday revelers, according to AAA. Paula Twidale, a spokeswoman for the auto club and insurer, said the pickup in travel began in April as more Americans got vaccinated and the weather improved.

"People are just excited to get out," she said.



**Henry Hernandez, his wife Karina Gonzalez and their children Jose Sebastian, 2, and Laura, 6, of Colombia, walk towards the baggage claim area at Miami International Airport, Friday, May 28, 2021, in Miami. The couple were surprised to be offered the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine upon arrival to the U.S. It is their first overseas trip since the pandemic began last year. Florida's Emergency Management Agency is running the program through Sunday.** (AP Photo/Marta Lavandier)



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 49 of 86

Memorial Day coincides with some states eliminating their remaining pandemic restrictions as the number of new COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations and deaths decline.

Virginia, where President Joe Biden traveled to tout his administration's efforts to contain the virus, is easing all distancing and capacity restrictions Friday. A mask mandate in Massachusetts ends Saturday.

AAA expects a 60% jump in travel over the 2020 Memorial Day weekend, with 37 million Americans traveling at least 50 miles (80 kilometers) from home, most of them in cars. That's despite gasoline prices being at their highest levels in seven years: The national average is above \$3 a gallon for regular.

Prices for rental cars are up sharply, too — if you can find one — after companies culled their fleets to survive last year's deep slump in travel.

"My mother-in-law called me on a vacation and said, 'Hey, can you get me a rental car?' I said, 'No,'" said Jordan Staab, president of SmarterTravel Media. "Demand is up 500% since January, and it's tough to get a rental car right now, so plan ahead as much as you possibly can."

Hotels and other lodging in beach and mountain areas are expecting bigger crowds than those in cities. Lou Carrier, the president of Distinctive Hospitality Group, said the company's two hotels in tourist towns in Connecticut have seen a jump in bookings since the state loosened its mask requirements two weeks ago, but occupancy is still only around 20% at its three hotels in Boston.

Hotel room rates nationally jumped 9% in April after an 8% rise in March, and airfares soared 10% in April, according to the latest available figures from the Commerce Department.

That's not stopping people from getting on planes. The Transportation Security Administration has screened nearly 1.6 million people a day this month, up from 224,000 a day in May 2020 but still down one-third from the same time in 2019. TSA officials said this week they have hired enough new screeners to handle the crowds.

Most of those travelers are taking vacations or visiting family and friends in the United States. Airline executives say domestic leisure travel is back to pre-pandemic levels. Delta Air Lines President Glen Hauenstein said this week that bookings are now running ahead of the 2019 pace.

Business travelers and international visitors are still mostly absent, however, and airlines are eager to see that lucrative business return.

## **GOP blocks Capitol riot probe, displaying loyalty to Trump**

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Republicans on Friday blocked creation of a bipartisan panel to investigate the deadly Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol, displaying continuing party loyalty to former President Donald Trump and firm determination to shift the political focus away from the violent insurrection by his GOP supporters.

The Senate vote was 54-35 — six short of the 60 needed — to take up a House-passed bill that would have formed an independent 10-member commission evenly split between the two parties. It came a day after emotional appeals for the commission from police who fought the mob, the family of an officer who died and lawmakers in both parties who fled Capitol chambers in the worst attack on the building in two centuries.

The Republicans were mostly but not totally united: Six voted with Democrats to move forward. Eleven senators — nine Republicans and two Democrats — missed the vote, an unusually high number of absentees for one of the highest-profile votes of the year. At least one of the missing Republicans would have voted in favor of considering the commission, according to his office.

The GOP opposition means that questions about who should bear responsibility for the attack could continue to be filtered through a partisan lens — in congressional committees — rather than addressed by an outside, independent panel modeled after the commission that investigated the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks.

"The investigations will happen with or without Republicans," declared Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, one of the Republicans who voted to move forward. "To ensure the investigations are fair, impartial and focused on the facts, Republicans need to be involved."

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 50 of 86

The vote was in part a GOP attempt to placate Trump, or avoid his reprisals, as he has kept a firm hold on the party since his defeat by Democrat Joe Biden. The former president told his supporters to "fight like hell" to overturn his defeat before the siege and continues to falsely say he won the election — claims shouted by his supporters as they stormed the building. Trump called the commission legislation a "Democrat trap."

Friday's vote — the first successful use of a Senate filibuster in the Biden presidency — was emblematic of the profound mistrust between the two parties since the siege, especially among Republicans, with some in the party downplaying the violence and defending the rioters.

The vote also is likely to galvanize Democratic pressure to do away with the filibuster, a time-honored procedure typically used to kill major legislation. It requires 60 votes to move ahead, rather than a simple majority in the 100-member Senate. With the Senate evenly split 50-50, Democrats needed support from 10 Republicans to move to the commission bill.

Speaking to his Republican colleagues, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said after the vote they were "trying to sweep the horrors of that day under the rug" out of "fear or fealty" to Trump. He left open the possibility of another vote in the future on establishing a bipartisan commission, declaring, "The events of Jan. 6 will be investigated."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi echoed that commitment, saying Democrats "will find the truth."

Though the bill to form the commission passed the House earlier this month with the support of almost three dozen Republicans, most GOP senators said they believed the bipartisan panel would eventually be used against them politically. While initially saying he was open to the idea, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell turned firmly against it in recent days, arguing that the panel's investigation would be partisan despite the even split among party members.

McConnell, who once said Trump was responsible for provoking the mob attack on the Capitol, said dismissively of Democrats, "They'd like to continue to litigate the former president, into the future."

Still, six in McConnell's caucus defied him, arguing that an independent look was needed, and Pennsylvania's Pat Toomey would have brought the total to seven but for a family commitment, his office said. In addition to Cassidy, the Republicans who voted to move forward were Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Susan Collins of Maine, Ben Sasse of Nebraska, Rob Portman of Ohio and Mitt Romney of Utah.

Murkowski said Thursday evening that she needed to know more about what happened before and on the day of the attack, and why.

"Truth is hard stuff, but we've got a responsibility to it," she said. "We just can't pretend that nothing bad happened, or that people just got too excitable. Something bad happened. And it's important to lay that out."

Some Republican colleagues strongly disagree, defending the rioters who supported Trump and his false insistence that the election was stolen from him. A House Republican said this month that one video of the insurrection looked like "a normal tourist visit."

In reality, the attack was the worst on the Capitol in 200 years. The protesters interrupted the certification of Biden's win over Trump, constructed a mock gallows in front of the Capitol and called for the hanging of Vice President Mike Pence, who was overseeing the proceedings inside. Lawmakers hid on the floor of the House balcony as the rioters tried to break in, and senators evacuated their chamber mere minutes before it was ransacked.

Four of the protesters died that day, including a woman who was shot and killed by police as she tried to break into the House chamber. Dozens of police officers were injured, and two took their own lives in the days afterward.

Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick collapsed and died after engaging with the rioters, and video showed two men spraying Sicknick and another officer with a chemical. The Washington medical examiner said he suffered a stroke and died from natural causes.

Senate Democrats angrily questioned how the Republicans could vote against an independent investigation.

"An insurrection without consequences — without even a proper investigation — is a dress rehearsal for

another insurrection," said Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin, the No. 2 Democrat in Congress. "When the Capitol police, who protect us with their lives, ask for this commission, we are ingrates to refuse."

The Republicans' political arguments over the violent siege — which is still raw for many in the Capitol, almost five months later — have frustrated not only the Democrats and some of their Republican colleagues but also those who fought off the rioters. Sicknick's mother, girlfriend and two police officers who battled the rioters alongside him went office to office and asked Republicans to support the commission.

Michael Fanone, a Metropolitan Police Department officer who responded to the attack, joined Sicknick's family on Capitol Hill Thursday. In between meetings with Republican senators, he said a commission is "necessary for us to heal as a nation from the trauma that we all experienced that day." Fanone has described being dragged down the Capitol steps by rioters who shocked him with a stun gun and beat him.

Sicknick's mother, Gladys Sicknick, suggested those who opposed the panel visit her son's grave.

In interview on CNN after the vote, she asked of the Republicans: "What kind of country do they want?"

## Farm laborer convicted in 2018 stabbing death of Iowa runner

By RYAN J. FOLEY Associated Press  
IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) — A farm laborer was found guilty Friday in the abduction and killing of an Iowa college student who vanished while out for a run in 2018 and will face life behind bars for a crime that shocked the nation.

A 12-member jury unanimously found Cristhian Bahena Rivera guilty of first-degree murder in the attack on University of Iowa student Mollie Tibbetts, who was described as so kind and friendly that investigators could find no one who spoke badly about her.

Bahena Rivera, who came to the U.S. illegally from Mexico as a teenager, will be sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. Judge Joel Yates ordered Bahena Rivera, who has been in custody since his August 2018 arrest, to be held without bond pending a July 15 sentencing hearing.

The verdict came after a two-week trial at the Scott County Courthouse in Davenport, in a case that fueled public anger against illegal immigration and concerns about random violence against women. The jury, which included nine white members and three of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish descent, deliberated for seven hours on Thursday and Friday.

"This was the verdict that the evidence demanded," said one of the prosecutors, Poweshiek County Attorney Bart Klaver, who said such violent crime almost never happens in his county of 18,000 people.

Klaver said the verdict was an emotional moment for the family of Tibbetts, calling the outcome a "weight off of everyone's shoulders." Several of her relatives, including her mother, had watched the proceedings daily in a conference room across from the courtroom, where the public was banned due to COVID-19



**Cristhian Bahena Rivera reacts after the verdict is announced in his trial, Friday, May 28, 2021, at the Scott County Courthouse in Davenport, Iowa. A jury on Friday found Bahena Rivera guilty of first-degree murder in the stabbing death of Mollie Tibbetts, a University of Iowa student who vanished while out for a run in 2018.** (AP Photo/

Charlie Neibergall, pool)

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 52 of 86

protocols.

Bahena Rivera's defense attorneys, Chad and Jennifer Frese, said they were disappointed in the verdict and would appeal. They said their client had consistently since 2018 told them the story he shared on the witness stand about two masked men that he claims were responsible, even though prosecutors had never previously heard that claim.

Jennifer Frese said that if the testimony had been coached by defense lawyers, "we would have come up with something better than that."

"We can tell you that getting to know Cristhian Bahena, we are very surprised that he would be the kind of person that would commit a crime like this," Chad Frese said. "He is nothing but a soft-spoken, respectful, kind person."

They said they would renew their arguments that Bahena Rivera's statements to police were coerced and should be suppressed, along with the discovery of Tibbetts' body that followed.

Tibbetts, who ran track and cross country in high school, never returned home after going for a routine run in her hometown of Brooklyn, Iowa on the evening of July 18, 2018. She was reported missing the next day after she didn't show up for her summer job at a daycare, where she was working after completing her freshman year. Tibbetts had hoped to one day become a child psychologist.

Her disappearance from the town of 1,700 was immediately deemed suspicious, and local, state and federal agencies joined hundreds of volunteers in a highly publicized search for her.

Investigators say they broke the case open nearly a month later after obtaining surveillance video from a homeowner that shows, for a split second, a shadowy figure that appears to be Tibbetts running in the distance. The video shows a black Chevy Malibu with chrome mirrors and door handles driving past 20 seconds later, and back and forth several times in the next 20 minutes.

A sheriff's deputy spotted Bahena Rivera, who worked at a local dairy farm, driving the distinctive vehicle the next day. During a lengthy interrogation that began Aug. 20, 2018, Bahena Rivera said that he drove past Tibbetts while she was running and turned around to get another look because he found her attractive.

He eventually said that he approached Tibbetts and fought with her after she tried to get away and threatened to call police. He claimed that he then "blacked out" but remembered driving with her body in the trunk of his car. He led investigators in the early morning hours of Aug. 21 to a remote cornfield where they found her badly decomposed body hidden under corn stalks.

An autopsy found that Tibbetts died of sharp force injuries from several stab wounds to her head, neck and chest. DNA testing showed that her blood was found in the trunk of the Malibu, but investigators never found the murder weapon.

Prosecutor Scott Brown praised the investigators whose persistence helped solve the case, noting they faced criticism during the trial from the defense.

He said in a closing argument Thursday that Bahena Rivera killed Tibbetts out of anger after she rebuked him. He said Bahena Rivera also had a sexual motive, noting that Tibbetts was found partially naked with her legs spread when her body was found.

During dramatic testimony Wednesday that surprised prosecutors, the 26-year-old Bahena Rivera denied that he killed Tibbetts. He claimed publicly for the first time that two masked men took him at gunpoint from his trailer, forced him to drive as one of them killed Tibbetts on a rural road and directed him to a rural area where he left her body. Bahena Rivera said the men threatened to kill his ex-girlfriend and young daughter if he spoke out.

Bahena Rivera's defense suggested one of the men may have been Tibbetts' boyfriend, Dalton Jack, who admitted during hours of difficult testimony that he had an affair with another woman and past anger problems. But police said they cleared Jack, who had bought an engagement ring and planned to soon propose marriage to Tibbetts, after establishing that he was out of town for work when Tibbetts vanished.

Then-President Donald Trump, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds and other Republicans had cited the vicious crime ahead of the 2018 midterm elections to call for harsher policies to deter illegal immigration. But their efforts eventually stopped after Tibbetts' parents said the slaying should not be used to advance a political agenda that Tibbetts would have opposed.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 53 of 86

In a sign of how the case remains politicized, GOP U.S. Rep. Ashley Hinson of Iowa released a statement on Friday morning praising the guilty verdict as a just outcome, even though jurors were still deliberating at the time. Her staff quickly apologized for the error but re-released the statement after the verdict was announced.

## **Biden's \$6T budget: Social spending, taxes on business**

By ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Friday unveiled a \$6 trillion budget for next year that's piled high with new safety net programs for the poor and middle class, but his generosity depends on taxing corporations and the wealthy to keep the nation's spiking debt from spiraling totally out of control.

Biden inherited record pandemic-stoked spending and won a major victory on COVID-19 relief earlier this year. Friday's rollout adds his recently announced infrastructure and social spending initiatives and fleshes out his earlier plans to sharply increase spending for annual Cabinet budgets.

This year's projected deficit would set a new record of \$3.7 trillion that would drop to \$1.8 trillion next year — still almost double pre-pandemic levels. The national debt will soon breach \$30 trillion after more than \$5 trillion in already approved COVID-19 relief. As a result, the government must borrow roughly 50 cents of every dollar it spends this year and next.

With the deficit largely unchecked, Biden would use proposed tax hikes on businesses and high-earning people to power huge new social programs like universal prekindergarten, large subsidies for child care and guaranteed paid leave.

"The best way to grow our economy is not from the top down, but from the bottom up and the middle out," Biden said in his budget message. "Our prosperity comes from the people who get up every day, work hard, raise their family, pay their taxes, serve their Nation, and volunteer in their communities."

The budget incorporates the administration's eight-year, \$2.3 trillion infrastructure proposal and its \$1.8 trillion American Families Plan and adds details on his \$1.5 trillion request for annual operating expenditures for the Pentagon and domestic agencies.

Acting White House budget chief Shalanda Young said the Biden plan "does exactly what the president told the country he would do. Grow the economy, create jobs and do so responsibly by requiring the wealthiest Americans and big corporations to pay their fair share."

Biden's budget is sure to give Republicans fresh ammunition for their criticisms of the new Democratic administration as bent on a "tax and spend" agenda that would damage the economy and impose a crushing debt burden on younger Americans. Republicans also say he's shorting the military.

"It is insanely expensive. It dramatically increases nondefense spending and taxes" and would weaken the Pentagon, said South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, top Republican on the Budget Committee and a generally pragmatic GOP voice on spending bills. "There will be serious discussions about government funding. But the Biden budget isn't serious and it won't be a part of those discussions."

Veteran GOP Sen. Richard Shelby, whose help is needed to pass annual agency budget bills, blasted Biden's plan as "a blueprint for the higher taxes, excessive spending" that also "shortchanges our national security."

Biden is a veteran of a long-gone Washington that fought bitterly in the 1980s and 1990s to wrestle the deficit under control. But there hasn't been any real effort to stem the flow of red ink since a tea party-driven moment in 2011 that produced unpopular automatic spending cuts that were largely reversed over the ensuing decade.

Huge deficits have yet to drive up interest rates as many fiscal hawks have feared, however, and genuine anti-deficit sentiment is difficult to find in either political party.

The unusual timing of the budget rollout — the Friday afternoon before Memorial Day weekend — indicates that the White House isn't eager to trumpet the bad deficit news.

Under Biden's plan, the debt held by the public would quickly match the size of the economy and soon eclipse record levels of debt relative to gross domestic product that have stood since World War II. That's despite more than \$3 trillion in proposed tax increases over the decade, including an increase in the

corporate tax rate from 21% to 28%, increased capital gains rates on top earners and returning the top personal income tax bracket to 39.6%.

Like all presidential budgets, Biden's plan is simply a proposal. It's up to Congress to implement it through tax and spending legislation and annual agency budget bills. With Democrats in control of Capitol Hill, albeit barely, the president has the ability to implement many of his tax and spending plans, though his hopes for awarding greater increases to domestic agencies than to the Pentagon are sure to hit a GOP roadblock.

Some Democrats are already balking at Biden's full menu of tax increases, imperiling his ability to pay for his ambitious social spending. And his plan to increase spending on domestic agencies by 16% while limiting defense to a 1.7% rise is politically impossible in the 50-50 Senate.

A top Senate ally, Appropriations Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., called Thursday for bipartisan talks to start the annual appropriations bills. There's incentive for both GOP defense hawks and liberal Democrats like Leahy to bargain since the alternative is a long-term freeze at current spending levels.

The Biden plan comes as the White House is seeking an agreement with Senate Republicans over infrastructure spending. But winning gains that would even begin to meet his social spending goals would require him to rely solely on support from his narrow Democratic majorities in Congress.

Biden's spending proposals include numerous new programs to strengthen the "caring economy" with large programs aimed at child and elder care: \$437 billion over 10 years to provide free preschool to all 3- and 4-year-olds and two years of free community college to all Americans. Also, \$225 billion would subsidize child care to allow many to pay a maximum of 7% of their income for all children under age 5.

Another \$225 billion over the next decade would create a national family and medical leave program, while \$200 billion would make recently enacted subsidy increases under the Obama health care law permanent.

Tax hikes, Biden claims, would pay for his initiatives over the next 15 years, including \$2 trillion from corporations from curbing overseas tax preferences and raising rates to 28%. Unrealized capital gains would be taxed at death, a problem for some Democrats, and the Biden plan would significantly stiffen IRS enforcement, which the budget claims would raise \$700 billion over a decade otherwise lost to cheating and dodging.

Rep. Richard Neal, the top Democratic House tax writer, praised Biden's new spending and tax cuts but was silent on his tax hikes, saying he'll "consider the administration's proposals carefully."

Biden's budget calls for a roughly 10% bump in foreign affairs funding from 2021, with top increases for climate change, global health and humanitarian aid. Biden's \$58.5 billion request would support the administration's return to international groups, like the World Health Organization and others, from which former President Donald Trump had withdrawn.

Last year's \$3.1 trillion budget deficit under Trump more than doubled the previous record, as the coronavirus pandemic shrank revenues and sent spending soaring.

Council of Economic Advisers Chair Cecelia Rouse told reporters Friday that the economy is likely to outperform the administration's official prediction, forged in February, of 5.2% economic growth this year.

## US agency loosens mask guidance for summer campers

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Kids at summer camps can skip wearing masks outdoors, with some exceptions, federal health officials said Friday.

Children who aren't fully vaccinated should still wear masks outside when they're in crowds or in sustained close contact with others – and when they are inside, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said. Fully vaccinated kids need not wear masks indoors or outside, the agency said.

The guidelines open the door to a more conventional camp experience and came out in the nick of time, just before camps start opening in some parts of the country, said Tom Rosenberg, president of the American Camp Association.

The guidance is the first in a wave of updates that will incorporate the CDC's recent decisions on masks and social distancing. Earlier this month, the agency said Americans don't have to be as cautious about

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 55 of 86

masks and distancing outdoors, and that fully vaccinated people don't need masks in most situations.

Previously, the CDC advised that just about all people at camps should wear masks with only a few exceptions, like while they are eating, drinking or swimming.

But that was before adults began getting shots in December, and before the U.S. government authorized the Pfizer vaccine for 12- to 15-year-olds earlier this month.

About 2.5 million of the roughly 17 million U.S. kids in that age group have gotten at least one shot. A second dose is also required, three weeks after the first, and then it takes two more weeks before the vaccine fully takes effect.

That means that it will be mid-summer before kids in that age bracket are fully vaccinated. When that happens, "it's going to be a camp experience that is much more like (before the pandemic)," said Erin Sauber-Schatz, who leads the CDC task force that prepares recommendations designed to keep Americans safe from COVID-19.

The new guidance also says social distancing — staying 3 to 6 feet from others — is recommended for the unvaccinated, but not for the vaccinated.

Camps likely will have mixed groups of vaccinated and unvaccinated kids and should be prepared to have mask and distancing guidelines in place, CDC officials said.

The camp guidance was updated in reaction to the CDC's May 13 decision to allow fully vaccinated Americans to stop wearing masks outdoors and in most indoor settings.

Some public health officials and others have criticized that announcement, partly because it seemed to conflict with other CDC guidance.

Sen. Tammy Duckworth, an Illinois Democrat, wrote this week to CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky that "parents, caregivers and immunocompromised patients across the country may now have to navigate a confusing patchwork of recommendations and requirements in order to keep themselves and their families safe."

Not helping matters: Agency officials have said their decision was based on growing medical evidence, but CDC officials provided few specifics. The agency did not post a science brief detailing the supporting evidence until Thursday.

The U.S. vaccination campaign has been an apparent success, with COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths declining. But some public health experts saw the rollback as prematurely removing a measure that had helped drive that success. Some also faulted the agency for poorly communicating the decision.

"There is no evidence that states, businesses, event organizers and so on were given any heads up that



**FILE - This Thursday, June 4, 2020 file photo shows a row of cabins at a summer camp in Fayette, Maine. On Friday, May 28, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention posted guidance saying kids at summer camps can skip wearing masks outdoors, with some exceptions. Children who aren't fully vaccinated should still wear masks outside when they're in crowds or in sustained close contact with others – and when they are inside, and fully vaccinated kids need not wear masks indoors or outside, the CDC says. (AP**

Photo/Robert F. Bukaty, File)

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 56 of 86

this announcement was pending.” said Dr. Irwin Redlener, a pandemic researcher at Columbia University’s Earth Institute.

A major concern has been that it can be hard to know who’s vaccinated, so unvaccinated people could quietly go maskless, causing cases to rise.

That concern was raised Thursday during a virtual U.S. Chamber of Commerce event with Walensky.

Suzanne Clark, the organization’s president, said many people were relieved that vaccinated could go many places without masks. “But I think employers are still trying to figure out what that means,” she added, noting questions like whether business owners can ask employees and customers if they’ve been vaccinated.

At the same forum, Polly Hanson of the American Public Transportation Association noted the apparent contradiction between CDC guidance that fully vaccinated people need not wear masks and a federal directive that says people who ride on public transportation have to wear them. She asked when that might change.

Redlener said in an email that the public is confused, in part because rules vary by state and city.

“Lack of consistency from one place to another is creating even more confusion,” she said.

Asked how camps will sort out who is vaccinated and who is not, Sauber-Schatz of the CDC said those decisions will have to be made at the local level.

Rosenberg, whose organization represents thousands of year-round and summer camps in the United States, noted medical forms are a common requirement and said many camps likely will ask for some kind of vaccination verification.

More than 80% of overnight camps did not open last year, some because states didn’t allow them to, Rosenberg said. This year, all states are permitting day and overnight camps, though many expect to operate at lower capacity, he added.

“Demand is soaring” for camp this summer, as families seek to give kids a chance at normalcy, Rosenberg said.

“This is going to be a summer of joy,” Rosenberg said. “This is going to be a summer where kids are going to be able to reconnect, emotionally and socially, with each other.”

## In visions of post-pandemic life, Roaring ‘20s beckon again

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — History repeats itself. But do decades duplicate?

As hopes rise that the pandemic is ebbing in the United States and Europe, visions of a second “Roaring Twenties” to match last century’s post-pandemic decade have proliferated. Months of lockdown and restrictions on social life have given way to dreams of a new era of frivolity and decadence. For some, it feels like party time.

In many parts of the world, such thoughts are unthinkable. India is engulfed in crisis. The virus is raging in South America. Japan is grappling with a punishing new wave of cases. And even in places where cases are falling and vaccinations are expanding, deep wounds remain from more than a year of death, illness and isolation. COVID-19 won’t disappear. More infectious variants are circulating. Herd immunity may be elusive. Long-term health effects will linger. There will be no Hollywood ending.

But a coming summer and a soaring stock market have lifted optimism and fueled predictions of a new Roaring Twenties. This time, Bill Maher has suggested, we do it without “the Depression at the end of it.” The New Yorker joked that prohibition in “the New Roaring Twenties” should be on “company-mandated virtual happy hours.” Madison Avenue has turned up the heat. Suitsupply, a men’s fashion brand, is running a suggestive ad campaign with writhing models and the tagline: “The New Normal Is Coming.” Summer travel is booming. A summer of love “sexplosion” is predicted. Even the bob is back in style.

Is it fair to connect these twin ‘20s, both decades that follow closely on the heels of worldwide pandemic? Could two ‘20s really roar? Do we all need to start buying flapper dresses and brushing up on our F. Scott Fitzgerald?



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 57 of 86

Some of the parallels are legitimate, says Nicholas Christakis, professor of sociology and medicine at Yale University and author of "Apollo's Arrow: The Profound and Enduring Impact of Coronavirus on the Way We Live." After an interim period of "coping with the clinical, psychological and economic shock of the virus," he says, we'll see an uplift this summer, with a post-pandemic period taking root by 2023. It will, he says, be "a bit of a party."

"Understandably, people will be very relieved when this is all finally over. People have been cooped one way or another for a very long time," Christakis says. "We're going to see people relentlessly seeking out social opportunities in nightclubs and restaurants and bars and sporting events and musical concerts and political rallies. We might see some sexual licentiousness, some loosening of sexual mores."

Such prognostications have tantalized many eager for the fabled liberation of a century ago — what Fitzgerald described as "the most expensive orgy in history." Outside of the 1960s, perhaps, no decade looms larger in the collective imagination than the 1920s, thanks in part to the emerging mass culture that captured the time — the swinging speakeasies, the Harlem Renaissance, the first "talkie" in 1927's "The Jazz Singer." Over time, the mythology has only grown glitzier (see Baz Luhrmann, "Gatsby," 2013).

There's truth in that portrait of the '20s, but mainly to wealthier white Americans.

The decade was punishing to farmers; for the first time, more people lived in cities. Membership surged for the Ku Klux Klan, which targeted African Americans, immigrants, Jews and Catholics — anyone who didn't meet its definition of a "real American." In 1921, one of the worst incidents of racial violence occurred — the Tulsa Race Massacre. Three years later, the Immigration Act of 1924 restricted immigrants from Asia and Eastern Europe.

The 1920s, in short, were not all they were cracked up to be. "We have today in the United States, cheek by jowl, Prosperity and Depression," the author and civil rights activist W.E.B. Du Bois wrote in 1926.

It's not hard to see many of the same threads today: racial injustice, economic inequity, convulsive technological change. The 1921 campaign slogan of Warren G. Harding — "a return to normalcy" — sounds very familiar and even appealing to those who have had it with the "new normal."

Forecasts on Wall Street, of course, vary. The United Nations last month raised its global economic forecast to 5.4% growth in 2021. While many analysts are predicting the pace to quicken in the months and years ahead, Tina Fordham, partner and head of global political strategy for Avonhurst, foresees a post-lockdown period that will feel like "The Great Gatsby" only to a few.

"For many, it could be more like 'The Grapes of Wrath,' unless steps are taken to address inequities — which accelerated during the pandemic — and the gaps in the social safety net," Fordham concluded.

Are we even right to connect the 1920s with the 1918 influenza? To John M. Barry, author of the defining history "The Great Influenza," it's a false association. The so-called Spanish Flu was far more virulent and deadly. It killed more than 50 million worldwide and some 675,000 Americans — more than ten times the toll of WWI to the U.S.

"People seem to think we just leapt into the Roaring Twenties," says Barry. "But first we went through 1919, which is one of the most chaotic and violent years in American history. Then you had a serious re-



**This combination of photos shows a general view of Times Square near 42nd Street in New York in the 1920s, left, and a general view of Times Square in New York on March 10, 2021. As hopes rise that the pandemic is ebbing in the United States and Europe, visions of a second "Roaring Twenties" to match last century's post-pandemic decade have proliferated..** (AP Photo, File)

cession in 1920, 1921. The aftermath this time, one would hope, is quite different.”

People also experienced the 1918 influenza differently. Lockdowns then never lasted more than a few weeks. The societal surge that followed in the '20s? Most historians ascribe that to the postwar period.

“The Roaring Twenties, that was the Lost Generation,” says Barry, who is writing a book on the COVID-19 pandemic. “There was a sense of fatalism, ennui, disillusionment with the world that I think was much more closely related to the war.”

Lucy Moore, author of “Anything Goes: A Biography of the Roaring Twenties,” connects World War I with the 1918 influenza in that they both were punishing for young Americans. The 1920s, says Moore, were propelled by a disillusioned, emancipated youth.

“The young have sacrificed a lot during this pandemic on behalf of the older generation,” Moore says. “There was a sense of that after the war and after the Spanish Flu. The war was very much young people being sent off to die by an older generation they’d been taught to trust but then felt very let down by.”

Whether the same response will happen in the aftermath of this pandemic is something to watch for. The crisis is far from over, Christakis cautions. “We don’t want to spike the ball at the 5-yard line,” he says. But throughout history, Christakis sees a pattern common to prolonged calamity. Plagues are followed by boom times. After the Black Death came the erosion of feudalism.

“The Roaring Twenties is just a metaphor,” Christakis says. “Grief walks the streets during times of plague, so people will rightly be relieved when this period of loss is behind us.”

## Belarus leader seeks Russian support amid showdown with EU

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin warmly welcomed his counterpart from Belarus for talks Friday on forging closer ties amid Minsk’s bruising showdown with the European Union over the diversion of a passenger jet to arrest a dissident journalist.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has found himself increasingly isolated since flight controllers told the crew of a Ryanair plane to land in Minsk on Sunday citing an alleged bomb threat. No bomb was found, but 26-year-old journalist Raman Pratasevich was arrested along with his Russian girlfriend.

EU leaders denounced it as air piracy and responded by barring Belarusian carriers from the bloc’s airspace and airports and advising European airlines to skirt Belarus. EU foreign ministers sketched out tougher sanctions Thursday to target the country’s lucrative potash industry and other cash-earning sectors.

At the start of his talks in the Black Sea resort of Sochi with Putin, Lukashenko ranted about the EU sanctions, describing them as an attempt to reignite the opposition protests that followed his reelection in August that was widely rejected as rigged.



**Russian President Vladimir Putin, right, and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko talks to each other during their meeting in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, Russia, Friday, May 28, 2021.** (Mikhail Klimentyev, Sputnik, Kremlin Pool Photo via AP)

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 59 of 86

"It's an attempt to destabilize the situation like last August," he said.

Putin appeared relaxed and invited Lukashenko for a swim, while the Belarusian leader looked tense as he launched a long rant accusing the West of being perfidious and hypocritical.

In an emotional tirade, the 66-year-old Belarusian leader bemoaned the EU sanctions against the Belarusian flag carrier, Belavia, pointing to its role in carrying "thousands and thousands" of travelers from EU nations and the U.S. who were stranded at the start of the pandemic.

"They have punished the Belavia staff who have helped evacuate thousands of their people!" Lukashenko exclaimed. "What an abomination!"

Putin nodded in sympathy, pointing to a 2013 incident in which a private plane carrying Bolivian President Evo Morales landed in Vienna after several European nations had refused to let it cross their airspace, purportedly over speculation that Edward Snowden, who leaked classified U.S. government information, was on the plane. Austrian and Bolivian officials disagreed over whether the plane was searched after landing before resuming its journey.

"The Bolivian president's plane was forced to land, the president was taken off the plane, and it was OK, everyone kept silent," Putin said with a chuckle.

Snowden, the former National Security Agency contractor who disclosed classified information about government surveillance programs, ended up in Russia, where he received asylum to avoid prosecution.

The showdown over the Ryanair diversion has pushed Lukashenko, who has relentlessly stifled dissent during his rule of more than a quarter-century, even closer to his main ally and sponsor, Russia.

The two ex-Soviet nations have signed a union agreement that calls for close political, economic and military ties but stops short of a full merger. Russia has buttressed Belarus' economy with cheap energy supplies and loans, but the ties often have been strained with Lukashenko scolding Moscow for trying to force him to relinquish control of prized economic assets and eventually abandon his country's independence.

In his remarks at the start of Friday's talks, Putin said the countries were moving to deepen their union "consistently, without rush, acting stage by stage."

In the past, Lukashenko has tried to play the West against Russia, raising the prospect of a rapprochement with the EU and the U.S. to wring more aid out of Moscow.

Such tactics no longer work after Lukashenko's brutal crackdown last year. More than 35,000 people were arrested amid the protests and thousands beaten — moves that made him a pariah in the West. The flight's diversion has now cornered the Belarusian strongman even more.

Lukashenko, a former Soviet state farm director, ended the leaders' appearance before cameras in Sochi by exclaiming, "There are no heights the Bolsheviks wouldn't storm!" — a line apparently from a Soviet-era movie. The remark drew a wry laugh from Putin.

Many observers warn that the new, tougher EU sanctions would make Lukashenko easy prey for the Kremlin, which may use his isolation to push for closer integration. Some in the West have even alleged Russia was involved in the Ryanair diversion — something Moscow angrily denies — and will seek to exploit the fallout.

"Lukashenko is scared, and the Kremlin may demand payment for its political support by pushing for the introduction of a single currency, the deployment of military bases and more," said Valery Karbalevich, an independent Minsk-based political analyst. "In this situation, it would be much more difficult for him to resist and bargain with Putin."

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Lukashenko's main opponent in the election who left the country under official pressure, also acknowledged the danger that Russia may try to use his weakness to its advantage. She urged the EU to use whatever influence it has to help prevent any deals with Moscow that would hurt Belarus.

At the same time, Tsikhanouskaya also urged the EU to be "stronger, braver in its resolutions and decisions," saying Lukashenko acted out of a sense of impunity in diverting the flight.

The European Commission on Friday presented a 3 billion euro (\$3.7 billion) aid plan to support "a future

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 60 of 86

democratic Belarus" that could be activated if the country moves toward a "democratic transition."

But in a further sign of Belarus' isolation, the Geneva-based European Broadcasting Union moved Friday to suspend the Belarusian state broadcaster, BTRC, saying it has been particularly worried by its showing of interviews apparently obtained under duress. BTRC has two weeks to respond before the suspension takes effect. The move would bar Belarus from taking part in the Eurovision Song Contest, among other things.

Moscow has offered Lukashenko quick political support over the diversion, cautioning the EU against hasty action until the episode is properly investigated and arguing that Lukashenko's actions were in line with international protocols in cases of bomb threats.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova denounced the EU's decision to ask European airlines to avoid Belarusian airspace as "utterly irresponsible and threatening passengers' safety."

Dmitry Polyansky, Russia's deputy envoy at the United Nations, criticized the West on Friday for what he called a rash response and defended Belarus' narrative, arguing its flight controllers only "recommended" the plane land in Minsk because of the purported threat, and the pilot could have continued if he wanted.

"To say from the outset that this is a forced landing, to condemn it and to introduce sanctions without any investigation — this kind of behavior is absolutely irresponsible," he said at a news conference.

The International Civil Aviation Organization has said it will investigate the diversion, as many Western countries have asked.

As European airlines began skirting Belarus, Russia has refused some of their requests to change the flight paths of service to Moscow in the past two days but allowed some flights to proceed Friday. The Kremlin said the denial of quick permissions to use the bypass routes was technical, but Lukashenko hailed it as a show of support for Belarus.

## US to expedite immigration cases of families on border

By AMY TAXIN and ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Families arriving at the U.S. border with Mexico will have their cases fast-tracked in immigration court, the Biden administration said Friday, less than two weeks after it said it was easing pandemic-related restrictions on seeking asylum.

Under the plan, families stopped on the border starting Friday could be placed in expedited proceedings aimed at determining whether they can remain in the United States. Immigration judges would generally decide these cases within 300 days of an initial hearing in 10 cities including New York, Los Angeles and border communities such as El Paso, Texas, and San Diego, the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security said in a statement.

It isn't the first time U.S. officials have sought to expedite the immigration cases of families arriving on the southwest border. The Trump and Obama administrations previously created dockets aimed at quickly deciding these cases in the immigration courts, which are notoriously backlogged and can take years to resolve cases.

The latest iteration, which the administration is calling a "dedicated docket," lets judges grant continuances "for good cause," according to instructions they received. It calls the 300-day timeline "an internal goal."

The announcement comes as President Joe Biden is under mounting pressure to lift pandemic-related restrictions on seeking asylum at the border that were put in place by the Trump administration in March 2020. Under the rules, citizens of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador are typically expelled to Mexico within two hours without any opportunity to seek asylum or other humanitarian protections.

Biden exempted unaccompanied children but about one of every three people who arrive in families are still subject to them, as is nearly every single adult. Last week, the administration took steps to ease the rules and agreed to eventually allow 250 people a day through border crossings to seek refuge in the United States.

But immigrant advocates said creating dockets to speed asylum seekers through the courts isn't fair and in the past has created delays for other migrants already waiting years for their cases to be heard.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 61 of 86

Eleanor Acer, senior director for refugee protection at Human Rights First, urged the Biden administration to roll back Trump administration measures that make it difficult for Central American migrants fleeing violence to qualify for humanitarian protection in the United States. "U.S. asylum proceedings cannot be considered fair when the Biden administration continues to blatantly violate U.S. refugee laws and treaties," she said in a statement.

The Border Patrol had more than 170,000 encounters in April, its highest tally since March 2001, including 50,000 with people traveling in families. Many are repeat crossers because getting expelled carries no legal consequences.

Friday's announcement gives families at the border a higher priority than other cases in an immigration court system with about 1.3 million pending cases. Attorney General Merrick Garland said the effort aligns with his goal of immigration courts deciding cases "promptly and fairly."

The National Association of Immigration Judges is studying the proposal, said Dana Marks, an immigration judge and the group's executive vice president. She said the group was not consulted about the plan.

Immigrants were issued deportation orders in more than 90 percent of the cases that were decided in the Trump administration's family unit dockets, according to statistics from the Justice Department's Executive Office for Immigration Review, which runs immigration courts.

Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, policy counsel at American Immigration Council, said the new plan appears to give judges more discretion to grant continuances in families' cases but he's concerned because many asylum seekers placed in these special dockets during the last two administrations wound up representing themselves in court.

"We are very skeptical about yet another attempt to create a 'rocket docket' and continued to believe rushed justice is no justice at all," he said.

In addition to New York, Los Angeles, San Diego and El Paso, the docket is being introduced in Denver; Detroit; Miami, Newark, New Jersey; San Francisco; and Seattle.



**FILE - In this May 17, 2021, file photo a group of migrants mainly from Honduras and Nicaragua wait along a road after turning themselves in upon crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, in La Joya, Texas. The Biden administration says families arriving at the U.S. border with Mexico will have their cases fast-tracked in immigration court, an announcement Friday, May 28, that comes less than two weeks after said it was easing pandemic-related restrictions on seeking asylum. Under the plan, immigration judges in 10 cities will aim to decide cases within 300 days.** (AP Photo/Gregory Bull, File)

## NASA releases stunning new pic of Milky Way's 'downtown'

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA has released a stunning new picture of our galaxy's violent, super-energized "downtown."

It's a composite of 370 observations over the past two decades by the orbiting Chandra X-ray Observatory, depicting billions of stars and countless black holes in the center, or heart, of the Milky Way. A radio

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 62 of 86

telescope in South Africa also contributed to the image, for contrast.

Astronomer Daniel Wang of the University of Massachusetts Amherst said Friday he spent a year working on this while stuck at home during the pandemic.

"What we see in the picture is a violent or energetic ecosystem in our galaxy's downtown," Wang said in an email. "There are a lot of supernova remnants, black holes, and neutron stars there. Each X-ray dot or feature represents an energetic source, most of which are in the center."

This busy, high-energy galactic center is 26,000 light years away.

His work appears in the June issue of the Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society.

Launched in 1999, Chandra is in an extreme oval orbit around Earth.

## NOT REAL NEWS: A look at what didn't happen this week

By The Associated Press undefined

A roundup of some of the most popular but completely untrue stories and visuals of the week. None of these are legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked them out. Here are the facts:

No evidence COVID-19 vaccines create new virus variants

CLAIM: The variants of the coronavirus that have been found in the global population were created by COVID-19 vaccines, because the vaccines caused people to develop antibodies and forced the virus to evolve.

THE FACTS: An article quoting a virologist known for spreading conspiracy theories about the coronavirus is pushing the false claim that COVID-19 vaccines were the catalyst that caused new variants of the virus to emerge around the globe. "Bombshell: Nobel Prize Winner Reveals - Covid Vaccine is 'Creating Variants,'" reads the headline of the article, which has been shared thousands of times on Facebook. The article claims that the vaccines forced the virus to "find another solution' or die," thus producing the known coronavirus variants. The article attributes the claim to Luc Montagnier, who won the Nobel Prize in 2008 for discovering HIV and has spread false claims about the coronavirus. It is published on the website of the RAIR Foundation, which describes itself as a "grassroots activist organization" aiming to "combat the threats from Islamic supremacists, radical leftists and their allies." Experts contacted by The Associated Press explained that coronavirus variants found across the globe began emerging long before vaccines were widely available. They said the evidence suggests new variants evolved as a result of prolonged viral infections in the population, not vaccines, which are designed to prevent such infections. "There's no evidence that the vaccines create new variants, largely because vaccination appears to shut down viral infections, prevent people from spreading it to others," said Dr. Stuart Ray, a professor at Johns Hopkins University's medical school. "If the virus can't spread, it doesn't have the



**This false-color X-ray and radio frequency image made available by NASA on Friday, May 28, 2021 shows threads of superheated gas and magnetic fields at the center of the Milky Way galaxy. X-rays detected by the NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory are in orange, green, blue and purple, and radio data from the MeerKAT radio telescope in South Africa are shown in lilac and gray. The plane of the galaxy is horizontal, in the center of this vertical image. Astronomer Daniel Wang of the University of Massachusetts Amherst said Friday he spent a year working on this, while stuck at home during the pandemic.** (NASA/CXC/

UMass/Q.D. Wang, NRF/SARAO/MeerKAT via AP)

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 63 of 86

opportunity to evolve." With some viruses, such as dengue virus, scientists have observed a phenomenon called antibody-dependent enhancement, in which antibodies generated by a past infection or a vaccine will bind to a viral pathogen but not neutralize it. This can cause people who have antibodies to experience more severe symptoms if they are infected later. However, this phenomenon has not been observed with the coronavirus or vaccines to prevent it. Montagnier did not respond to a request for comment.

— Associated Press writer Ali Swenson in Semora, North Carolina, contributed this report.



COVID-19 vaccines do not wipe out antibodies

CLAIM: The Red Cross says if you recovered from COVID-19 and had a vaccine, you cannot donate blood plasma because the vaccine wipes out natural antibodies.

THE FACTS: The Red Cross says that statement is inaccurate and COVID-19 vaccines do not wipe out antibodies, according to experts. As of March 26, the Red Cross discontinued the dedi-

cated collection of COVID-19 convalescent plasma due to declining demand from hospitals and a sufficient industry supply. Posts online are now misrepresenting the change and are spreading the false claim that the Red Cross is no longer taking any plasma donations from those who have had the COVID-19 virus and received a vaccine. Social media users are sharing a February clip from KMOV-4, a CBS-affiliate news station in Missouri, where the anchor incorrectly says the Red Cross is no longer accepting convalescent plasma from people who are vaccinated because COVID-19 vaccines wipe out natural antibodies. "If you have had covid and recovered you can donate plasma to help save lifes UNLESS YOU GET THE VACCINE after having recovered," reads an inaccurate tweet that shared the video. Red Cross spokeswoman Katie Wilkes told The Associated Press that her organization had reached out to the news station to correct the information, since it is not correct that vaccines wipe out natural antibodies. Wilkes also said that even though the dedicated convalescent plasma program was discontinued, vaccinated people are still able to participate in blood drives. "In most cases, you can donate blood, platelets and plasma after a COVID-19 vaccine as long as you're feeling healthy and well," she said. KMOV-4 updated their story on May 27. "Today News4 updated a story we reported in February," a station spokesperson told the AP in an email. "At that time, a representative of the American Red Cross said the organization's policy was to discourage convalescent plasma donations from donors who previously had COVID-19 and were then vaccinated because of a then-belief about antibodies." Experts say the recent posts about antibodies get it all wrong. Dr. C. Buddy Creech, a Vanderbilt University vaccine expert, said there is no reason to suspect that COVID-19 vaccines would diminish antibodies. In fact, vaccines should boost them. Vaccines produce a more consistent immune response to the coronavirus, since mild infections lead to lower antibody levels than

**FILE - In this Dec. 29, 2020, file photo, Pat Moore, with the Chester County, Pa., Health Department, fills a syringe with a Moderna COVID-19 vaccine before administering it to emergency medical workers and health care personnel at the Chester County Government Services Center in West Chester, Pa. On Friday, May 28, 2021, The Associated Press reported on stories circulating online incorrectly asserting that the variants of the coronavirus that have been found in the global population were created by COVID-19 vaccines.**

(AP Photo/Matt Slocum, File)

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 64 of 86

more severe infections, Creech explained. "This is why those who have been infected still benefit from vaccination; that vaccine will then serve to boost the immune response that was made during the initial infection," Creech said in an email.

— Associated Press writer Beatrice Dupuy in New York contributed this report.

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Sweden is still using PCR tests for COVID-19 detection

CLAIM: Sweden has stopped using PCR tests to detect viruses.

THE FACTS: A post by Sweden's top health agency discussing the use of polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests to detect the coronavirus is being misinterpreted by social media users who falsely say the test is being discontinued there. "Sweden Stops using PCR Tests - for the reason that good scientists have been saying for fifteen months - RNA from Viruses can be Detected for Months After Infection. Not fit for purpose," a Twitter user falsely stated. The false claim also spread on Instagram. The PCR test, which can detect whether a virus's genetic material is present in a sample, is considered to be the most accurate kind of COVID-19 test available. "We can confirm that Sweden has not suspended the use of PCR tests," Anna Wetterqvist, a spokesperson for Sweden's Public Health Agency, told the AP in an email. In July, the health agency published a notice describing clinical criteria that can be used to determine when COVID-19 patients should be considered free of infection, which was misinterpreted on social media. "The PCR technology used in tests to detect viruses cannot distinguish between viruses capable of infecting cells and viruses that have been neutralized by the immune system and therefore these tests cannot be used to determine whether someone is contagious or not," reads a translation of the agency's website. The health agency's website notes, however, that PCR tests are used to identify whether someone is infected with COVID-19. Wetterqvist noted that about 350,000 PCR tests were carried out weekly in April and May. Sweden has carried out over 9.7 million PCR tests, she added. "The tests are considered secure given that testing is performed according to regulations for quality assessment as stated by the Health and Medical Services Act," Wetterqvist said.

— Associated Press writer Arijeta Lajka in New York contributed this report.

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Video shows protesters at Toronto vaccine site

CLAIM: Video shows parents in Toronto being blocked by police as children were given the COVID-19 vaccine in exchange for ice cream, without parental permission.

THE FACTS: Posts online are falsely claiming that a video showing protesters outside a vaccine pop-up clinic at Toronto City Hall were in fact parents trying to stop health professionals and police from vaccinating their children. The city of Toronto and the University Health Network held a pop-up vaccination event on May 23 at City Hall, where 2,500 doses of vaccine were administered, along with free ice cream, to those 12 years of age and older, according to the University Health Network. Canada became the first country to approve the Pfizer vaccine for 12- to 15-year-olds on May 5, a decision that was criticized by anti-vaccine advocates. In videos online, protesters can be seen at Nathan Phillips Square outside City Hall speaking out against vaccinating children at the clinic. "This is our children and we will not back down," one woman could be heard yelling in the video at police. Posts online shared the video to falsely claim it showed children being vaccinated against their parents' wishes. "A pop up vaccine clinic in Canada that is offering kids free ice cream in exchange for a vaccine, no parental permission required. Police are guarding the front to stop parents from intervening," one tweet said. Another post claimed that the video showed parents being barred from a school campus where children were being vaccinated without parental consent. Gillian Howard, a spokesperson for the University Health Network, said clinic staff did not see children being vaccinated without a family member present. "Anyone receiving vaccination would have been taken through the consent process by clinical staff and if there was any indication that someone – whatever their age – didn't understand the consent process, they would not be vaccinated," she wrote in an email. Only a handful of demonstrators took part in the protest. Howard said that police were present due to threats to the clinic. Under Ontario's Health Care Consent Act, there is no minimum age to provide consent for vaccination, according to Toronto Public Health spokesperson Dr. Vinita Dubey. Rather, it is



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 65 of 86

up to the healthcare providers to ensure that they obtain informed consent prior to immunization. "This means the healthcare provider administering the vaccine has to deem the youth capable of understanding their decision," Dubey said. "If the individual is incapable of consenting to receiving the vaccine, they would need consent from their substitute decision-maker, such as their parent or legal guardian."

— Beatrice Dupuy

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NY Post 1987 cover with Fauci is fake

CLAIM: The front page of a New York Post newspaper shows an image of Dr. Anthony Fauci under the headline, "THE MAN WHO GAVE US AIDS."

THE FACTS: The supposed cover is fake. The image of the newspaper's front page was manipulated to show a photo of Fauci under the headline, "Triggered 'gay cancer' epidemic in the U.S. THE MAN WHO GAVE US AIDS," to give the false impression that a 1987 article was about him. The Post did run that headline on Oct. 6, 1987, but the actual story was about a different individual and did not mention Fauci -- nor did it include his photo. Kenneth Moy, head librarian at the Post, shared with The Associated Press a scanned copy of the authentic front page and accompanying article that showed the real story focused on so-called "Patient Zero," a gay man who was accused of bringing HIV to the United States. Scientists now say that assumption was wrong, and that HIV appeared in the U.S. at an earlier date. During the AIDS epidemic, Fauci was appointed director of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. At the height of the crisis, Fauci and other government officials were criticized by AIDS activists for how they handled developing and administering treatments for the disease.

— Associated Press writer Terrence Fraser in New York contributed this report.

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Chelsea Clinton didn't tweet about Bill Gates' 'behavior'

CLAIM: Chelsea Clinton tweeted about Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates, asking, "What kind of man pursues a physical relationship with an underling and has relations with her in their office?"

THE FACTS: On May 24, just over a week after news broke that Microsoft Corp. had investigated Gates over a romantic relationship with a female Microsoft employee, social media users were sharing a fake tweet about the situation designed to look like it came from former President Bill Clinton's daughter Chelsea Clinton. "The more I hear about Bill Gates behavior the more ashamed for him I feel," the fake tweet read. "What kind of man pursues a physical relationship with an underling and has relations with her in their office??? Time to close the window on him. I always liked Mac better anyway." Facebook and Twitter users shared the bogus tweet as real, suggesting the younger Clinton's words were ironic in light of the extramarital affair her father had with a White House intern while in office. But there is no evidence Chelsea Clinton ever tweeted this. A search of her Twitter feed shows she did not post any tweets on the date shown on the fake tweet, May 17. Clinton's feed before and after that date also shows no evidence of any tweet resembling the image. An internet search finds no credible reports on the tweet, which likely would have garnered media attention had it been real. Chelsea Clinton's spokesperson Sarah Horowitz confirmed to The Associated Press that the tweet is fake.

— Ali Swenson

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Video of Ted Cruz supposedly swallowing a fly was edited

CLAIM: Video shows Texas Sen. Ted Cruz swallowing a fly during a Fox News interview.

THE FACTS: The video circulating on social media was manipulated and was first shared on Reddit last year as a joke with the title "Ted Cruz Eats Spider." On June 27, 2019, Cruz, the Republican senator, appeared on the Fox News show "Hannity," but there was no crawling critter in the original clip. In the original video, Cruz's voice cracks and Hannity tells him, "Take a sip of water. By the way, that's your Marco Rubio moment, just in case you didn't know." A clip of Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida sipping from a water bottle during a speech was widely shared in 2013. In the edited video of Cruz, which has no audio, some kind of crawling pest has been added. Social media users compared the edited video to the time a fly landed on Vice President Mike Pence's head during a debate with then-vice presidential nominee Kamala Harris last

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 66 of 86

October. "Remember that fly on Pence's head? Well Ted Cruz ate it last night," wrote an Instagram user who shared the manipulated video. Twitter users shared the manipulated video with the hashtag #ToadCruz.  
— Arijeta Lajka

## "The foundation of the wealth:" Why Black Wall Street boomed

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press  
TULSA, Okla. (AP) — In a century-old family story about a teenage aunt who liked to drive her luxury car down the trolley tracks of Tulsa, Kristi Williams still savors a tiny, lingering taste of how different life could have been for all Black Americans after slavery.

On Monday, Tulsans commemorate the 100th anniversary of a two-day assault by armed white men on Tulsa's prosperous Black community of Greenwood, known around the country as Black Wall Street, calling attention to an era of deadly mob assaults on Black communities that official history long suppressed.

But Williams, and other descendants of the freed Black people enslaved by Native American nations who once owned much of the land under Tulsa, say there's another part of Black Wall Street's history that more Americans need to know about.

It's one that has important lessons for contemporary racial issues in the United States, including the long debated matter of reparations, descendants and historians say.

That bit of the story: where much of the seed money that made Black Wall Street boom came from.

Unlike Black Americans across the country after slavery, Williams' ancestors and thousands of other Black members of slave-owning Native American nations freed after the war "had land," says Williams, a Tulsa community activist. "They had opportunity to build a house on that land, farm that land, and they were wealthy with their crops."

"And that was huge — a great opportunity and you're thinking this is going to last for generations to come. I can leave my children this land, and they can leave their children this land," recounts Williams, whose ancestor went from enslaved laborer to judge of the Muscogee Creek tribal Supreme Court after slavery.

In fact, Alaina E. Roberts, an assistant professor at the University of Pittsburgh, writes in her book "I've Been Here All the While: Black Freedom on Native Land," the freed slaves of five Native American nations "became the only people of African descent in the world to receive what might be viewed as reparations for their enslavement on a large scale."

Why that happened in the territory that became Oklahoma, and not the rest of the slaveholding South: The U.S. government enforced stricter terms for reconstruction on the slave-owning American Indian nations that had fully or partially allied with the Confederacy than it had on Southern states.



**This photo provided by the Department of Special Collections, McFarlin Library, The University of Tulsa shows an African American woman and girl sitting on a porch swing, both dressed in coats and hats, by the side of a house. Provenance is unknown; however, it is believed that these photos were taken in Tulsa, Okla. prior to the Tulsa Race Massacre.**

(Department of Special Collections, McFarlin Library, The University of Tulsa via AP)

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 67 of 86

While U.S. officials quickly broke Gen. William T. Sherman's famous Special Field Order No. 15 providing 40 acres for each formerly enslaved family after the Civil War, U.S. treaties compelled five slave-owning tribes — the Choctaws, Chickasaws, Cherokees, Muscogee Creek and Seminoles — to share tribal land and other resources and rights with freed Black people who had been enslaved.

By 1860, about 14% of the total population of that tribal territory of the future state of Oklahoma were Black people enslaved by tribal members. After the Civil War, the Black tribal Freedmen held millions of acres in common with other tribal members and later in large individual allotments.

The difference that made is "incalculable," Roberts said in an interview. "Allotments really gave them an upward mobility that other Black people did not have in most of the United States."

The financial stability allowed Black Native American Freedmen to start businesses, farms and ranches, and helped give rise to Black Wall Street and thriving Black communities in the future state of Oklahoma. The prosperity of those communities — many long since vanished — "attracted Black African Americans from the South, built them up as a Black mecca," Roberts says. Black Wall Street alone had roughly 200 businesses.

Meeting the Black tribal Freedmen in the thriving Black city of Boley in 1905, Booker T. Washington wrote admiringly of a community "which shall demonstrate the right of the negro, not merely as an individual, but as a race, to have a worthy and permanent place in the civilization that the American people are creating."

And while some tribes reputedly gave their Black members some of the worst, rockiest, unfarmable land, that was often just where drillers struck oil starting in the first years of the 20th century, before statehood changed Indian Territory to Oklahoma in 1907. For a time it made the area around Tulsa the world's biggest oil producer.

For Eli Grayson, another descendant of Muscogee Creek Black Freedmen, any history that tries to tell the story of Black Wall Street without telling the story of the Black Indian Freedmen and their land is a flop.

"They're missing the point of what caused the wealth, the foundation of the wealth," Grayson says.

The oil wealth, besides helping put the bustle and boom in Tulsa's Black-owned Greenwood business district, gave rise to fortunes for a few Freedpeople that made headlines around the United States. That included 11-year-old Sarah Rector, a Muscogee Creek girl hailed as "the richest colored girl in the world" by newspapers of the time. Her oil fortune drew attention from Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Dubois, who intervened to check that Rector's white guardian wasn't pillaging her money.

The wealth from the tribal allotment also gave rise to Williams' family story of great-aunt Janie, "who learned to drive by going behind the trolley lines" in Tulsa, with her parents in the car, Williams' uncle, 67-year-old Samuel Morgan, recounted, laughing.

"It was real fashionable, because it was one of the cars that had four windows that rolled all the way up," Morgan said.

Little of that Black wealth remains today.

In May 1921, 100 years ago this month, Aunt Janie, then a teenager, had to flee Greenwood's Dreamland movie theater as the white mob burned Black Wall Street to the ground, killing scores or hundreds — no one knows — and leaving Greenwood an empty ruin populated by charred corpses.

Black Freedmen and many other American Indian citizens rapidly lost land and money to unscrupulous or careless white guardians that were imposed upon them, to property taxes, white scams, accidents, racist policies and laws, business mistakes or bad luck. For Aunt Janie, all the family knows today is a vague tale of the oil wells on her land catching fire.

Williams, Grayson and other Black Indian Freedmen descendants today drive past the spots in Tulsa that family history says used to belong to them: 51st Street. The grounds of Oral Roberts University. Mingo Park.

That's yet another lesson Tulsa's Greenwood has for the rest of the United States, says William A. Darity Jr., a leading scholar and writer on reparations at Duke University.

If freed Black people had gotten reparations after the Civil War, Darity said, assaults like the Tulsa Race Massacre show they would have needed years of U.S. troop deployments to protect them — given the angry resentment of white people at seeing money in Black hands.

## Tanker's impossible voyage signals new sanction evasion ploy

By JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press Writer

MIAMI (AP) — The Cyprus-flagged oil tanker *Berlina* was drifting near the Caribbean island of Dominica earlier this year when the safety signals it is required to transmit showed it stopping in its tracks and in two minutes turning around 180 degrees.

It was an amazingly quick pivot since the 274-meter (nearly 900-foot) ship needs roughly 10 times that amount of time to perform such a maneuver.

Even more intriguing: Around the same time in March the *Berlina* was pinging that location at sea, it was physically spotted loading crude oil in nearby Venezuela despite U.S. sanctions against such trading.

Meanwhile, nine other tankers, some connected to the same Greece-based owner of the *Berlina*, were sending signals that showed them moving nearby in the Caribbean at an identical speed and direction — and with sudden changes in weight indicating they had somehow been loaded full of crude without ever touching port.

The *Berlina's* impossible journey may show the next frontier in the evolving methods used by rogue states and their enablers to fool satellite-based tracking systems so that they can circumvent sanctions without detection.

In recent years, as the U.S. has expanded economic sanctions and tracking technology has become more widely used, companies have adopted a number of techniques to evade detection. Most involve a ship going dark, by turning off its mandatory automated identification system or by "spoofing" the identity and registration information of another ship, sometimes a sunken or scrapped vessel.

Windward, a maritime intelligence agency whose data is used by the U.S. government to investigate sanctions violations, carried out a detailed investigation into the *Berlina*. It considers the movements of the *Berlina* and the other ships to be one of the first instances of orchestrated manipulation in which vessels went dark for an extended period while off-ship agents used distant computers to transmit false locations.

Militaries around the world have been using similar electronic warfare technology for decades. But it is only now cropping up in commercial shipping, with serious national security, environmental and maritime safety implications.

"We believe this is going to spread really fast because it's so efficient and easy," Matan Peled, co-founder of Windward, said in an interview. "And it's not just a maritime challenge. Imagine what would happen if small planes started adopting this tactic to hide their true locations?"

Under a United Nations maritime treaty, ships of over 300 tons have been required since 2004 to use an automated identification system to avoid collisions and assist rescues in the event of a spill or accident at sea. Tampering with its use is a major breach that can lead to official sanctions for a vessel and its owners.

But that maritime safety system has also become a powerful mechanism for tracking ships engaged in illegal fishing or transporting sanctioned crude oil to and from places under U.S. or international sanctions like Venezuela, Iran and North Korea.

In the cat-and-mouse game that has ensued, the advent of digital ghosts leaving false tracks could give the bad actors the upper hand, said Russ Dallen, the Miami-based head of Caracas Capital Markets brokerage, who tracks maritime activity near Venezuela.

"It's pretty clear the bad guys will learn from these mistakes and next time will leave a digital trail that more closely resembles the real thing," Dallen said, referring to some of the anomalies detected by Windward, such as the sudden 180-degree turn. "The only way to verify its true movement will be to get a physical view of the ship, which is time consuming and expensive."

The *Berlina* never reported a port call while floating in the Caribbean. Nonetheless, on March 5, the draft — showing the level at which it rides through the water — indicated by its identification system went from 9 meters to 17 meters (30 feet to 60 feet), suggesting it had been loaded with oil.

Was it manipulation or a malfunction?

While the *Berlina's* voyage remains something of a mystery, Vortexa, a London-based energy cargo tracker, determined the tanker had loaded at the Venezuelan port of Jose on March 2 and then headed

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 69 of 86

toward Asia. Separately, Windward also confirmed the crude delivery through two sources.

Two months later, on May 5, the *Berlina* discharged its crude in a ship-to-ship transfer to a floating storage vessel, the *CS Innovation*, according to Vortexa. The *CS Innovation* remains off the coast of Malaysia, where the transfer took place, and has undertaken a number of ship-to-ship transfers in the interim, making it nearly impossible to know where Venezuela's oil will end up.

Adding to suspicions, the *Berlina* and at least four of the nine other vessels involved in the Caribbean voyage earlier this year are connected to the same Greek company, according to Windward. And all 10 vessels switched the countries in which they were registered — another common ploy used to make it harder to keep track of ships — to Cyprus in the four months prior to the manipulation of the fleet's tracking information.

The Associated Press was unable to locate any contact information for the *Berlina*'s ship manager or owner, both of which are based in the port city of Pireaus, near Athens.

Peled said the *Berlina*'s activities may never have been detected if not for a tip it received from an external source that it wouldn't identify.

But the know-how gained from the investigation has allowed it to identify other recent examples of location tampering, including one in January, when a ship it did not identify was spotted loading Iranian crude at Kharg island while broadcasting a location out at sea somewhere else in the Persian Gulf.

While the U.S. government has more resources than commercial enterprises to ferret out such deceptive practices, doing so will require extra effort.

"It suggests the length to which rogue actors are willing to go, to hide their activities," said Marshall Billingslea, an assistant Treasury secretary for terrorist financing during the Trump administration and former deputy undersecretary of the Navy. "It's a worrisome trend and given the huge volume of maritime traffic will introduce a lot more noise into the system."

## European regulator recommends Pfizer shot for children 12-15

By FRANK JORDANS and MARIA CHENG Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — The European Medicines Agency on Friday recommended that the use of the coronavirus vaccine made by Pfizer and BioNTech be expanded to children ages 12 to 15, a decision that offers younger and less at-risk populations across the continent access to a COVID-19 shot for the first time.

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was the first one granted authorization across the European Union in December, when it was given the green light for use in anyone 16 and over. Since then, about 173 million doses have been administered in the EU, which is about three-quarters of all vaccine shots given so far in the 27-nation bloc.

"Extending the protection of a safe and effective vaccine in this younger population is an important step forward in the fight against this pandemic," Marco Cavaleri, head of health threats and vaccine strategy at the Amsterdam-based EMA, said.

The EU regulator authorized the vaccine for younger adolescents after receiving data from the United States showing it to be highly effective against infection. In a study involving 2,000 adolescents, none of those who received the vaccine got COVID-19, compared with 16 in a control group that received a placebo, Cavaleri said.

"The vaccine was well-tolerated, and the side effects in this age group were very much similar (to) what we've seen in young adults and not raising major concern at this point in time," he said.

The EMA decision needs to be rubber-stamped by the European Commission, and national regulators can decide whether the vaccine will be offered to children under 16 in each country.

The recommendation follows similar decisions by regulators in Canada and the U.S. last month, as rich countries slowly approach their vaccination targets for adults and look to immunize as many people as possible.

Researchers will continue to monitor the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine's long-term protection and safety in study participants for another two years. Cavaleri acknowledged that rare adverse effects may not have

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 70 of 86

been picked up in the relatively small study on which authorization was based.

"Once the vaccine will be deployed, it will be important to continue monitoring the performance of the vaccine and to determine if there is any safety issue," he said, adding that recent months had shown Europe's reporting system is able to detect possible problems in vaccines.

The EMA last month added warnings about the possible risk of rare blood clots in people who had received a dose of vaccines made by AstraZeneca or Johnson & Johnson, after some countries reported a very small number of the millions vaccinated had experienced rare blood clots.

Most COVID-19 vaccines worldwide have been authorized for adults, who are at higher risk of severe disease and death from the coronavirus. But vaccinating children of all ages could be critical to stopping outbreaks, since some research has shown older children may play a role in spreading the virus even though they don't typically fall seriously ill with COVID-19.

In the U.S., children represent about 14% of the country's coronavirus cases and at least 316 have died, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. Doctors have also identified a rare inflammatory syndrome in a very small proportion of children sickened by COVID-19.

Immunizing children against COVID-19 might also give authorities more confidence to reopen schools, as getting children to wear masks and engage in social distancing has been challenging at times.

But the World Health Organization has criticized rich countries for moving on to vaccinate their younger and less at-risk populations, saying that the extremely limited number of COVID-19 vaccines should instead be shared with poor countries so they too can protect their health workers and those most vulnerable.

"I understand why some countries want to vaccinate their children and adolescents, but right now I urge them to reconsider and to instead donate vaccines to COVAX," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said earlier this month, referring to the U.N.-backed initiative to distribute vaccines fairly. Of the more than 1 billion COVID-19 shots administered globally, fewer than 2% have gone to poor countries.

Other vaccine makers also are studying whether their shots are safe and effective in children. Earlier this week, Moderna Inc. said its shot strongly protects children as young as 12; it said it would submit a request for emergency use authorization to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration next month. Another U.S. company, Novavax, has a COVID-19 vaccine in late-stage development and just began a study in 12- to 17-year-olds.

Both Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech have been testing their vaccines in children from ages 6 months to 11; they get a lower dose than what teens and adults receive. China's Sinovac has also submitted early data to the country's regulators, hoping to prove its vaccine is safe in children as young as 3.

## US consumers boosted spending in April as inflation surged

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans increased their spending by 0.5% in April, a slowdown after a massive gain in March that had been powered by the distribution of billions of dollars in individual stimulus checks.

Even with the pullback from a 4.7% surge in spending in March, the April increase provided further evidence that consumers are driving a strengthening recovery from the pandemic recession. The April gain was led by a 1.1% rise in spending on services, the sector that covers airline travel, hotels and restaurants — areas that were devastated by the pandemic-caused shutdowns a year ago.

Friday's report also showed that inflation by a measure preferred by the Federal Reserve surged by a bigger-than-expected 3.6% for the 12 months that ended in April. Even excluding the volatile food and energy categories, core inflation over that period was a still high 3.1%.

Both figures are far above the Fed's 2% annual inflation target. Yet the current year-over-year inflation figures are likely temporarily elevated. That's because when the pandemic paralyzed the economy in early spring last year, many prices plummeted before rebounding later in the year. That factor at least partly explains why the 12-month inflation figures look so large. They are expected to ease in the coming months, although inflation pressures have been surfacing in the prices of many goods and components — a result, in most cases, of supply shortages.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 71 of 86

In its report Friday on consumer spending in April, the government said that goods purchases fell 0.6%. To some economists, this suggested that consumers have embarked on a long-anticipated shift away from the large goods purchases many of them had made while hunkered down at home to spending on services, from haircuts to airline tickets to restaurant meals.

"The great consumer spending rotation to services has begun," said Gregory Daco, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics. "As health conditions continue to improve and the economy reopens, generous fiscal stimulus, rebounding employment and rising optimism will help unleash pent-up demand."

Daco forecast that consumer spending, the main driver of the U.S. economy, could grow this year by around 9.5%. If so, that would amount to the strongest such showing since 1946, when the nation was emerging from World War II rationing and other restrictions.

Friday's report from the Commerce Department also showed that personal incomes, which provide the fuel for spending, tumbled 13.1% in April. But the drop in income was expected, having followed a record 20.9% income gain in March that reflected the billions in one-time checks to most adults.

The April gain in consumer spending, slight as it was compared with March, supported the view that the economy is rebounding rapidly as individuals and businesses grow increasingly confident enough to spend, hire and invest. On Thursday, the government estimated that the economy grew at a robust 6.4% rate in the January-March quarter, powered in large part by consumer and business spending.

The economy is thought to be expanding even faster in the current April-June quarter with many analysts forecasting an annual figure of 10% or more.

The outlook for the rest of the year is brightening, too, on the strength of trillions of dollars more in government support, increased mobility as vaccinations keep increasing and a surge in pent-up consumer demand. More Americans are venturing out to shop, travel, dine out and gather in large groups at sporting and entertainment venues. For 2021 as a whole, many economists foresee growth, as measured by the gross domestic product, achieving its fastest pace since at least 1984.

As the recovery rapidly expands, the risk of a pickup in inflation continues to loom. Should inflation, which has been dormant for years, begin to accelerate on a sustained basis, it might compel the Fed to respond with interest rate hikes that could derail the recovery.

Gus Faucher, chief economist at PNC Financial, said that while the April inflation figures exceeded expectations, much of the increase related to supply-chain bottlenecks in such areas as computer chips and autos.

"We have some temporary inflation pressures," Faucher said, "but those will fade, so there is nothing that the Federal Reserve is going to be concerned about."

When asked about the rise in inflation, Chair Jerome Powell and other Fed officials have said repeatedly that they believe the inflation spikes that have surfaced with some goods will prove temporary as bottlenecked supply chains are unclogged.

On Thursday, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen echoed this sentiment but also cautioned a House committee that the economy could endure a "bumpy" period with high inflation through year's end.

The 3.6% increase in prices over the past 12 months was the largest year-over-year rise since September 2008. Excluding volatile food and energy costs, the 3.1% year-over-year rise in core inflation was the sharpest since 1992. And the one-month increase in core inflation in April, 0.7%, was the biggest since 1981.

In its report Friday on spending and income, the government also reported that the savings rate stood at a still high 14.9% in April, down from 27.7% in March. Many Americans built up saving over the past year, either from government stimulus checks or from hunkering down at home and avoiding much spending. Economists generally believe that the pool of savings will help fuel the spending boom they envision in the coming months.

## Frenchman killed after stabbing, shooting 3 police officers

By ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — A man with severe schizophrenia who had been on a watch list for Islamic radicalism stabbed a police officer at her station Friday in western France and shot two other officers before police

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 72 of 86

killed him, authorities said.

The slain suspect was a Frenchman in his 40s who had been on a watch list for Islamic radicalism because of his "rigorous" religious practices, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said. The assailant had recently been released from prison and was under monitoring by psychiatric services, he said.

The three officers were wounded but none is in life-threatening condition, the minister said.

The motive for the violence in the Nantes suburb of La Chapelle-sur-Erdre was unclear, but Darmanin told reporters at the scene that the man "clearly wanted to attack police."

The attacker was born in France and did not have any past convictions for terrorism-related crimes, Darmanin said.

The assailant, who lived in La Chapelle-sur-Erdre, entered the police station Friday morning saying he had a car problem, Mayor Fabrice Roussel said.

He then stabbed the first police officer inside the station, apparently took her gun and fled, Darmanin said. The officer was wounded in the leg and hand.

French police deployed helicopters, search dogs and more than 200 officers to find the suspect, and closed nearby schools and stores. When he was located, he fired on officers trying to arrest him, Darmanin said.

The suspect was gravely wounded in an ensuing shootout, and died Friday afternoon of his injuries, according to a police official. The official, who was not authorized to be publicly named, said authorities are not searching for any accomplices.

French President Emmanuel Macron, on a visit to South Africa, called for "all efforts to clarify the circumstances" of the attack and to better protect France.

Police and ambulances blocked roads in the normally quiet, residential area after the stabbing.

Domestic security and attacks on police are a big political issue ahead of regional elections next month and France's presidential election next year.

Two police employees have been killed in France in recent weeks. One was an administrative official stabbed to death inside her police station near Paris in what authorities are investigating as an Islamic extremist attack. The other was a drug squad officer shot to death in the southern city of Avignon.

## IndyCar courts Black fans, drivers in its push to diversify

By DAN GELSTON AP Sports Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Rod Reid ran a program full of young, Black kart racers locked out of a venue because of the pandemic and needing a track to race.

Indianapolis Motor Speedway had spent millions on upgrades on the historic property at the same time last year when the coronavirus had a steely grip on the nation. There was no guarantee -- even if gates were open -- that there would be room for NXG Youth Motorsports' usual spot teaching kids STEM classes in a makeshift classroom in the paddock or for their drivers to race around the cone-lined course in a parking lot.

The suggestion was made to Reid: Why not dial up the new boss at IMS?

His plea for help last June to Roger Penske -- Reid noted the 2,300 kids from 11 to 15 years old who have passed through the school over 15 years looking for a path into motorsports -- turned instead into a startling revelation for the Captain.

Yes, the NXG kids needed a place to learn and hone their craft. But the blossoming drivers also represented a rare chance for a minority group severely underrepresented in racing to feel at home inside the sprawling, 111-year-old speedway.

"We told him what we were about and he was really surprised," Reid said. "He did not know we existed. The reason we started, especially the idea of exposing the Black community to Indianapolis Motor Speedway, surprised him because he said he couldn't believe people don't feel welcome here. I told him, you're talking years and years and years back to when a person of color couldn't even go to the speedway."

The 84-year-old Penske offered NXG space at IMS to resume the program and, essentially, a new start. He helped NXG start a working relationship with Chevrolet, and the program secured loans to purchase



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 73 of 86

a truck for its trailer. The talks with Penske happened to come not long after the death of George Floyd, a catalyst that in part led to IndyCar's "Race for Equality and Change" initiative supporting diversity and inclusivity across the industry.

"I think the idea that a group of people would not feel welcome in a place he purchased, and a sport he loves, like I do, totally didn't make sense to him," Reid said.

Much like NASCAR dealt with its own racial reckoning last year, IndyCar moved to create a more diverse workforce throughout all levels of a series that has had just two Black drivers race in the Indy 500, its showcase annual event that dates to 1911. Willy T. Ribbs became the first Black driver to start the race in 1991 (and again in 1993) and George Mack in 2002 are it.

"Isn't it sad, all these years and not another Black driver?" Reid said.

The 66-year-old Ribbs, who drives this summer for the Superstar Racing Experience series, said he never cared much for his role as Indy 500 trailblazer.

"It did not matter. I didn't care about it," he said. "Still don't. It meant nothing. I was focused on going fast and trying to win. If you focused on anything other than that when you were there, you were going to get hurt or get killed."

Programs launched over the last several months are designed to reach far beyond the cockpit, but an anchor of IndyCar's plan was the creation of Force Indy, an all-Black race team led by Reid that competes in the IndyCar ladder USF2000 Series. Force Indy hired and developed Black mechanics, engineers and drivers throughout its entire team. Myles Rowe, who turns 21 in June, drives for the team and has been pegged as a potential Indy 500 driver.

"The goal is, in 2023, can we have an African-American, male or female, try to qualify for the 500," Penske said.

Jimmie McMillian, chief diversity officer for Penske Entertainment, is the architect intent on designing a new era in the open wheel series. He said members of the Black community who live near IMS treat never having attended an Indianapolis 500 as some sort of badge of honor. They have an up-close look at one of the most famous venues in sports and don't really see anyone who looks like them, certainly not on the starting grid.

"We want to make sure our paddock represents the fan base that we hope to have," McMillian said. "My No. 1 goal, I feel every day, is to get rid of the concept that this is a white sport and that people are not welcome here."

Years before Penske assumed stewardship of the series, IndyCar had a diversity committee that worked on recruitment and retainment for both the series and IMS. While McMillian viewed the number of women involved on the corporate side as a positive for the series -- roughly 35% to 40% of the workforce are women -- the minority makeup "was where we probably struggled."

"We tried to figure out why we were so monolithic in our employee base," McMillian said.

IndyCar's solution was an attempt to become more aggressive and creative in its outreach efforts -- how does it find the best and brightest in urban communities and persuade them to seek a career inside the paddock. Yes, there was a greater presence on social media and ticket drives, and some of the usual promotional pushes like working with key stakeholders in the community such as the Indianapolis Urban League.

"Someone has to take that first step," Penske said. "I think in the position we're in, we can be leaders in that area. We're going to continue to do it. We're looking at the people we do business with. The people that we hire. We have a much deeper focus. We have that within our company. But I think from a racing perspective, I think we have that responsibility."

For McMillian, it was the 1-to-1 connection, the personal stories that could be shared with kids and adults that Indianapolis Motor Speedway was as welcoming to them as any other fan enjoying a pork tenderloin sandwich as cars zip past at 200 mph on race day.

"How successful could you be as a person of color if you don't see people who are successful?" McMillian asked. "So it's telling that story and going out to different communities to say, not only do we want

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 74 of 86

you here, but there's different paths of success for you and your race doesn't matter. This is a great place to work."

McMillian changed tires and performed oil changes working at a Bloomington, Indiana, tire dealer in the late 1990s when his co-workers invited him to a NASCAR race at the Brickyard. He was instantly in awe at the scene of packed crowds and fast cars but Confederate flags and "South Will Rise Again" T-shirts made him uncomfortable and sowed doubts about pursuing a career in motorsports.

He's now leading a charge for change.

IndyCar didn't necessarily have a moment like NASCAR faced last year when Black driver Bubba Wallace led the demand for the stock car series to finally ban the Confederate flag from its races and venues.

IndyCar kept an eye on how NASCAR added minority owners like Michael Jordan and Pitbull, and McMillian said there was even more to study from NHRA: The drag racing series has long been a leader in diversity and essentially made gender, race -- and even socioeconomics -- nonfactors in pursuing a career in motorsports.

That hasn't always been the case in IndyCar.

"I knew that I was not dealing on a level playing field," Ribbs said. "I was not getting the same opportunities based on one thing, and not because I couldn't win. I was not getting support because I was African-American. Support meaning from corporate America."

With few exceptions for drivers born into legacy families, pursuing a career in racing is as much about sponsorship, cash and connections as talent, and the hustle is part of the job. IndyCar took a deeper look at identifying businesses willing to support developmental teams or help in securing equipment for up-and-coming programs. That also means developing a career path in racing for women and minorities in a variety of jobs outside the cockpit ranging from race engineers to public relations and sponsorship selling and beyond; Reid is a former member of the whistle-blowing, yellow-shirted security team.

"Some people say having a driver in a car is going to make all the difference in the world but if you listen to Lewis Hamilton, he's very adamant about the fact that when he gets out of the car and goes to the Mercedes paddock, all the faces don't look like him," McMillian said, referring to the seven-time Formula One champion, who is Black. "His success has not changed that. I have the same concern, quite frankly, that if we were successful enough to have the Lewis Hamilton of IndyCar, that alone would not be the thing we need to really bring the change into the sport that we need."

IndyCar created incentives for teams and track promoters that pushed diversity efforts. NXG students will race karts in Detroit as part of a pilot program that could lead to a full-season schedule in 2022 and expansion of the program is planned across the country.

NXG, funded in part through Lucas Oil sponsorship, has yet to send a student to IndyCar, though there may be no better time for kids to feel like they can succeed in some capacity at IMS.

Penske is engaged at every level and, yes, diversity can be good for the bottom line, but he has taken a hands-on approach with ideas that could spark fundamental change in the sport.

"He says, what can we do, let's get it done," McMillian said.

Look around IMS and tangible culture change is happening now. USF2000, the first rung on the road to IndyCar, raced at IMS during the IndyCar Grand Prix weekend, and more Black fans seemed to visit the track and watch the race than McMillian could remember.

"They said, 'I didn't know so many Black people came to races,'" he said. "The narrative now is, there are a lot of Black people here. We have to make sure all the folks in our community, for one reason or another can say, 'I've been to the track.'"

## Spain criticized for unequally priced 'equality stamps'

By BARRY HATTON and ALICIA LEÓN Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Spain's postal service is feeling a backlash from its attempt to highlight racial inequality.

State-owned Correos España this week issued a set of four stamps in different skin-colored tones. The darker the stamp, the lower the price. The lightest color costs 1.60 euros (\$1.95). The darkest one costs

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 75 of 86

0.70 euros (\$0.85).

The postal service calls them "Equality Stamps" and introduced them on the anniversary of George Floyd being killed by a police officer in Minneapolis. It said the stamps "reflect an unfair and painful reality that shouldn't be allowed" and that every letter or parcel sent with them would "send a message against racial inequality."

The campaign was launched during European Diversity Month in collaboration with Spain's national SOS Racism Federation, a nonprofit group, and featured a 60-second video with Spanish hip-hop star and activist El Chojín.

But while the goal of Correos España was to "shine a light on racial inequality and promote diversity, inclusion and equal rights," critics are accusing the company of having a tin ear for racial issues and misreading the sentiment of Black people in Spain.

Antumi Toasijé, a historian who heads the government's Council for the Elimination of Racial or Ethnic Discrimination, urged the postal service to stop selling the stamps.

"A campaign that outrages those it claims to defend is always a mistake," he tweeted.

The main thrust of the public criticism was that the darker stamps have a lower value, giving the impression that a light skin color is worth more.

Moha Gerehou, a 28-year-old Spanish author and a former president of SOS Racismo Madrid, said that was "an insurmountable contradiction."

"At the end of the day, an anti-racism campaign has put out a clearly racist message," Gerehou told the Associated Press on Friday.

He put the controversy in the context of what he sees as structural racism in Spain, which often goes unacknowledged but can be detected in such aspects as commercial advertising, the Spanish language and in access to housing. "It's all connected," he said.

Correos España said it would make no comment on the controversy.

The postal service's initiative has divided Spanish anti-racism activists. While the national SOS Racism Federation backed it, the organization's Madrid section poured scorn on the effort.

SOS Racismo Madrid said the campaign helps conceal the structural nature of racism and perpetuate the notion of Black inferiority.

Any racially aware person would have identified what was wrong with the campaign, it said, adding that the blunder proved the need for more racially aware people in decision-making positions at companies.

The campaign also received criticism on social media.

This isn't the first time the Spanish postal service has sought to make a statement on social issues. Last June, to coincide with LGBT Pride Month, it issued a special stamp and painted its delivery vans and mail boxes in rainbow colors.

## At century mark, Tulsa Race Massacre's wounds still unhealed

By AARON MORRISON Associated Press

TULSA, Okla. (AP) — The Black Wall Street Market is nowhere near Black Wall Street.

The original Black Wall Street vaporized a hundred years ago, when a murderous white mob laid waste to what was the nation's most prosperous Black-owned business district and residential neighborhood. When Billie Parker set out to memorialize the name with her new development, she built it far from Tulsa's historic Greenwood neighborhood.

She followed the trail of the city's Black population. There were roughly 10,000 Black Tulsans in 1921; displaced by the massacre, they would be pushed farther and farther north into what is unambiguously an underdeveloped and underserved section of the city today.

Parker's Black Wall Street Market is a ramshackle outpost on a 3-acre lot abutting a two-lane road, a far cry from the booming city within a city that was Greenwood, with its Black grocers, shopkeepers, doctors, lawyers, newspaper publishers and other businessmen and women.

But Parker thought it was important to lay claim to the name and its legacy.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 76 of 86

"We were taught not to even think about that," Parker, who is in her 50s, said on a recent Saturday morning after opening up the market's gift shop. "We had to hush up. So, I say it's time for us to put Black Wall Street out there."

The 6 miles between the old and new incarnations of Black Wall Street belie the dire connection that links them: Racial and socioeconomic inequality on Tulsa's north side has its roots in the 100-year-old atrocity of the Tulsa Race Massacre.

First, a racist mob stripped an almost unknowable amount of wealth from Black Tulsans overnight. Then, desegregation and urban renewal further upended the post-massacre Black business community that was rebuilt. Insurance claims for massacre victims' losses were denied and their civil lawsuits against the city and state seeking financial relief were tossed out.

No Black survivor or descendant has been justly compensated for their losses. That timeline left a gaping wound unhealed for a century -- and that wound is still open on Tulsa's north side.

The question is: What can be done now to help it heal?

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According to a U.S. Census Bureau estimate, the median household income for Black households across Tulsa was an estimated \$30,955 in 2019, compared with \$55,278 median income for white households. In a city of an estimated 401,760 people, close to a third of Tulsans who lived below the poverty line in 2019 were Black, while 12% were white.

A quick drive between south and north Tulsa shows a clear difference in development. Some paved streets don't have streetlights or traffic signals. Until recently, the entire north side had easy access to just one grocery store. Many homes are in need of repair and renovations.

The Gibbs Next Generation Center, a small shopping mall and office park run by descendants of a woman who survived the Tulsa Race Massacre, is located in the same ZIP code as Parker's market. LeRoy Gibbs II and his wife, Tracy, purchased the center in 2015 — the property used to be the location of businesses run by LeRoy's grandfather and grandmother, LeRoy and Ernestine Gibbs, who was a teenager during the massacre.

The younger generation of Gibbs has revived the center with the hope that it brings jobs and revenues to the Black community. They rent office space and storefronts to six tenants, including a graphic design shop, a legal defense aid organization, a Black beauty boutique and a candy store.

But the Gibbs have also grown frustrated with the stark inequality of Tulsa's north side.

"One thing we have to remember is when the 1921 Race Massacre occurred, people's homes and businesses were destroyed," said Tracy Gibbs, CEO of the center.

The community didn't just lose structures and buildings, they lost an educational base of residents who knew how to start and grow businesses, Gibbs said.

"You lose all of that history as it relates to businesses and that information being passed down from generation to generation," she said. "You have African American businesses that are striving and struggling to turn a dollar, make a dollar, keep a dollar in a community because of that lack of education that's there."

Look around, says Brandon Oldam, a native north Tulsan and member of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission, and you'll see the cascading effects of a 100-year-old massacre: "We don't know how the wealth that would have been passed down would have changed the trajectory of millions of people."

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Greenwood -- where the massacre occurred -- has seen some improvements. There are white-napkin restaurants, a bookstore, a gourmet dessert bar, and a jazz club within blocks of the district. Silhouette Sneakers and Art, on Archer Avenue, is a Black-owned boutique that opened in 2019. Prior to the massacre, it was Grier-Shoemaker, a Black-owned shop.

And soon there'll be a \$30 million history center at Greenwood and Archer avenues. Greenwood Rising will honor the legacy of Black Wall Street, with exhibits depicting the district before and after the massacre, according to the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission.

But Greenwood's expansion appears choked off by the development happening around it, in Tulsa's Art

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 77 of 86

District. And for Billie Parker, any revitalization of Black Wall Street in Tulsa should be where Black people reside -- and that's not in Greenwood, 6 miles south of her lot.

"I'm sorry to tell you that we don't own it (Greenwood) anymore," Parker said.

She owns her lot, on North Osage Drive, and uses it as an incubator for Black entrepreneurship and an events venue.

It's a fixer upper. There are no paved parking spaces at Black Wall Street Market. A museum consists of a glass case displaying Black cultural antiques. The gift shop is organized inside of a one-room trailer, where Parker sells dashikis, African shea butter, black soap, body oils, jewelry made from cowrie shells and other vintage Black culture trinkets.

To the left of the gift shop is a hoop house, where she allows her neighbors to plant and grow vegetables and herbs in raised garden beds. The produce is sometimes sold in the gift shop.

When Dawn Tree, a Black abstract painter and graphic design artist, stopped by the market on a recent day, the discussion turned to the massacre -- and to reconciliation. Tree said it was impossible without compensation to victims. And that compensation should include more than just the dozen or so plaintiffs in an ongoing reparations lawsuit, she said.

"There's trauma that's blanketed over this city," said Tree. "Going forward, whatever is done to atone for what happened 100 years ago must be done for the north side community."

The city's white, Republican mayor, G.T. Bynum, doesn't support paying direct reparations to massacre victims and descendants. But he recognizes that racial disparities in Tulsa demand attention, and public initiatives that he says are helping to address, for example, the 11-year gap in life expectancy between north Tulsans and others in the city.

"The city of Tulsa in 1921 had two choices," Bynum said. "They could either be completely transparent about what happened, hold those who did it accountable, and help a community rebuild. Or in embarrassment and disgrace, they could pretend it never happened, cover it up and tell everybody to just get on with their lives."

He added: "I think to our city's eternal detriment, they chose door No. 2, when given that option. I can't imagine how better off we would be as a city today, if they had chosen door No. 1."

For Tiffany Crutcher -- organizer of the Black Wall Street Legacy Festival, which is independent of the city's official commemoration -- the argument for reparations rests on two tragedies that befell her family, almost a century apart.

Terrorized by the massacre, "My father's grandmother, Rebecca Brown Crutcher, had to flee Greenwood in fear of her life," Crutcher said.

But the family stayed in Tulsa, enduring some of the same post-massacre hardships that generations of Black Tulsans endured: urban renewal, inequality on the north side and police brutality.

Then, in 2016, her unarmed twin brother, Terence, was shot and killed by a Tulsa police officer on the north side. Terence was a father to a young boy. The now-former city officer, Betty Jo Shelby, was acquitted of first-degree manslaughter in 2017.

"I can't help but think, almost 100 years later, about what happened to my twin brother," Crutcher said. "I like to note that the same state-sanctioned violence that burnt down my great-grandmother's community is the same state-sanctioned violence that killed my twin brother."

It is that kind of trauma -- as much as the crippling financial losses suffered in the wake of the riot, and in the decades since -- that Crutcher said demanded compensation.

"We paid reparations to the Japanese, (and) the Jews received reparations" after World War II, she said. "And even when I think about the Oklahoma City bombing, those victims, they've received some compensation."

"But when it comes to Blacks in America, why is it so difficult? Why is there a debate? Why do we have to negotiate what's right and what should be owed? Lives were lost."

## WHO chief concedes 'slow' response to Congo sex abuse claims

By MARIA CHENG AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — The head of the World Health Organization acknowledged the U.N. health agency's response to sexual abuse allegations involving employees who worked in Congo during an Ebola outbreak was "slow," following an Associated Press investigation that found senior WHO management knew of multiple cases of misconduct.

As the WHO's highest decision-making body meets this week, countries were tackling subjects like how to reform the U.N. health agency's emergencies program after its missteps in responding to the coronavirus pandemic. At its week-long meeting of countries, the WHO held a roundtable talk on preventing sexual abuse on Friday.

"In many ways, we're all to blame for what happens in these situations," said Dr. Michael Ryan, the WHO's emergencies chief.

Diplomats have already pressed WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on the issue behind closed-doors. At least six countries raised concerns last week about how the agency was handling sexual abuse and exploitation, citing recent press reports. Tedros tried to allay their worries.

"I can understand the frustration," he told a committee meeting of the WHO's Executive Board on May 19. According to a recording of the meeting obtained by the AP, the director-general said it took time to deal with security problems in Congo, to install a commission to investigate sex abuse claims and to get the group up and running.

"The way this thing was run until now, although it was slow ... I hope it will satisfy," Tedros said.

The WHO's press office declined to comment on Tedros' description of a slow response but said the commission was "committed to conducting a comprehensive investigation into all recent allegations, including those relating to management actions." The group's co-chairs were asked to sign a confidentiality agreement with the WHO.

The panel commissioned by the WHO does not include any law enforcement agencies to investigate if any of the reported sexual exploitation was criminal and its reports will be submitted only to the WHO.

Tedros created the panel in October, after news reports surfaced about sex abuse during the WHO's efforts to contain the Ebola epidemic in Congo from 2018 to 2020. At the time, Tedros said he was "outraged" and would move quickly to punish those responsible.

But more than seven months later, the panel has yet to publicly release any details about its work or findings. The commission began its work in Congo on May 3 and expects to publish a report at the end of August, the group said.

Many countries said they expected more action, alluding to the AP's recent story. Nearly 50 countries issued a joint statement Friday expressing their "deep concerns" about the WHO's handling of sexual abuse.

"We expressed alarm at the suggestions in the media that WHO management knew of reported cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment and had failed to report them, as required by U.N. and WHO protocol, as well as at allegations that WHO staff acted to suppress the cases," the joint statement said.

The United States, addressing the assembly Friday, urged other countries to hold the WHO accountable for its management of sex abuse claims; Canada, Australia, Britain, New Zealand and Mexico were among the countries that signed the statement.

Simon Manley, Britain's ambassador to the U.N. in Geneva, called for the WHO to reconsider issues including whether the U.N.'s internal oversight office should be involved in probing sex abuse claims and to clearly explain what the process would be for sharing its investigation results with member countries. Manley said earlier reports "lacked detail" and should have been shared earlier.

"We must from now on see much more transparency from the WHO," he said.

An AP investigation published earlier this month found members of the WHO's senior management were told of sexual abuse concerns in 2019 involving at least two doctors employed by the agency during the Ebola epidemic in Congo.

The AP obtained a notarized contract showing two WHO staff members signed off on an agreement by Dr. Jean-Paul Ngandu to pay off a young woman he reportedly impregnated. Another doctor, Boubacar Diallo, bragged of his relationship with WHO chief Tedros and offered women jobs in exchange for sex, three women told the AP.

Even some WHO staffers appear unsatisfied at how the agency has handled the claims.

"We cannot afford to ignore signs of repeated, systemic failure of our Organization to prevent such alleged behaviors and to address them in a just and timely manner," the WHO staff committee wrote in an email to staff and senior management last week. The committee urged WHO directors to take immediate action over the allegations, including reports that "senior management may have suppressed concerns."

Some countries told the WHO's top leadership during last week's closed meetings they expected more details quickly.

"Now that WHO is considered a beacon to help us find our way out of this pandemic, it is so disheartening to learn about allegations of structural mishandling of cases of misconduct," a representative of the Dutch government said, according to a meeting recording. "Reading the (press) articles made us doubt whether the many statements and discussions we have had (at the WHO about sex abuse) have been truly heard."

The representative from the Netherlands called for more transparency to address "the gap in trust that is starting to emerge in this area."

Dr. Catherine Boehme, Tedros' Cabinet chief, responded that "some issues are still a work in progress." She said WHO officials would soon meet with the commission investigating the Congo sex abuse allegations to discuss "the investigation around failure to report or active suppression, including the allegation of a cover-up."

"We know there are weaknesses in the system, whether it's the WHO or the U.N. system," added Dr. Ibrahima Soce Fall, the WHO's assistant director-general for emergency response.

Some experts said the WHO's failure to quickly punish those involved in sexual misconduct was disappointing, but not surprising.

"Aid organizations are operating in an accountability vacuum, in contexts where law and order has broken down and where there are no external systems able to hold them to account," said Asmita Naik, an international human rights consultant who co-authored a report on sexual exploitation involving U.N. personnel.

"Things will not change until those who perpetrate abuse or turn a blind eye are disciplined and conversely, those who speak up are rewarded," Naik said.

## Microsoft: SolarWinds hackers target 150 orgs with phishing

By FRANK BAJAK AP Technology Writer

BOSTON (AP) — The state-backed Russian cyber spies behind the SolarWinds hacking campaign launched a targeted spear-phishing assault on U.S. and foreign government agencies and think tanks this week using an email marketing account of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Microsoft says.

The effort targeted about 3,000 email accounts at more than 150 different organizations, at least a quarter of them involved in international development, humanitarian and human rights work, Microsoft Vice President Tom Burt said in a blog post late Thursday.

It did not say what portion of the attempts may have led to successful intrusions but said many of those targeting Microsoft customers were blocked automatically. "We're also in the process of notifying all of our customers who have been targeted," Burt said.

The cybersecurity firm Volexity, which also tracked the campaign but has less visibility into email systems than Microsoft, said in a post that relatively low detection rates of the phishing emails suggest the attacker was "likely having some success in breaching targets."

Burt said the campaign appeared to be a continuation of multiple efforts by the Russian hackers to "target government agencies involved in foreign policy as part of intelligence gathering efforts." He said the targets spanned at least 24 countries.

The hackers gained access to USAID's account at Constant Contact, an email marketing service, Microsoft

said. The authentic-looking phishing emails dated May 25 purport to contain new information on 2020 election fraud claims and include a link to malware that allows the hackers to "achieve persistent access to compromised machines."

Microsoft said in a separate, technical blog post that the campaign is ongoing and evolved out of several waves of spear-phishing campaigns it first detected in January that escalated to the mass-mailings of this week.

USAID and Constant Contact provided no additional detail on how the hackers gained access. USAID spokeswoman Pooja Jhunjunwala said Friday that a forensic investigation was ongoing and the agency was working with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. Constant Contact spokeswoman Kristen Andrews called it an "isolated incident," with the impacted accounts temporarily disabled.

While the SolarWinds campaign, which infiltrated dozens of private sector companies and think tanks as well as at least nine U.S. government agencies, was supremely stealthy and went on for most of 2020 before being detected in December by the cybersecurity firm FireEye, this campaign is what cybersecurity researchers call noisy. Easy to detect.

Microsoft noted the two mass distribution methods used: the SolarWinds hack exploited the supply chain of a trusted technology provider's software updates; this campaign piggybacked on a mass email provider.

With both methods, the company said, the hackers undermine trust in the technology ecosystem.

As in the SolarWinds campaign, the exploit of the USAID marketing email was first publicized by private sector actors.

## Japan extends virus emergency with safe Olympics at stake

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan extended a coronavirus state of emergency in Tokyo and other areas for 20 more days on Friday, with infections still not slowing as it prepares to host the Olympics in just over 50 days.

Cases remain high and medical systems in Osaka, the hardest-hit area in western Japan, are still overburdened, Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said in announcing the decision.

"I am aware that many people are voicing concern about holding the Olympics and Paralympics," he said. "I take them seriously, and I will proceed with preparations for a safe and secure games."

He said the next three weeks are "an extremely important time for us to achieve results" in a two-pronged battle to control infections while expanding vaccinations.

The current state of emergency in the capital and eight other metropolitan areas was to end next Monday, but hospitals in some areas are still overflowing with COVID-19 patients and serious cases have recently hit new highs.

The 20-day extension covers nine areas ranging from Hokkaido in the north to Fukuoka in the south. A 10th area, the southern island prefecture of Okinawa, is already under emergency status through June 20.

Olympic organizers must decide at about that time whether to allow any fans at all, after overseas spectators were banned months ago. A plan to prioritize vaccinations for Japanese athletes is expected to begin around then, according to media reports.

The Olympics are scheduled to start July 23 after a one-year postponement due to the pandemic, and worries about new variants and Japan's slow vaccination rollout have triggered calls from the public, medical experts and even a sponsor to cancel the games.

Suga's public support ratings have plunged to about 30% from around 70% when he took office in September.

Experts have warned that the variants are infecting more people, leaving them seriously ill and flooding hospitals in some areas.

Japan has lagged on vaccinations due to bureaucratic and planning missteps and shortages of medical staff. Only 2.3% of the population has been fully vaccinated, and the current phase targeting older adults is not scheduled to finish before the games start.

Still, Suga and his government are determined to host the Olympics. The International Olympic Commit-



tee has also said the games will go ahead even if host city Tokyo is under emergency measures.

The government has been pushing to speed up inoculations and aims to administer up to 1 million a day, but some experts say that's an overly optimistic target.

Japan has reported about 730,000 coronavirus cases and more than 12,700 deaths.

## Party of 4? Your trail is ready. Busy parks try reservations

By MICHAEL HILL Associated Press

ST. HUBERTS, N.Y. (AP) — Nick and Matthew Golebiewski climbed to the summit of Gothics mountain in the Adirondacks with packs, water, good boots and a new must-have item: advanced reservations.

The free reservation system went online recently to handle the fast-growing number of visitors to the privately owned Adirondack Mountain Reserve. Similar management systems are in place this summer season for outdoor attractions from Maui to Maine, typically in response to the pandemic or to crowds that were surging even before lockdowns inspired more wilderness visits.

Trails elsewhere in New York's 6 million-acre Adirondack Park remain reservation-free. But hikers through the reserve like the Golebiewski brothers are now checked in by staff in the parking lot and at the trailhead.

The reservation system offers a trade-off to visitors, sacrificing spontaneity and ease of access for benefits like a guaranteed parking spot and more elbow room in the woods.

"I've been avoiding a lot of the High Peaks for years now because they've been so overcrowded, just been doing other trails," said Matthew Golebiewski at the mountain on a recent sunny Saturday. "And so it's nice that I have a guaranteed spot and we can do to hike today and no stress."

Outdoor reservation systems are not new, especially for camping spots. But they are popping up more as parks brace for a busy summer now that the coronavirus pandemic is waning in the U.S. and more restrictions are being lifted.

Waianapanapa State Park in Hawaii began requiring entry and parking reservations for non-residents. Yosemite and Rocky Mountain national parks have entry reservation systems in place.

In Maine, Acadia National Park on Wednesday began requiring a \$6 reservation for vehicles heading up on Cadillac Summit Road, an extremely popular perch to watch the sunrise. The move, part of a larger park transportation plan, was designed to cut down on traffic backups, said park spokesperson Christie Anastasia.

"Sometimes we had people calling 911 because they're literally on the road and they can't go up, they can't go down, they can't make a U-turn to get off the road," she said.

Glacier National Park in Montana recently launched a similar advance vehicle reservation on its 50 mile Going-to-the-Sun Road and quickly sold out the initial slots, prompting complaints on social media from frustrated tourists. Park spokesperson Gina Kerzman noted that more reservations are made available daily on a rolling basis.

In the Adirondacks, Shanzeh Farooqui said her group of friends initially couldn't get a reservation for a hike to a popular overlook called Indian Head on their preferred Saturday this month. But they eventually were able to grab a canceled spot and her friends enjoyed the panoramic views on their preferred day.

"It's a little more difficult," Farooqui said on the precipice, "but if that's what we need to do to preserve the land, then it's not too cumbersome."

Advocates say the inconvenience is outweighed by the need to protect wilderness from overuse. Though the day-use reservation system at Yosemite National Park was enacted because of the pandemic, it has helped solve congestion problems that have plagued the attraction, said Neal Desai, a senior program director with the National Parks Conservation Association.

"We need people's experience to match their expectations, and there's a massive disconnect right now," said Desai, who advocates for Yosemite. "People think they're getting nature and beautiful trails and instead they're inhaling car exhaust for hours and finding trails and facilities overcrowded."

The number of Americans who hiked last year increased by 8.1 million, the largest one-year gain on record, according to the Outdoor Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Outdoor Industry Association.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 82 of 86

National park visits dropped precipitously last year amid pandemic-related park closures and restrictions. But the drop followed years of high use and crowds are expected back in force this year.

"We expect that there will be significant increases in visitation at many parks as COVID mitigation measures are reduced, vaccination rates rise, and Americans increase their travel," National Parks Service deputy director for operations Shawn Bengel told a Senate committee Wednesday.

The parks service on Thursday launched its #PlanLikeARanger campaign, which encourages advanced planning.

In New York's Adirondacks, popular trailhead parking lots are typically filled before dawn on summer weekends. Summits like Cascade Mountain are packed.

At the private Adirondack Mountain Reserve, the number registered hikers surged from 16,500 in 2014 to 29,100 last year, general manager John Schuler said.

The 7,000-acre reserve, exclusive Ausable Club, is private land accessible to the public under a long-standing easement.

The three-year pilot reservation system, announced by the reserve and the state in March, is designed both to protect natural resources and for public safety. State officials hope the managed entry will reduce illegal roadside parking.

"It's a plan to help improve accessibility for parking in a fair and equitable manner for all levels of hikers," Schuler said, "whether it's entry-level day hikers, overnight hikers, peak baggers."

State Department of Environmental Conservation officials who signed off on the reservation system said they have no plans now to expand it to publicly owned lots and trailheads, despite overcrowding worries.

"We have always said that we would consider permits a tool of last resort," said Deputy Commissioner of Natural Resources Katie Petronis.

## CEO pay rises to \$12.7M even as pandemic ravages economy

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — As COVID-19 ravaged the world last year, CEOs' big pay packages seemed to be under as much threat as everything else.

Fortunately for those CEOs, many had boards of directors willing to see the pandemic as an extraordinary event beyond their control. Across the country, boards made changes to the intricate formulas that determine their CEOs' pay — and other moves — that helped make up for losses created by the crisis.

As a result, pay packages rose yet again last year for the CEOs of the biggest companies, even though the pandemic sent the economy to its worst quarter on record and slashed corporate profits around the world. The median pay package for a CEO at an S&P 500 company hit \$12.7 million in 2020, according to data analyzed by Equilar for The Associated Press. That means half the CEOs in the survey made more, and half made less. It's 5% more than the median pay for that same group of CEOs in 2019 and an acceleration from the 4.1% climb in last year's survey.

At Advance Auto Parts, CEO Tom Greco's pay for 2020 was in line to take a hit because of a mountain of pandemic-related costs. Extended sick-pay benefits and expenses for hand sanitizer and other safety equipment totaling \$60 million dragged on two key measurements that help set his performance pay. But because the board's compensation committee saw these costs as extraordinary and unanticipated, it excluded them from its calculations. That helped Greco's total compensation rise 4.7% last year to \$8.1 million.

At Carnival, the cruise operator gave stock grants to executives, in part to encourage its leaders to stick with the company as the pandemic forced it to halt sailings and furlough workers. For CEO Arnold Donald's 2020 compensation, those grants were valued at \$5.2 million, though their full value will ultimately depend on how the company performs on carbon reductions and other measures in coming years. That helped Donald receive total compensation valued at \$13.3 million for the year, up 19% from a year earlier, even as Carnival swung to a \$10.2 billion loss for the fiscal year.

Meanwhile, regular workers also saw gains, but not at the same rate as their bosses. And millions of

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 83 of 86

others lost their jobs.

Wages and benefits for all workers outside the government rose just 2.6% last year. That's according to U.S. government data that ignore the effect of workers shifting between different industries. It's an important distinction because more lower-wage earners lost their jobs as the economy shut down than professionals who could work from home.

"This should have been a year for shared sacrifice," said Sarah Anderson, who directs the global economy project at the left-leaning Institute for Policy Studies. "Instead it became a year of shielding CEOs from risk while it was the frontline employees who paid the price."

The AP's compensation study included pay data for CEOs at S&P 500 companies who have served at least two full fiscal years at their companies, which filed proxy statements between Jan. 1 and April 30. It doesn't include some highly paid CEOs who don't fit that criteria. The pay figures for CEOs sometimes include grants of stock and options they may never ultimately receive unless they hit certain performance targets.

## COMPLEXITY AND CORONAVIRUS

Last year's 5% gain for median CEO pay masks how much variation in pay there was beneath the surface. Some companies thrived as a direct result of the pandemic. Sales boomed for Lowe's amid a great nesting across the country, and CEO Marvin Ellison's pay nearly doubled after its stock more than doubled the S&P 500's total return through its fiscal year.

Other CEOs, meanwhile, saw their compensation cut. At Duke Energy, the board reduced CEO Lynn Good's short-term performance pay after its earnings per share fell short of its initial target, partly because industrial customers used less power during the pandemic. Good's pay dipped 2.6% to \$14.3 million, even though earnings ended up within the range Duke forecast for Wall Street early in the year. Duke didn't adjust formulas to raise Good's pay because of the pandemic.

Overall, 61% of the 342 CEOs in this year's survey did get a boost in compensation last year. That's almost the exact same percentage as the 62% in 2019, when the economy and corporate profits were growing.

That's also despite several CEOs taking high-profile cuts to their salary during the year as an act of shared sacrifice and to conserve a bit of cash for the company. Roughly one of every five CEOs in this year's survey had a smaller salary for 2020 than the year before.

But salary is often just a minor piece of a CEO's total compensation, which is derived from notoriously complex formulas. Each year, companies fill pages of their proxy statements with charts and footnotes showing how the bulk of their CEO's pay rises and falls with corporate performance. It's here, in the nuanced area, where many companies adjusted levers that ultimately helped CEOs get more in compensation.

## A SUDDEN CHANGE

Boards typically stick with the formulas set for CEO pay early each year, but the global economy's sudden crash forced a reconsideration. What made things even cloudier was that they had few historical guides for how to proceed.

"Many committees asked us this very question: Does this compare to the financial crisis? What did people do then?" said Melissa Burek, partner at Compensation Advisory Partners, a consulting firm that works with boards.

But the pandemic was very different than the 2008 economic collapse, mainly because this crisis was caused by a virus, rather than by CEOs taking on too much debt and risk. As boards adjusted targets to make CEOs' incentive pay less difficult to get, many also limited the size of the possible payouts.

"I think there is a recognition, when unemployment is so high, of: Do we feel good about paying our CEO at this level?" said Kelly Malafis, also a partner at Compensation Advisory Partners, of the thinking by boards of directors. "The answer is: 'We're doing this for performance. When performance is not good, we don't pay. When performance is good, we do pay.'"

At Carnival, for example, the company says that much of its CEO's compensation is tied to the company's financial and operational performance. The company said Donald received no cash bonus tied to 2020. And to preserve cash in the pandemic, the company gave him grants of restricted stock instead of salary

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 84 of 86

from April through June. Then from July through November, it cut Donald's salary by half.

## RATTLING AT THE GATES

Progressives in Washington are pushing for rules changes to narrow the gap between CEOs and workers. Companies have to show how much more their CEO makes than their typical worker, and the median in this year's survey was 172 times. That's up from 167 times for those same CEOs last year, and it means employees must work lifetimes to make what their CEO does in just a year.

One bill in Congress proposes to raise taxes on corporations where the CEO makes 50 times or more than the median worker at the company.

At some companies, shareholders are pushing back on compensation packages approved by the board.

At the annual meeting of Chipotle Mexican Grill's shareholders earlier this month, just 51% of voting shares gave a thumb's up to its executives' pay packages, compared with 95% a year earlier. Across the S&P 500, such "Say-on-pay" votes routinely get more than 90% approval.

Chipotle's board excluded three months of sales results from the worst of the pandemic, along with several other items, while calculating pay for its CEO, Brian Niccol. That allowed him to get bigger compensation than he would have otherwise.

Chipotle called the move a one-time modification that's not reflective of Niccol's ongoing pay package. Chipotle was one of the relative winners of the pandemic, with revenue rising 7.1% and its stock soaring 65.7%.

While they're nonbinding, "Say-on-pay" votes are getting increasing attention from Wall Street. Between 2017 and 2019, stocks of companies that failed their votes lagged sharply behind the S&P 500 in the following 12 months, according to Morgan Stanley.

The trend didn't hold last year, when the pandemic may have unsettled everything, but Morgan Stanley strategists say they still see failed "Say-on-pay" votes as a red flag that a stock may struggle.

And if there's anything that investors on Wall Street care about, it's how well they're getting compensated.

## Tokyo Olympics looking more and more like fan-free event

By STEPHEN WADE AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — The president of the Tokyo Olympic organizing committee hinted Friday that even local fans may be barred from venues when the games open in just under two months.

Fans from abroad were ruled out months ago as being too risky during a pandemic.

The prospect of empty venues at the postponed Olympics became more likely when the Japanese government decided Friday to extend a state of emergency until June 20 as COVID-19 cases continue to put the medical system under strain.

The state of emergency was to have been lifted on Monday. The extension in Tokyo, Osaka and other prefectures raises even more questions if the Olympics can be held at all.

Organizers and the IOC are insistent they will go ahead despite polls in Japan showing 60-80% want them called off.

"We would like to make a decision as soon as possible (on fans), but after the state of emergency is lifted we will assess," organizing committee president Seiko Hashimoto said at her weekly briefing.

Hashimoto promised to decide on local fans by April, then put it off until early June. Now the deadline is within a month of the July 23 opening date.

"There are many people who are saying that for the Olympic Games we have to run without spectators, although other sports are accepting spectators," Hashimoto said. "So we need to keep that in mind. We need to avoid that the local medical services are affected. We need to take those things into consideration before agreeing on the spectator count."

Cancellation pressure grows daily on Tokyo and the IOC as more questions arise about the risks of bringing 15,000 Olympic and Paralympic athletes from more than 200 countries and territories into Japan, a country that has been largely closed off during the pandemic.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 85 of 86

The IOC says more than 80% of athletes and staff staying in the Olympic Village on Tokyo Bay will be vaccinated. They are expected to remain largely in a bubble at the village and at venues.

In addition to athletes, tens of thousands of judges, officials, VIPs, media and broadcasters will also have to enter Japan.

Earlier this week, the New England Journal of Medicine said in a commentary: "We believe the IOC's determination to proceed with the Olympic Games is not informed by the best scientific evidence."

It questioned the IOC's so-called Playbooks, which spell out rules at the games for athletes, staff, media and others. The final edition will be published next month. Also this week, the Asahi Shimbun — the country's second-largest newspaper — said the Olympics should be canceled.

The British Medical Journal last month in an editorial also asked organizers to "reconsider" holding the Olympics in the middle of a pandemic.

On Thursday, the head of a small doctors' union in Japan warned that holding the Olympics could lead to the spread of variants of the coronavirus. He mentioned strains in India, Britain, South Africa and Brazil.

Japan has attributed about 12,500 deaths to COVID-19, a relatively small number that has gone up steadily in the last few months. The vaccination rollout began slowly in Japan, but has moved more quickly in the last few days. Vaccinated people are estimated at about 5% of the population.

The IOC, which often cites the World Health Organization as the source of much of its coronavirus information, has been steadfast in saying the games will happen. It receives about 75% of its income from selling broadcast rights, which is estimated to be \$2 billion-\$3 billion from Tokyo. That cashflow has been slowed by the postponement.

Japan itself has officially spent \$15.4 billion to organize the Olympics, and government audits suggest the figure is even higher.

Senior IOC member Richard Pound told a British newspaper this week that "barring Armageddon" the games will take place. Last week, IOC vice president John Coates was asked if the Olympics would open, even if there were a state of emergency.

"Absolutely, yes," he replied.

IOC President Thomas Bach has also said "everyone in the Olympic community" needs to make sacrifices to hold the Olympics.

The message got pushback from Japanese social and local media, some of which noted that the IOC and the so-called Olympic Family are booked into many of Tokyo's top five-star hotels during the games.

Hashimoto defended the IOC's leadership.

"The IOC has a strong determination to hold the games," she said. "So such a strong will is translated into strong words. That's how I feel."

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, May 29, the 149th day of 2021. There are 216 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 29, 2020, fired Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin was arrested and charged with third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter in the death of George Floyd. (He would be convicted in April 2021 on those charges as well as second-degree unintentional murder.)

On this date:

In 1790, Rhode Island became the 13th original colony to ratify the United States Constitution.

In 1914, the Canadian ocean liner RMS Empress of Ireland sank in the St. Lawrence River in eastern Quebec after colliding with the Norwegian cargo ship SS Storstad; of the 1,477 people on board the Empress of Ireland, 1,012 died. (The Storstad sustained only minor damage.)

In 1953, Mount Everest was conquered as Edmund Hillary of New Zealand and Tensing Norgay of Nepal became the first climbers to reach the summit.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 326 ~ 86 of 86

In 1973, Tom Bradley was elected the first Black mayor of Los Angeles, defeating incumbent Sam Yorty.  
In 1977, Janet Guthrie became the first woman to race in the Indianapolis 500, finishing in 29th place (the winner was A.J. Foyt).

In 1985, 39 people were killed at the European Cup Final in Brussels, Belgium, when rioting broke out and a wall separating British and Italian soccer fans collapsed.

In 1988, President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev opened their historic summit in Moscow.

In 1998, Republican elder statesman Barry Goldwater died in Paradise Valley, Arizona, at age 89.

In 2009, a judge in Los Angeles sentenced music producer Phil Spector to 19 years to life in prison for the murder of actor Lana Clarkson. (Spector remained in prison until his death in January 2021.)

In 2014, Starbucks closed thousands of stores for part of the day to hold training sessions for employees on unconscious bias, in response to the arrests of two Black men in Philadelphia at one of its stores.

In 2015, the Obama administration formally removed Cuba from the U.S. terrorism blacklist.

In 2019, in his first public remarks on the Russia investigation, special counsel Robert Mueller said charging President Donald Trump with a crime was "not an option" because of federal rules, but he emphasized that the investigation did not exonerate the president.

Ten years ago: A week after Joplin, Missouri, was nearly leveled by the deadliest tornado to strike the U.S. in decades, President Barack Obama visited the city to offer hope to survivors and promises of help. JR Hildebrand was one turn away from winning the Indianapolis 500 when he skidded high into the wall on the final turn and Dan Wheldon drove past to claim the win.

Five years ago: An Army veteran of two Afghanistan tours killed one person and wounded several others during a shooting rampage in west Houston before being gunned down by a SWAT officer. Alexander Rossi won the 100th running of the Indianapolis 500.

One year ago: Thousands of protesters in Minneapolis angered by the death of George Floyd ignored a curfew as unrest again overwhelmed authorities; fires burned unchecked in cars and businesses. In a tweet, President Donald Trump called protesters in Minneapolis "thugs" and added that "when the looting starts, the shooting starts." (The tweet was flagged by Twitter for "glorifying violence.") Protests over Floyd's death spread to dozens of cities. Hundreds of protesters gathered outside the White House, some throwing rocks and tugging at barricades; officials later said Secret Service agents rushed Trump to an underground bunker. A federal law enforcement officer, David Underwood, was killed and his partner wounded by gunfire from a vehicle as they provided security at the U.S. courthouse in Oakland, California, during a protest. (An Air Force sergeant, Steven Carillo, is accused in that killing and the shooting death of a sheriff's deputy days later; he has pleaded not guilty.) Trump announced that the U.S. would end support for the World Health Organization, saying it didn't respond adequately to the pandemic. Missouri officials said they were trying to notify "mass numbers" of people after someone who attended crowded pool parties Memorial Day weekend at Lake of the Ozarks tested positive for COVID-19. New Zealand said it had all but eradicated the coronavirus, with just one person in the nation of 5 million known to be infected.

Today's Birthdays: Former Baseball Commissioner Fay Vincent is 83. Motorsports Hall of Famer Al Unser is 82. Actor Helmut Berger is 77. Rock singer Gary Brooker (Procol Harum) is 76. Actor Anthony Geary is 74. Actor Cotter Smith is 72. Singer Rebbie (ree-bee) Jackson is 71. Movie composer Danny Elfman is 68. Singer LaToya Jackson is 65. Actor Ted Levine is 64. Actor Annette Bening is 63. Actor Rupert Everett is 62. Actor Adrian Paul is 62. Singer Melissa Etheridge is 60. Actor Lisa Whelchel is 58. Actor Tracey Bregman is 58. Rock musician Noel Gallagher is 54. Actor Anthony Azizi is 52. Rock musician Chan Kinchla (Blues Traveler) is 52. Actor Laverne Cox is 49. Rock musician Mark Lee (Third Day) is 48. Cartoonist Aaron McGruder ("The Boondocks") is 47. Singer Melanie Brown (Spice Girls) is 46. Latin singer Fonseca is 42. Actor Justin Chon (TV: "Deception"; "Dr. Ken") is 40. NBA player Carmelo Anthony is 37. Actor Billy Flynn is 36. Actor Blake Foster is 36. Actor Riley Keough is 32. Actor Brandon Mychal Smith is 32. Actor Kristen Alderson is 30. Actor Lorelei Linklater is 28.