

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 1 of 66

[1- Groton Legion Post #39 Overcomes Legion Webster Legion Post 40 \(2021\) In Face Of Early 5-Run Inning](#)

[2- New garbage receptacles](#)

[3- Groton Transit Fundraiser Ad](#)

[4- Truss Pros/Precision Wall Systems Ad](#)

[4- Groton Area Help Wanted Ad](#)

[5- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)

[6- Weather Pages](#)

[9- Daily Devotional](#)

[10- 2021 Community Events](#)

[11- News from the Associated Press](#)



## Groton Legion Post #39 Overcomes Legion Webster Legion Post 40 (2021) In Face Of Early 5-Run Inning

Groton Legion Post #39 weathered a scare by Legion Webster Legion Post 40 (2021) in the fourth inning where Groton Legion Post #39 coughed up five runs, but Groton Legion Post #39 still won 8-5 on Tuesday. The offensive onslaught by Legion Webster Legion Post 40 (2021) was led by Matt M, Carter W, and Tristan A, who all drove in runs.

Groton Legion Post #39 fired up the offense in the first inning. Cade Larson drew a walk, scoring one run.

Groton Legion Post #39 notched four runs in the second inning. Groton Legion Post #39's offense in the inning came from a walk by Jonathan Doeden and a triple by Brodyn DeHoet.

Pierce Kettering was the winning pitcher for Groton Legion Post #39. The pitcher lasted three innings, allowing one hit and zero runs while striking out six and walking one. Evin Nehls and Chandler Larson entered the game out of the bullpen and helped to close out the game in relief.

Carson M took the loss for Legion Webster Legion Post 40 (2021). The bulldog lasted three innings, allowing one hit and eight runs while striking out six.

DeHoet went 1-for-2 at the plate to lead Groton Legion Post #39 in hits. Groton Legion Post #39 didn't commit a single error in the field. Jackson Cogley had the most chances in the field with nine. Groton Legion Post #39 tore up the base paths, as two players stole at least two bases. Jayden Zak led the way with three.

Legion Webster Legion Post 40 (2021) was sure-handed and didn't commit a single error. Carter made the most plays with six.

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

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

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# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 2 of 66



**New garbage receptacles were distributed on Main Street. Councilman Brian Bahr and his son, Hunter, distributed the new cans earlier this week. The receptacles were made possible with the Never Satisfied Grant from POET.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

# 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 \***



**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.

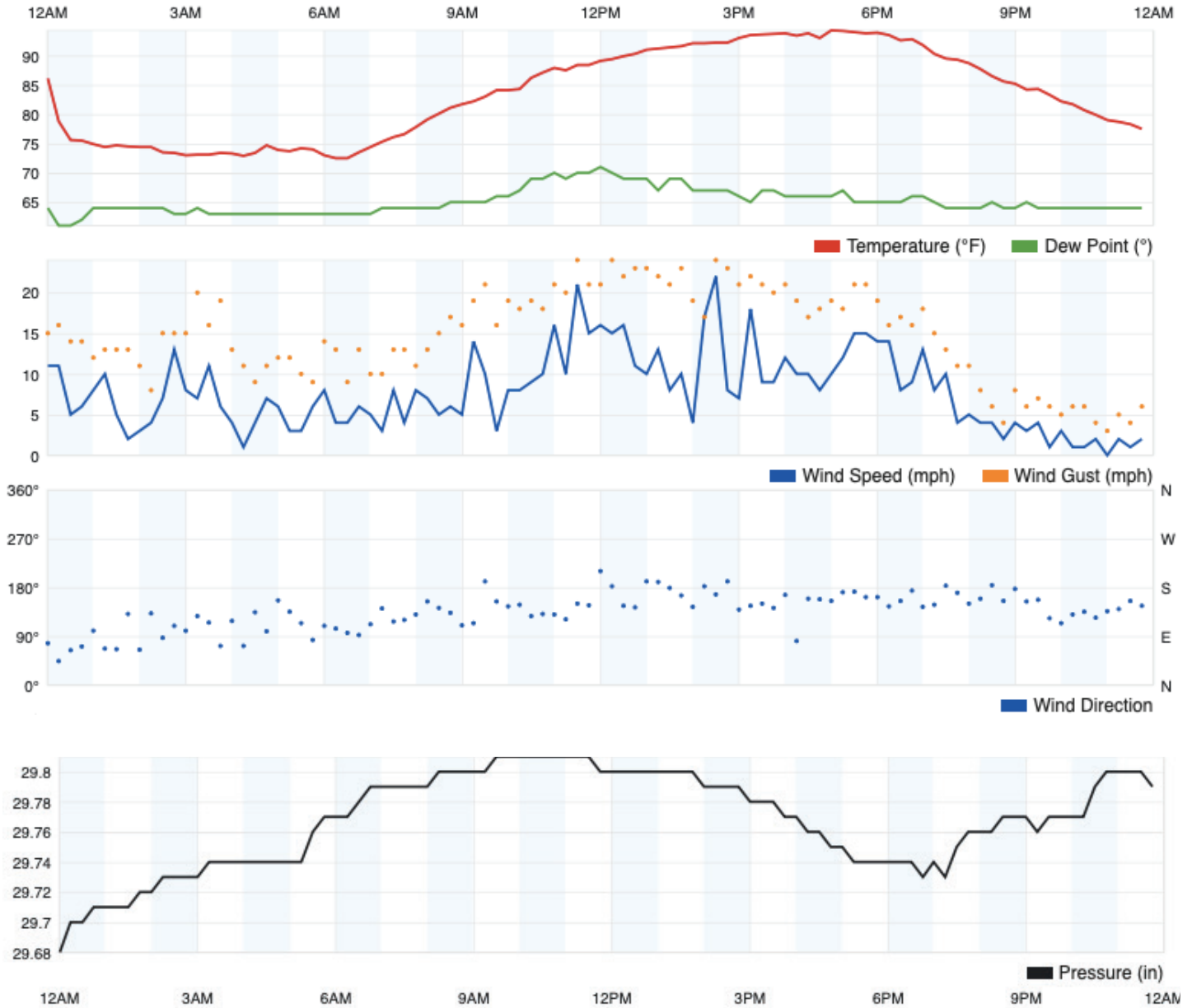
**MS/HS Special Education Paraprofessional.** The Groton Area School District is seeking applicants for the position of Special Education Paraprofessional. Starting salary is \$12.10/hour and position includes comprehensive benefits package. Criminal background check required. Interested parties should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




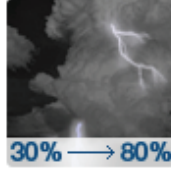

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 5 of 66

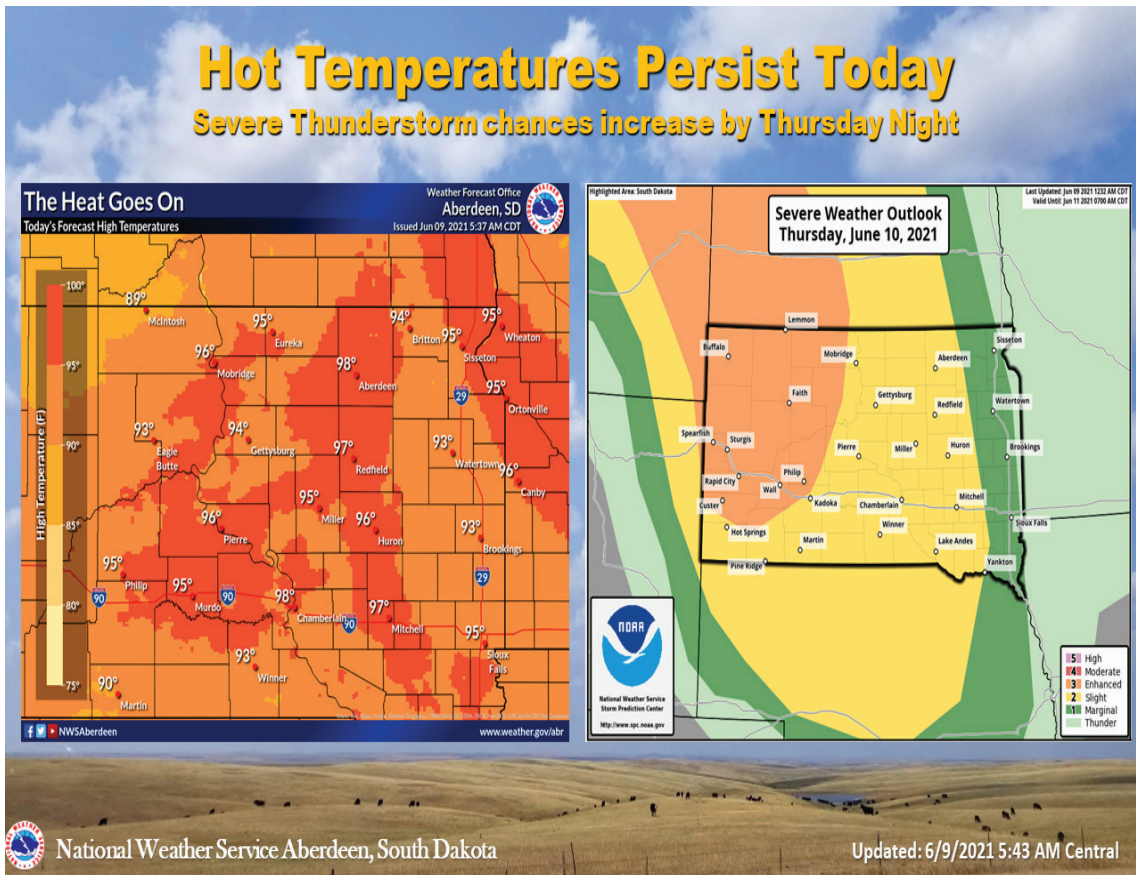
## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Broton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 6 of 66

Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
				
20%	20%		30% → 80%	30%
Breezy. Slight Chance T-storms then Mostly Sunny	Slight Chance T-storms then Mostly Clear	Hot	Chance T-storms then T-storms	Chance T-storms and Breezy
<b>High: 98 °F</b>	<b>Low: 68 °F</b>	<b>High: 100 °F</b>	<b>Low: 65 °F</b>	<b>High: 83 °F</b>



No long term relief is in sight for this ongoing heat wave the region has been experiencing. Temperatures today will once again soar back into the 90s to near 100 degrees in a few spots. Most of the daytime should be dry except for some early morning leftover thundershowers and a few pop up storms expected late this afternoon and evening in a few locales. No organized severe weather is expected. Those chances will arrive later tomorrow night into Friday morning when a stronger storm system moves into the region. An enhanced risk for severe weather is possible across western and central portions of South Dakota where damaging winds and large hail will be the main severe threats. Hot temps will continue on Thursday with readings closing in on a 100 again and heat index values from around 100 to 105.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 7 of 66

## Today in Weather History

June 9, 1957: Southwest of Faulkton, one of four funnel clouds finally touched down and cut an unusual path to the northeast. One home was reduced to "matchsticks and tidbits." The tornado strength was an F3.

June 9, 1968: A brief F2 tornado moved northeast from 6 miles northeast of Britton. Barns were destroyed, and trees were uprooted on three farms. Two cars were picked up and thrown into a ditch. One person in a car was hospitalized. Damage was estimated at \$150,000 to property and another \$80,000 to crops.

June 9, 1972: A steady flow of warm moist air near the surface fed storms and anchored them against the Black Hills for six to eight hours. A flash flood killed 238 people in the Rapid City area after as much as fifteen inches of rain fell over the eastern Black Hills.

1953 - A tornado hit the town of Worcester MA killing ninety persons. The northeastern states usually remain free of destructive tornadoes, however in this case a low pressure system, responsible for producing severe thunderstorms in Michigan and Ohio the previous day, brought severe weather to New Hampshire and central Massachusetts. The tornado, up to a mile in width at times, tracked 46 miles through Worcester County. It mangled steel towers built to withstand winds of 375 mph. Debris from the tornado fell in the Boston area, and adjacent Atlantic Ocea. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1966: Hurricane Alma made landfall over the eastern Florida panhandle becoming the earliest hurricane to make landfall on the United States mainland.

1972 - A cloudburst along the eastern slopes of the Black Hills of South Dakota produced as much as 14 inches of rain resulting in the Rapid City flash flood disaster. The rains, which fell in about four hours time, caused the Canyon Lake Dam to collapse. A wall of water swept through the city drowning 237 persons, and causing more than 100 million dollars property damage. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Lightning struck Tire Mountain near Denver CO, destroying two million tires out of a huge pile of six million tires. Thunderstorms spawned three tornadoes around Denver, and a man was killed at Conifer CO when strong thunderstorm winds lifted up a porch and dropped it on him. A thunderstorm near Compton MD produced two inch hail, and high winds which destroyed twenty barns and ten houses injuring five persons. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from North Carolina to the Central Gulf Coast Region. Hail in North Carolina caused more than five million dollars damage to property, and more than sixty million dollars damage to crops. Hail three and a half inches in diameter was reported at New Bern NC. Thunderstorms in the Central High Plains produced eighteen inches of hail at Fountain CO. The temperature at Del Rio TX soared to an all-time record high of 112 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Severe weather abated for a date, however, showers and thunderstorms continued to drench the eastern U.S. with torrential rains. Milton, FL, was deluged with 15.47 inches in 24 hours. Record heat and prolonged drought in south central Texas left salt deposits on power lines and insulators near the coast, and when nighttime dew caused arcing, the city of Brownsville was plunged into darkness. (The National Weather Summary)

# Groton Daily Independent

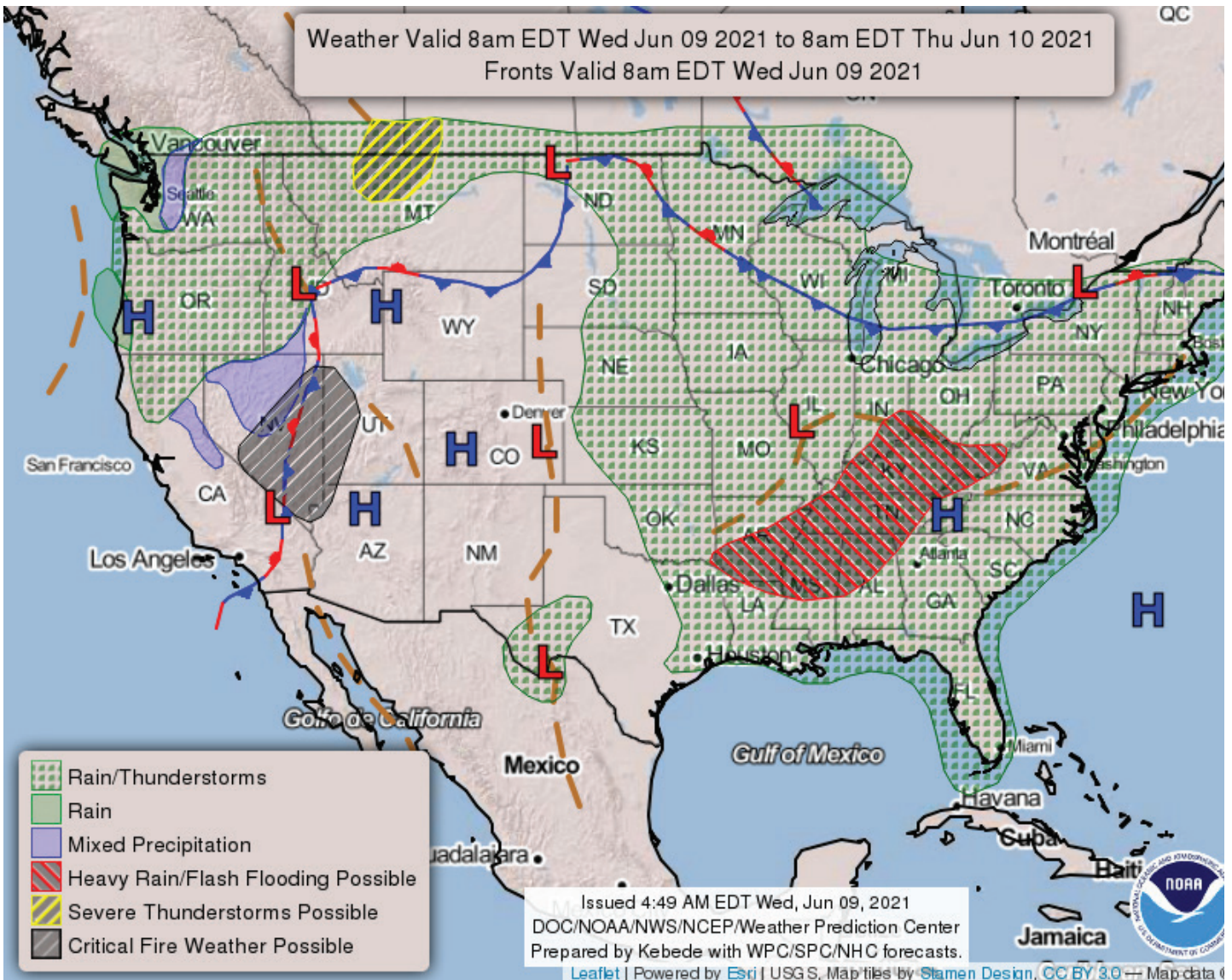
Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 8 of 66

## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 94.3 °F**  
**Low Temp: 72.5 °F**  
**Wind: 24 mph**  
**Precip: .00**

## Today's Info

**Record High:** 100° in 2016, 1933  
**Record Low:** 33° in 1915  
**Average High:** 79°F  
**Average Low:** 54°F  
**Average Precip in June.:** 0.90  
**Precip to date in June.:** 0.00  
**Average Precip to date:** 8.15  
**Precip Year to Date:** 3.97  
**Sunset Tonight:** 9:21 p.m.  
**Sunrise Tomorrow:** 5:45 a.m.







## THE REALITY OF GOD'S REWARDS

What words best "describe" God? Are there some that are more precise, or accurate, or complete to use when we talk about Him? Is it more appropriate to use some words and not others to describe Him?

Throughout the Psalms, from beginning to end, David uses many different words to describe the various acts of God. While some of them are "high and lofty," most of them are practical and helpful, descriptive and insightful. He speaks of God as his deliverer, protector, friend, savior, refuge, and stronghold. All words we could observe if we were to see God walking along a path with David.

In bringing Psalm 62 to a conclusion he speaks of his relationship with God as "strong" and "loving." He had experienced God's compassion and care, protection and presence and power – as we have. He also enjoyed God's love, grace and mercy as we, too, have. And then he adds something that is most interesting: "You reward everyone according to what they have done."

David enjoyed God's goodness. He mentions it again and again. He spoke often of those who wanted to kill him, defeat him, steal from him, embarrass him and even ruin his reputation. But through it all he survived and prospered. He was deeply grateful for the mercy and grace of God and recognized them as "God's reward" for his faithfulness in spite of his failures.

David speaks bluntly of those who are evil and do evil things to harm and hurt His beloved. They will not endure. But the righteous will be rewarded lavishly.

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for rewarding us with so many of Your extravagant gifts that we take for granted. Plant a seed of gratitude in our hearts! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Unfailing love, O Lord, is yours. Surely you repay all people according to what they have done. Psalm 62:12

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 10 of 66

## 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

### SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

09-22-39-41-54, Mega Ball: 19, Megaplier: 3

(nine, twenty-two, thirty-nine, forty-one, fifty-four; Mega Ball: nineteen; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$56 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$20 million

### Union vote authorizes strike at South Dakota pork plant

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The union at a Smithfield Foods pork processing plant in South Dakota engaged in contract negotiations Tuesday armed with the authorization to call a strike.

A strike authorization at the Sioux Falls chapter of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union was overwhelmingly approved late Monday with 98% of the vote total, the union said. However, union leaders said they hope to avoid a work stoppage as they met with company representatives Tuesday.

Meatpacking workers have become emboldened after a virus outbreak at the plant last year killed four workers and infected nearly 1,300. The union is demanding that Smithfield boost its wage offerings in a four-year contract to match those at a JBS pork plant in the region, as well as make several other concessions on break times and employee health insurance costs.

"We're not going to change our stand," said B.J. Motley, the president of the local union.

Smithfield Foods, which is based in Virginia, has said its initial offer, which was rejected by the union last week, is in "full alignment" with agreements that UFCW has already accepted at other plants.

A strike at the plant, which produces roughly 5% of the nation's pork supply every day, could create ripple effects from hog farmers to supermarket shelves. When the plant shuttered in April 2020 alongside others experiencing virus outbreaks, it highlighted the vulnerability of the meat supply chain. Major meatpacking companies convinced former President Donald Trump to declare them essential to national security.

Smithfield, like other large meatpacking companies, spent millions of dollars to incentivize workers and outfit plants with plexiglass safety barriers. It has pointed out that after the plant reopened, large outbreaks were avoided.

Mark Lauritsen, the UFCW's national vice president of meatpacking, said pay has increased significantly throughout the industry since the pandemic began. Last spring, the meat companies generally offered some temporary form of additional pay for workers while the coronavirus spread quickly through meatpacking plants.

Most companies made those pay increases permanent last year, giving most workers a couple more dollars per hour, Lauritsen said. Then additional pay raises have been negotiated as contracts expired over the past year.

Lauritsen said the base rate of pay at most pork plants is now up to \$19 an hour — an increase of about \$3.60 from before the pandemic.

"We're finally in a place where these workers are getting the raises they deserved for years," he said.

The union wants Smithfield to match the starting rate of \$19 an hour offered at a JBS pork plant 70 miles (110 kilometers) away in Worthington, Minnesota. Workers have said those wages, as well as a sudden boost in pay at fast-food chains or retail stores, have drawn employees away from the Smithfield plant and forced those left behind to work harder and longer.

Smithfield Foods did not immediately respond to a request for comment Tuesday.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 12 of 66

Motley did not offer a deadline for when a strike could happen, but said the union would wait until Smithfield makes a final contract offer.

Besides Sioux Falls, Smithfield is also in contract talks with the union at large plants in Crete, Nebraska and Tar Heel, North Carolina.

## Editorial Roundup: South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined  
Yankton Press & Dakotan. June 7, 2021.  
Editorial: USACE And Lessons From 2011

The decade that's passed since the Missouri River flood of 2011 has seen a lot of changes in the way we look at the river, and that also includes the entity that manages and oversees it.

A story in Saturday's Press & Dakotan looked back on the historic flood and how the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) faced this epic crisis. The story also discussed what lessons the Corps learned and has applied since, especially during the bomb cyclone flooding of 2019.

While mechanical issues on operating the dams have been modified with the passage of time, how the Corps has dealt with the public has clearly evolved. Expanded communication has become a priority, which has included monthly webinars during the first half of each year, and perhaps longer in cases of emergencies. (The 2019 flood was one such example; for exactly the opposite problem, this is happening currently because of the expanding drought conditions.) These webinars cover the entire basin, which brings everyone to the table in discussing shared issues.

These events also illustrate the formidable — sometimes nearly impossible — task the USACE faces in managing the river.

As we've pointed out before, the Missouri River is actually two rivers: everything above Gavins Point Dam and everything below it. For the Corps, balancing the two to everyone's satisfaction may not be impossible, but it likely resides next door to it.

In 2011, heavy waters roaring down the Missouri River from Montana and North Dakota forced massive discharges at Gavins Point Dam, as well as Fort Randall Dam and others up the chain, in order to reduce the pressure on the reservoir's storage capacity, but this then resulted in major flooding below Gavins Point, particularly near Yankton and at Dakota Dunes and Sioux City.

This conflict was also evident in the briefings held during the 2019 flooding. While the Corps was working to evacuate the sudden springtime rush of water at the dams, the southern reach of the basin was inundated by river flooding. As reporters in the upper basin were wondering how soon the storage levels could be vacated to allow for other flood events, some journalists in the basin end were occasionally asking why, for instance, discharges at Gavins Point couldn't be reduced or even halted to give the high waters a chance to recede. (The issue was renewed somewhat in September of that year during the record flooding on the James River; people along the James River valley wanted the Corps to reduce flows at Gavins Point Dam to allow the James to drain more quickly, even while storage evacuation still remained a concern.)

These decisions have not become any easier because of the lessons of 2011 and 2019, but communicating what is happening and why it's happening has been more imperative.

We have not, do not and never will envy the Corps' role in doing all this, and it's a job that may become trickier in the future. With climate change, we are apparently seeing increased major weather "uprisings" (like the 2019 bomb cyclone) that are creating more stresses and uncertainties on the basin, sometimes with very short notice. Communicating with the public and appropriate officials — the "stakeholders" along the river — is imperative, and the USACE appears to have embraced that reality.

END

## Sioux Falls narrows police chief candidates

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The Sioux Falls Police Department has selected its finalists to replace retiring Chief Matt Burns.

KELO radio reported Monday that the finalists are Nick Cook and Jonathan Thum. Both currently serve as lieutenants in the department.

Cook has been with the agency since 2003, serving as a patrol officer, training officer and a detective. Thum started work with the department in 2005, serving as a training officer and SWAT commander.

The department will hold a public meet-and-greet and a moderated question-and-answer session with both finalists on June 14.

Burns announced in April he will retire on July 23 after 25 years of service.

## Russia expected to outlaw opposition leader Navalny's groups

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — A Moscow court is expected Wednesday to outlaw the organizations founded by Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny — part of authorities' efforts to muzzle critics ahead of a crucial parliamentary election in September.

Prosecutors have asked the Moscow City Court to designate Navalny's Foundation for Fighting Corruption and his sprawling network of regional offices across Russia as extremist organizations. In conjunction with a new law, the ruling would bar people associated with the groups from running for public office, derailing the hopes of Navalny's allies of seeking parliamentary seats.

The extremism label also carries lengthy prison terms for activists who have worked with the organizations, anyone who donated to them, and even those who simply shared the groups' materials.

The court is expected to issue its verdict Wednesday, according to the lawyers in the case.

Navalny, the most adamant political foe of President Vladimir Putin, was arrested in January upon returning from Germany, where he spent five months convalescing after a nerve agent poisoning that he blames on the Kremlin — accusations that Russian officials reject. In February, Navalny was given a 2 1/2-year prison term for violating the terms of a suspended sentence from a 2014 embezzlement conviction that he dismissed as politically driven.

Navalny's offices in dozens of Russian regions already shut down in April after the prosecutors issued an injunction to suspend their activities pending the court's ruling, but the opposition leader's associates have vowed to continue their work in different formats.

His foundation, started 10 years ago, has relentlessly targeted senior government officials with colorful and widely watched videos that detail corruption allegations against them. One of its latest productions, which has received 117 million views on YouTube, claimed that a lavish palace on the shores of the Black Sea was built for Putin through an elaborate corruption scheme. The Kremlin has denied any links to Putin.

Navalny also has relied on his offices across Russia to promote and implement his Smart Voting strategy — a project to support the candidates most likely to defeat those from the Kremlin's dominant United Russia party in various elections.

Just as the Moscow court was considering the prosecutors' request to outlaw Navalny's organizations, Russian lawmakers have fast-tracked a new law that banned members of organizations declared extremist from running for public office. The law was signed by Putin last week — and combined with the expected court ruling will dash the hopes of several of Navalny's associates who have declared their intention to run for the Russian parliament in the Sept. 19 election.

The vote is widely seen as an important part of Putin's efforts to cement his rule ahead of the 2024 Russian presidential election. The 68-year-old leader, who has been in power for more than two decades, pushed through constitutional changes last year that would potentially allow him to hold onto power until 2036.

The crackdown on Navalny and his associates is just one part of a multi-pronged strategy to steamroll the opposition ahead of the vote. Last week, authorities also arrested Andrei Pivovarov, the head of another anti-Kremlin group that they have labeled "undesirable" — a designation used by the Kremlin to outlaw more than 30 groups.

Days before his arrest, Pivovarov announced the dissolution of his Open Russia movement to protect members from prosecution, but that didn't stop authorities from pulling him off a Warsaw-bound plane at

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 14 of 66

St. Petersburg's airport last week. A court in southern Russia's Krasnodar region ordered him to be held for two months pending an investigation.

Membership in "undesirable" organizations is a criminal offense under a 2015 law, and another bill now making its way through the Russian parliament increases the punishment for it, introducing prison terms of up to six years for their members.

Open Russia was financed by Russian tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who moved to London after spending 10 years in prison in Russia on charges widely seen as political revenge for challenging Putin's rule. Khodorkovsky has described the ongoing crackdown on dissent as a reflection of authorities' concern about the waning popularity of the main Kremlin-directed party, United Russia.

Another opposition activist, Dmitry Gudkov, a former Russian lawmaker who has aspired to run again for the parliament, was held for two days last week on financial charges that he and his supporters allege were trumped up. He went abroad after being released, saying that he had received a warning that he would be jailed if he didn't leave the country.

## Europe's stimulus likely to keep running as economies reopen

By DAVID McHUGH AP Business Writer

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — The European Central Bank is expected to leave its stimulus efforts running at full steam Thursday — even as the economy shows signs of recovery thanks to the easing of pandemic restrictions.

And that could present a challenge for ECB head Christine Lagarde. She faces a balancing act: acknowledging improving economic data without triggering a premature market reaction that anticipates the eventual reduction in central bank support for the economy.

Any talk of a stimulus taper could mean higher borrowing costs for companies — the last thing the ECB wants right now.

"Even if economic developments would in our view clearly justify at least having a first tapering discussion, the sheer mention of such a discussion could push up bond yields further and consequently undermine the economic recovery before it has actually started," said Carsten Brzeski, global head of macro at ING bank.

The central bank for the 19 countries that use the shared euro currency has been purchasing around 85 billion euros per month in government and corporate bonds as part of a 1.85 trillion euro (\$2.25 trillion) effort slated to run at least through early next year. The purchases drive up the prices of bonds and drives down their interest yields, since price and yield move in opposite directions. That influences longer-term borrowing costs throughout the economy, sending them lower.

That's exactly what the bank wants at a time when many companies are struggling with reduced demand and higher debt and need to keep credit lines open so they can get to the other side of the pandemic.

Any hint, however, that the ECB is thinking about tapering the purchases could send market rates higher earlier than the central bankers would like. That's why any discussion could be postponed until the bank's Sept. 9 meeting or later.

The U.S. Federal Reserve will face a similar communications challenge; several officials have said that as the economy recovers, the U.S. central bank will eventually have to reassess its stance. Currently it is purchasing \$120 billion in bonds each month. Fed policymakers next meet June 15-16.

IHS Markit's surveys of purchasing managers showed activity increasing sharply in May, including for the hard-hit services sector. The index reached 57.1, with anything over 50 indicating expansion. Statistics for economic output in the first quarter were revised up to minus 0.3% from minus 0.6%; the ECB expects a strong rebound in the second half of the year and growth of 4.0% for all of 2021.

Rising inflation also complicates the ECB's messaging. Normally, rising prices would lead a central bank to withdraw its stimulus. But in this case, ECB officials and economists say recent higher inflation figures are the result of temporary factors that will fade, leaving inflation below the ECB goal.

Eurozone annual inflation hit 2.0% in May due largely to higher oil prices. The ECB's goal is less than but close to 2%. The base comparison to lower oil prices during the pandemic year 2020 will soon drop out

of the statistics, however, meaning post-pandemic inflation could be weaker than current figures might otherwise suggest.

Top bank officials have been making stimulus-supporting comments in recent days, leading analysts to think no real change is coming on Thursday. At its March 11 meeting, the government council said it would "significantly increase" the pandemic purchases during the April-June quarter.

"After co-ordinated messages from ECB speakers in recent days, we expect the ECB to hold the course and keep purchasing assets at the current high pace," said Paul Diggle, deputy chief economist at Aberdeen Standard Investments. "But either way, investors will want to see the ECB thread the needle of talking up the economic recovery, while avoiding the dreaded "tapering" word."

## Fastly blames global internet outage on software bug

LONDON (AP) — Fastly, the company hit by a major outage that caused many of the world's top websites to go offline briefly this week, blamed the problem on a software bug that was triggered when a customer changed a setting.

The problem at Fastly meant internet users couldn't connect to a host of popular websites early Tuesday including The New York Times, the Guardian, Twitch, Reddit and the British government's homepage.

"We experienced a global outage due to an undiscovered software bug that surfaced on June 8 when it was triggered by a valid customer configuration change," Nick Rockwell, Fastly's senior vice president of engineering and infrastructure, said in a blog post late Tuesday.

He said the outage was "broad and severe" but the company quickly identified, isolated and disabled the problem and after 49 minutes, most of its network was up and running again. The bug had been included in a software update that was rolled out in May and Rockwell said the company is trying to figure out why it wasn't detected during testing.

"Even though there were specific conditions that triggered this outage, we should have anticipated it," Rockwell said.

San Francisco-based Fastly provides what's called a content delivery network — an arrangement that allows customer websites to store data such as images and videos on various mirror servers across 26 countries. Keeping the data closer to users means it shows up faster.

But the incident highlighted how the much of the global internet is dependent on a handful of behind the scenes companies like Fastly that provide vital infrastructure, and it amplified concerns about how vulnerable they are to more serious disruption.

## Justices to decide if charge fits Minneapolis police killing

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The Minnesota Supreme Court will hear oral arguments Wednesday in the case of Mohamed Noor, a former Minneapolis police officer who was convicted of third-degree murder in the shooting death of an Australian woman who had called 911 to report a possible sexual assault behind her home.

Noor's attorneys argue that a divided Minnesota Court of Appeals failed to follow legal precedents defining third-degree murder when it affirmed Noor's conviction. The high court's decision has repercussions for another high profile police killing case, the death of George Floyd. Besides second-degree murder, former Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin was also convicted in April of third-degree murder, as well as second-degree manslaughter.

The judge overseeing Chauvin's trial initially threw out the third-degree murder charge against Chauvin, but later reinstated the count after the Court of Appeals in February affirmed Noor's conviction for third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. Chauvin faces sentencing June 25. Prosecutors are seeking to add charges of aiding and abetting third-degree murder to the existing counts against three other ex-officers facing trial in Floyd's death. All four former officers also face federal civil rights charges.

Noor was convicted in 2019 of third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter and sentenced to 12 1/2 years in prison in the 2017 death of Justine Rusczyk Damond, a dual U.S.-Australian citizen engaged to a Minneapolis man. Noor testified that a loud bang on the squad car startled him and his partner, and that he reached across his partner from the passenger seat and fired through the driver's window to protect his partner's life. But prosecutors criticized Noor for shooting without seeing a weapon or even Damond's hands when she approached the car.

A key issue is whether third-degree murder in Minnesota must involve actions that endangered multiple people, or if it's sufficient that only one person was put at risk. Both sides in their written briefs cited previous cases to back up their positions on how the statute should be interpreted.

The statute defines third-degree murder as "an act eminently dangerous to others and evincing a depraved mind, without regard for human life." The high court is being asked to decide whether "dangerous to others" must be read as plural, or if the fatal act can be directed at a single, specific person.

Prosecutors wrote in their brief that over 40 states have some form of "depraved mind" or "depraved indifference" homicide statute, but "only a handful" require a defendant to endanger more than one person for prosecutors to get a conviction.

Defense attorneys wrote in their brief that the "particular-person exclusion" that they say was eliminated by the Court of Appeals serves an important public policy function because it helps draw a distinction between the varying degrees of murder and other forms of homicide charges, such as manslaughter, which carry different penalties.

If the high court voids Noor's third-degree murder conviction, it could still affirm his conviction for second-degree manslaughter, but it carries a recommended sentence of just 4 years under the state's sentencing guidelines.

## Hostage advocates concerned by US pullout from Afghanistan

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Advocates for Americans held hostage overseas are raising concerns that the U.S. military withdrawal from Afghanistan will make it harder to bring home captives from the country.

An annual report from the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation, released Wednesday, examines the status of U.S. government efforts to secure the release of hostages and unlawful detainees in foreign countries. The report's findings are based on interviews with former hostages and detainees or their representatives and relatives, as well as current and former government and military officials.

The report shows general satisfaction with changes instituted as part of a 2015 hostage policy overhaul, which included the creation of an FBI-led hostage recovery fusion cell and the appointment of a State Department envoy for hostage affairs. But it also raises potential areas for improvement, including more mental health and financial support for hostages and detainees who return from captivity. And it says more may need to be done to make hostage recovery a greater priority.

Among the concerns raised by hostage advocates interviewed for the report is that once American troops leave Afghanistan — a process the Biden administration has said will be completed by Sept. 11 — "it will become more difficult to generate the intelligence needed to find Americans and conduct rescue operations for current hostages held in the area."

They include Mark Frerichs, a contractor from Lombard, Illinois, who vanished in January 2020 and is believed held by the Taliban-linked Haqqani network, and Paul Overby, an American writer who disappeared in Afghanistan in 2014.

"They also fear that the further reduction of U.S. physical presence in the country is an erosion of the leverage needed to make progress on resolving these cases," the report states. "It is perceived by some advocates that securing the release of these hostages was not made a precondition for any settlement during the peace talks in Doha, Qatar with the Taliban."

The departure of all U.S. special operations from Afghanistan will make counterterrorism operations, including the collecting of intelligence on al-Qaida and other extremist groups, more difficult. The admin-



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 17 of 66

istration hopes to be able to compensate through the military's wide geographic reach, which has only expanded with the advent of armed drones and other technologies.

The administration has said it will retain a U.S. Embassy presence, but that will become more difficult if the military's departure leads to a collapse of Afghan governance.

The top U.S. peace envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, has told Congress that he has repeatedly demanded the release of Frerichs and has "enlisted the support of senior Qatari and Pakistani officials on his behalf."

The foundation behind the report was created by Diane Foley, whose son, James Foley, was killed by Islamic State militants in 2014 while in Syria as a freelance journalist. The deaths of James Foley and other Western hostages at the hands of IS operatives helped prompt the 2015 policy overhaul following complaints by hostage families that government officials had failed to sufficiently communicate with them and had even threatened prosecution if relatives tried to raise a ransom.

## On 1st overseas trip, Biden to assure allies and meet Putin

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Set to embark on the first overseas trip of his term, President Joe Biden is eager to reassert the United States on the world stage, steadying European allies deeply shaken by his predecessor and pushing democracy as the only bulwark to rising forces of authoritarianism.

Biden has set the stakes for his eight-day trip in sweeping terms, believing that the West must publicly demonstrate it can compete economically with China as the world emerges from the coronavirus pandemic.

Building toward his trip-ending summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Biden will aim to reassure European capitals that the United States can once again be counted on as a dependable partner to thwart Moscow's aggression both on their eastern front and their internet battlefields.

The trip will be far more about messaging than specific actions or deals. And the paramount priority for Biden, who leaves Wednesday for his first stop in the United Kingdom, is to convince the world that his Democratic administration is not just a fleeting deviation in the trajectory of an American foreign policy that many allies fear irrevocably drifted toward a more transactional outlook under former President Donald Trump.

"The trip, at its core, will advance the fundamental thrust of Joe Biden's foreign policy," said national security adviser Jake Sullivan, "to rally the world's democracies to tackle the great challenges of our time."

Biden's to-do list is ambitious.

In their face-to-face sit-down in Geneva, Biden wants to privately pressure Putin to end myriad provocations, including cybersecurity attacks on American businesses by Russian-based hackers, the jailing of opposition leader Alexei Navalny and repeated overt and covert efforts by the Kremlin to interfere in U.S. elections.

Biden is also looking to rally allies on their COVID-19 response and to urge them to coalesce around a strategy to check emerging economic and national security competitor China even as the U.S. expresses concern about Europe's economic links to Moscow. Biden also wants to nudge outlying allies, including Australia, to make more aggressive commitments to the worldwide effort to curb global warming.

The week-plus journey is a big moment for Biden, who traveled the world for decades as vice president and as chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and will now step off Air Force One on international soil as commander in chief. He will face world leaders still grappling with the virus and rattled by four years of Trump's inward-looking foreign policy and moves that strained longtime alliances as the Republican former president made overtures to strongmen.

"In this moment of global uncertainty, as the world still grapples with a once-in-a-century pandemic," Biden wrote in a Washington Post op-ed previewing his diplomatic efforts, "this trip is about realizing America's renewed commitment to our allies and partners, and demonstrating the capacity of democracies to both meet the challenges and deter the threats of this new age."

The president first travels to Britain for a summit of the Group of Seven leaders and then Brussels for a NATO summit and a meeting with the heads of the European Union. It comes at a moment when Eu-

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 18 of 66

Europeans have diminished expectations for what they can expect of U.S. leadership on the foreign stage. Central and Eastern Europeans are desperately hoping to bind the U.S. more tightly to their security. Germany is looking to see the U.S. troop presence maintained there so it doesn't need to build up its own. France, meanwhile, has taken the tack that the U.S. can't be trusted as it once was and that the European Union must pursue greater strategic autonomy going forward.

"I think the concern is real that the Trumpian tendencies in the U.S. could return full bore in the midterms or in the next presidential election," said Alexander Vershbow, a former U.S. diplomat and once deputy secretary general of NATO.

The sequencing of the trip is deliberate: Biden consulting with Western European allies for much of a week as a show of unity before his summit with Putin.

His first stop late Wednesday will be an address to U.S. troops stationed in Britain, and the next day he sits down with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson. The two men will meet a day ahead of the G-7 summit to be held above the craggy cliffs of Cornwall overlooking the Atlantic Ocean.

The most tactile of politicians, Biden has grown frustrated by the diplomacy-via-Zoom dynamics of the pandemic and has relished the ability to again have face-to-face meetings that allow him to size up and connect with world leaders. While Biden himself is a veteran statesman, many of the world leaders he will see in England, including Johnson and French President Emmanuel Macron, took office after Biden left the vice presidency. Another, Germany's Angela Merkel, will leave office later this year.

There are several potential areas of tension. On climate change, the U.S. is aiming to regain its credibility after Trump pulled the country back from the fight against global warming. Biden could also feel pressure on trade, an issue to which he's yet to give much attention. And with the United States well supplied with COVID-19 vaccines yet struggling to persuade some of its own citizens to use it, leaders whose inoculation campaigns have been slower will surely pressure Biden to share more surplus around the globe.

Another central focus will be China. Biden and the other G-7 leaders will announce an infrastructure financing program for developing countries that is meant to compete directly with Beijing's Belt-and-Road Initiative. But not every European power has viewed China in as harsh a light as Biden, who has painted the rivalry with the techno-security state as the defining competition for the 21st century.

The European Union has avoided taking as strong a stance on Beijing's crackdown on Hong Kong's democracy movement or treatment of Uyghur Muslims and other ethnic minorities in the western Xinjiang province as the Biden administration may like. But there are signs that Europe is willing to put greater scrutiny on Beijing.

The EU in March announced sanctions targeting four Chinese officials involved with human rights abuses in Xinjiang. Beijing, in turn, responded by imposing sanctions on several members of the European Parliament and other Europeans critical of the Chinese Communist Party.

Biden is also scheduled to meet with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan while in Brussels, a face-to-face meeting between two leaders who have had many fraught moments in their relationship over the years.

Biden waited until April to call Erdogan for the first time as president. In that call, he informed the Turkish leader that he would formally recognize that the systematic killings and deportations of hundreds of thousands of Armenians by Ottoman Empire forces in the early 20th century were "genocide" — using a term for the atrocities that his White House predecessors had avoided for decades over concerns of alienating Turkey.

The trip finale will be Biden's meeting with Putin.

Biden has taken a very different approach to Russia than Trump's friendly outreach. Their sole summit, held in July 2018 in Helsinki, was marked by Trump's refusal to side with U.S. intelligence agencies over Putin's denials of Russian interference in the election two years earlier.

Biden could well be challenged by unrest at home as Russia looks to exploit the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection and the debate over voting rights to undermine the U.S. position as a global role model. The American president, in turn, is expected to push Russia to quell its global meddling.

"By and large, these are not meetings on outcomes, these are 'get to know you again' meetings for the

U.S. and Europe," said Richard Haass, president of the Council on Foreign Relations. "It's about delivering a message to Putin, to reviving old alliances and to demonstrate again that the U.S. is back on the right course."

## EU lawmakers OK virus pass, boosting summer travel hopes

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — European Union lawmakers on Wednesday endorsed a new travel certificate that will allow people to move between European countries without having to quarantine or undergo extra coronavirus tests, paving the way for the pass to start in time for summer.

The widely awaited certificate is aimed at saving Europe's travel industry and prime tourist sites from another disastrous vacation season. Key travel destinations like Greece have led the drive to have the certificate, which will have both paper and digital forms, rapidly introduced.

Several EU countries have already begun using the system, including Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece and Poland.

Right now, traveling in the EU's 27 nations is a trial for tourists and airlines alike. Countries have various COVID-19 traffic-light systems, where those in green are considered safe and those in red to be avoided. But each nation is applying different rules and standards, making travel confusing for all.

The new regulations governing the vaccine certificates were adopted in two votes at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France. Rules for EU citizens were passed 546 to 93, with 51 abstentions. Those for people from outside the bloc passed 553 to 91, with 46 abstentions.

The vote must still be rubber-stamped by EU nations, but that's likely a formality.

It means that beginning July 1 for 12 months, all EU countries must recognize the vaccine certificate. They will be issued free and certify that a person has either been fully vaccinated against the virus, has recently tested negative or has recovered from the disease.

The rules will not be heavily enforced for 6 weeks to allow countries to prepare.

The passes will be issued by individual nations, not from a centralized European system. They will contain a QR code with advanced security features. Personal data will not be shared with other countries.

Spanish Socialist lawmaker Juan Fernando Lopez Aguilar, who chaperoned the votes through parliament, said "EU states are encouraged to refrain from imposing further restrictions, unless strictly necessary and proportionate."

People coming from outside the EU, the overwhelming majority of whom should be vaccinated to enter, will be able to get a certificate if they can convince authorities in the EU country they enter that they qualify for one.

## Gucci digitally outfits Gen-Z in metaverse foray with Roblox

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

MILAN (AP) — Anyone whose virtual alter ego is wandering around the Roblox online game platform these days might run into other avatars sporting Gucci handbags, sunglasses or hats.

The digital-only items were part of a limited Gucci collection for Roblox, a step by the fashion house that prides itself on Italian craftsmanship to enter an expanding virtual space where many of its youngest admirers already are at home.

Players in the metaverse — where virtual worlds, augmented reality and the internet meet — say the big-name fashion collaboration represents a new era of virtual-real world interplay, a space in which smart product placement meets the desire of consumers to express their personalities in the virtual world.

While the Gucci Garden space on Roblox was open for two weeks last month, the platform's 42 million users could spend from \$1.20 to \$9 on collectible and limited-edition Gucci accessories. Items were hidden in the virtual Gucci Garden, which echoed real-world Gucci Garden exhibitions in Florence and other global cities. Some items were offered for free, and the exclusivity was underlined with limited time releases.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 20 of 66

The experience allowed Roblox's core demographic — roughly ages 9 to 15 — a digital entrée to the rarified world of luxury goods that few can dream of in the real world. Now that the space is closed, the limited edition items have even greater cachet. According to the developer, more than 4.5 million items were "won."

Many parents may scratch their heads at paying real money to accessorize an avatar, but Generation Z players have long been prepped for this evolution.

They ran through physical streets and parks to intercept and capture Pokemon Go characters, part of an augmented reality mobile game that launched in 2016. Many took the edge off pandemic lockdown by playing with real-world friends over gaming platforms. On Roblox, dressing up avatars is old hat.

"Gen Z, they sometimes see virtual products as more valuable than physical products," Christina Wootton, the vice president for brand partnerships at Roblox, said. "We are definitely seeing that on Roblox, where it is all about storytelling and self-expression. There are so many people who come together and social and connect with their friends, and they want to represent their digital selves through fashion."

While the Gucci items users bought only can be "worn" on the Roblox platform, it is just the tip of the metaverse iceberg.

Similar items made and traded in the metaverse are known as non-fungible tokens (NFTs) — digital objects backed by blockchain technology certifying their authenticity, and often uniqueness. NFTs, which might be anything from personalized "skins," or costumes, for avatars to digital art, can be traded ad-infinitum, potentially growing in value with each trade. Their ownership is not limited to any single platform.

Even on Roblox, which has its own marketplace where items can be traded, the Gucci Dionysus Bag with Bee was resold for over \$4,100 worth of Robux — exceeding the price of a real Gucci Dionysus bag and a huge premium of the original price of 475 Roblox, roughly \$4.75. Only 851 of the bags were available during two releases, making it the rarest piece in the collection, compared with the 2.6 million wide-brim denim hats that were snapped up.

Unlike NFTs, the astronomically priced Dionysus bag cannot be traded outside of the Roblox platform, making it seemingly a vanity investment for a super-fan.

The metaverse's potential for the fashion world goes well beyond the world of gaming and extends into digital ecosystems that are still under construction. So-called decentralized worlds are seeing a huge influx of money, with billions being spent to iron out technical issues.

Boson Protocol, a technology company, is bridging the gap between the metaverse and physical world with a new venture designed to allow consumers to purchase fashion NFTs for their avatars from a platform, Decentraland. NFTs, in turn, will contain vouchers redeemable for corresponding real-world items. The project is expected to launch in two months.

"If we increasingly are going to exist in these digital spaces, then objects that are scarce, unique and ownable, of course, are going to have value in those spaces," London-based Boson Protocol co-founder Justin Banon said. "All of these things of social signaling in the real world are just, in fact, perhaps more important in the digital world."

It's only natural that fashion would pave the way for the less digitally savvy consumers, who may shy away from Bitcoin and balk at multimillion-dollar sales of NFTs that have captured the attention of artists and collectors alike.

"Fashion brands have to go where other people are not going. The whole point of a fashion brand is to stand out," Allen Adamson, co-founder of marketing consultancy Metaforce, said.

For Gucci, the biggest return on investment from the Roblox tie-up "is to become part of that generation's world," Adamson said.

"No one shares ordinary," Adamson said. "My avatar is wearing a Gucci belt' is a little different" and perhaps even catchier for a certain audience than spotting a real Gucci bag on the street.

Gucci CEO Marco Bizzarri said that more than generating revenue, the Roblox collaboration was a way to tap fresh creative veins and stay apace of an evolving world where fashion, music, films and technology increasingly mashup.

"Who knows what the industry will look like in 10 years? We want to start before everyone else to get up

to speed," Bizzarri said at the physical Gucci Garden opening in Florence. "Certainly, they are not operations that bring a lot of business now, but they could be a source of business tomorrow."

Gucci creative director Alessandro Michele described the metaverse as new "territory" to explore.

"Fashion has become more than a boutique along the street in a capital. I think we are in a phase when maybe the world wants to go beyond the industrialized revolution and doesn't know how to do it," Michele said. "Especially now, in this phase of the pandemic, it is a big chance to accelerate changes."

## **In Lebanon, a search for medicine and a stranger's help**

By MARIAM FAM Associated Press

To all the struggles of life in Lebanon — the pandemic, the power outages, the inflation, the punishing financial and political crises — add one more: shortages of crucial medications.

But as residents struggle to find the medicines they need, some are finding that their fellow Lebanese are doing what they can to help.

Christiane Massoud, a 41-year-old nurse, scoured pharmacies for an elusive drug to manage her Crohn's disease, had friends around the country search on her behalf and asked her doctor if there was a substitute. She also appealed to strangers online for pointers to track it down.

Nada Waked responded to one of those online pleas: She had a small amount that her mom no longer needed. Massoud offered to pay; Waked and her mom declined the money. Instead, Waked asked for a prayer.

In this bleak landscape, Massoud found in Waked's gesture a bright spot.

"It showed that we are a people who stand by one another and feel for one another," she said. "There are still people who help each other out."

As the country's crises deepened, pharmacist Chadi Geha said he noticed more were eager to help strangers. Some of his customers started refusing to take back change, asking him instead to use the cash to pay for the medications of others in need.

"That didn't happen before," he said. "You feel like there's still good in the world. ... They don't even want to know who they're helping; they just care about helping."

But money or no money, Geha has had to turn away many customers as more medications became unavailable, shortages that had been exacerbated by panic buying and by some suppliers holding on to the drugs. The difference between the official and black-market dollar rates has also fueled smuggling of subsidized drugs out of the country.

In late May, Lebanon's central bank said it could not continue with its subsidies of medical items without dipping into the mandatory reserves, hard currency deposits parked by local lenders at the bank, and asked authorities to find a solution.

Geha started closing the pharmacy early. "I'm tired of telling people we're out of this and out of that."

Frantic pleas for tracking down medications abound on LibanTroc, the Facebook group where Massoud and Waked connected. Members point some to organizations who may have the drugs or to pharmacies they know carry them.

"We've seen amazing interaction and a lot of good deeds that keep us from working on migrating elsewhere, as we're still trying to fix whatever remains of our wounded roots," said Hala Dahrouge, founder of LibanTroc, which has evolved into a nongovernmental organization facilitating different kinds of assistance and requests.

Massoud thinks of others who may not know how to navigate social media like she did to find medications. She's thinking of moving her family out of the country, but amid the despair of life in Lebanon, she takes heart from the ways, small and big, in which many are helping strangers.

Waked said that even though she has no extra means to help others financially, she still wanted to offer a little relief.

"I know very well that if you give from the heart, God will provide for you whenever you are in need," she said. "I gave from the heart."

## 'This IS INSANE': Africa desperately short of COVID vaccine

By GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — In the global race to vaccinate people against COVID-19, Africa is tragically at the back of the pack.

In fact, it has barely gotten out of the starting blocks.

In South Africa, which has the continent's most robust economy and its biggest coronavirus caseload, just 0.8% of the population is fully vaccinated, according to a worldwide tracker kept by Johns Hopkins University. And hundreds of thousands of the country's health workers, many of whom come face-to-face with the virus every day, are still waiting for their shots.

In Nigeria, Africa's biggest country with more than 200 million people, only 0.1% are fully protected. Kenya, with 50 million people, is even lower. Uganda has recalled doses from rural areas because it doesn't have nearly enough to fight outbreaks in big cities.

Chad didn't administer its first vaccine shots until this past weekend. And there are at least five other countries in Africa where not one dose has been put into an arm, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The World Health Organization says the continent of 1.3 billion people is facing a severe shortage of vaccine at the same time a new wave of infections is rising across Africa. Vaccine shipments into Africa have ground to a "near halt," WHO said last week.

"It is extremely concerning and at times frustrating," said Africa CDC Director Dr. John Nkengasong, a Cameroonian virologist who is trying to ensure some of the world's poorest nations get a fair share of vaccines in a marketplace where they can't possibly compete.

The United States and Britain, in contrast, have fully vaccinated more than 40% of their populations, with higher rates for adults and high-risk people. Countries in Europe are near or past 20% coverage, and their citizens are starting to think about where their vaccine certificates might take them on their summer vacations. The U.S., France and Germany are even offering shots to youngsters, who are at very low risk of serious illness from COVID-19.

Poorer countries had warned as far back as last year of this impending vaccine inequality, fearful that rich nations would hoard doses.

In an interview, Nkengasong called on the leaders of wealthy nations meeting this week at the G-7 summit to share spare vaccines — something the United States has already agreed to do — and avert a "moral catastrophe."

"I'd like to believe that the G-7 countries, most of them having kept excess doses of vaccines, want to be on the right side of history," Nkengasong said. "Distribute those vaccines. We need to actually see these vaccines, not just ... promises and goodwill."

Others are not so patient, nor so diplomatic.

"People are dying. Time is against us. This IS INSANE," South African human rights lawyer Fatima Hasan, an activist for equal access to health care, wrote in a series of text messages.

The Biden administration made its first major move to ease the crisis last week, announcing it would share an initial batch of 25 million spare doses with desperate countries in South and Central America, Asia and Africa.

Nkengasong and his team were in contact with White House officials a day later, he said, with a list of countries where the 5 million doses earmarked for Africa could go to immediately.

Still, the U.S. offer is only a "trickle" of what's needed, Hasan wrote.

Africa alone is facing a shortfall of around 700 million doses, even after taking into account those secured through WHO's vaccine program for poorer countries, COVAX, and a deal with Johnson & Johnson, which comes through in August, two long months away.

Uganda just released a batch of 3,000 vaccine doses in the capital, Kampala — a minuscule amount for a city of 2 million — to keep its program barely alive.

There and elsewhere, the fear is that the luck that somehow enabled parts of Africa to escape the worst of previous waves of COVID-19 infections and deaths might not hold this time.

"The first COVID was a joke, but this one is for real. It kills," said Danstan Nsamba, a taxi driver in Uganda who has lost numerous people he knew to the virus.

In Zimbabwe, Chipso Dzimba embarked on a quest for a vaccine after witnessing COVID-19 deaths in her community. She walked miles to a church mission hospital, where there were none, and miles again to a district hospital, where nurses also had nothing and told her to go to the region's main government hospital. That was too far away.

"I am giving up," Dzimba said. "I don't have the bus fare."

South African health workers faced similar disappointment when they crowded into a parking garage last month, hoping for vaccinations and ignoring in their desperation the social distancing protocols. Many came away without a shot.

Femada Shamam, who is in charge of a group of old-age homes in the South African city of Durban, has seen only around half of the 1,600 elderly and frail people she looks after vaccinated. It is six months, almost to the day, since Britain began the global vaccination drive.

"They do feel very despondent and they do feel let down," Shamam said of her unvaccinated residents, who are experiencing "huge anxiety" as they hunker down in their sealed-off homes 18 months into the outbreak. Twenty-two of her residents have died of COVID-19.

"It really highlights the biggest problem ... the haves and the have-nots," Shamam said.

As for whether wealthy countries with a surplus of vaccine have gotten the message, Nkengasong said: "I am hopeful, but not necessarily confident."

## **Bus with migrant workers collides with van in India; 17 dead**

LUCKNOW, India (AP) — A bus carrying migrant workers after the lifting of coronavirus restrictions hit a delivery van on a highway in northern India, killing at least 17 people and injuring 18, police said Wednesday.

The bus overturned after colliding with the van coming from the opposite direction on Tuesday night near Kanpur, a city 80 kilometers (50 miles) southwest of Lucknow, the Uttar Pradesh state capital, said police officer Mohit Agarwal.

The migrant workers were heading to Ahmedabad, a city in western Gujarat state, to resume work with industries reopening after the lifting of lockdown restrictions.

The van was transporting workers home from a biscuits manufacturing unit and most of the dead were among them, Agarwal said.

Sixteen people were killed on the spot and one died in a hospital, where the injured were being treated, he said.

"The passengers complained that the bus driver was going very fast," Agarwal said.

More than 110,000 people are killed every year in road accidents across India, according to police. Most crashes are blamed on reckless driving, poorly maintained roads and aging vehicles.

## **Biden ends GOP infrastructure talks, but new group emerges**

By LISA MASCARO and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden ended talks with a group of Republican senators on a big infrastructure package on Tuesday and started reaching out to senators from both parties in a new effort toward bipartisan compromise, setting a summer deadline for Congress to pass his top legislative priority.

The president is walking away from talks with lead Republican negotiator Sen. Shelley Moore Capito after the two spoke Tuesday, but would welcome her in the new bipartisan group, according to an administrative official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private negotiations.

Shortly after the Biden-Capito talks collapsed, 10 senators huddled late Thursday over pizza — five Republicans, five Democrats — emerging after three hours with some optimism their new effort could

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 24 of 66

create a viable path forward, said a person familiar with the closed-door talks and granted anonymity to discuss them.

At the same time, with anxiety running high as time slips by, Democrats are laying the groundwork to pass some or all of the ambitious package on their own. Biden conferred Tuesday with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer about launching the budget resolution process for Senate votes in July, the White House said.

"The President is committed to moving his economic legislation through Congress this summer, and is pursuing multiple paths to get this done," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said in a statement.

The breakdown in the White House's efforts with GOP senators comes after weeks of prolonged infrastructure talks between the president and Capito as the two sides failed to broker the divide over the scope of Biden's sweeping infrastructure investment and how to pay for it.

The Republican senators offered a \$928 billion proposal, which included about \$330 billion in new spending — but not as much as Biden's \$1.7 trillion investment proposal for rebuilding the nation's roads, bridges, highways and other infrastructure, including Veterans Affairs hospitals and care centers.

Biden has proposed raising the corporate tax rate from 21% to 28%, a nonstarter for Republicans, and rejected the GOP senators' suggestion of tapping unspent COVID-19 aid money to fund the new infrastructure spending.

In a statement, Capito said she was disappointed Biden ended the talks, but also expressed interest in ongoing bipartisan work.

"While I appreciate President Biden's willingness to devote so much time and effort to these negotiations, he ultimately chose not to accept the very robust and targeted infrastructure package, and instead, end our discussions," she said. "However, this does not mean bipartisanship isn't feasible."

As Biden aims for a compromise deal, he has begun reaching out to other senators, including Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana and two key centrist Democrats, Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, whose votes will be crucial in the evenly split Senate.

Those senators receiving phone calls from Biden were among the group of 10 assembled with Sinema and Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, late Tuesday in Portman's office for what was described as a productive meeting, the person familiar with the session said.

Portman and Sinema have been engaged for months with Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, and Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, on a sizable infrastructure proposal that is expected to include proposed ways to pay for it.

The senators' group has expanded in recent weeks to include the others from both parties. Romney has described it a "back burner" group, in case the administration's talks with the GOP senators faltered.

Psaki said the president urged the senators in his conversations to continue their work "to develop a bipartisan proposal that he hopes will be more responsive to the country's pressing infrastructure needs." Biden tapped Cabinet and White House aides to meet with the senators in person.

Ahead of Biden's announcement, the White House had also spoken to other lawmakers, including from the House.

Rep. Josh Gottheimer, D-N.J., and Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., the co-chairs of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus, spoke late Monday with Brian Deese, director of the White House National Economic Council, about bipartisan efforts to reach an infrastructure deal, according to an aide who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private conversations.

The Problem Solvers group has agreed to \$761.8 billion in new spending over eight years as part of \$1.2 trillion plan, according to a draft obtained late Tuesday by The Associated Press. The one-page draft does not include any proposed ways to pay for the package.

Gottheimer is also working with Cassidy and Sinema from the senators' group, the aide said.

With the narrowly split House and the 50-50 Senate, the White House faces political challenges pushing its priorities through Congress with Democratic votes alone. Biden's party holds a slight majority in the Senate because Vice President Kamala Harris can break a tie.

The special budget rules could provide Biden with an alternative path, particularly in the Senate, because they allow legislation to be approved with a 51-vote threshold, rather than the 60 votes typically needed



to advance a bill past a filibuster — in this case, led by Republicans against the Biden package.

Democrats are watching warily as time passes and anxiety builds toward an agreement, with many lawmakers worried they are not fulfilling their campaign promises to voters who put the party in control of Congress and the White House.

During a private discussion of Democratic senators at lunch Tuesday, there were differing views over whether they should keep talking with Republicans or pursue an approach that would allow them to pass a bill on their own, through the budget reconciliation process.

Schumer told reporters afterward that Democrats are pursuing “a two-path approach.”

The bipartisan talks led by Sinema with the other senators are underway, Schumer said, while the budget committee is preparing the legislation that would allow passage through the reconciliation process.

“It may well be that part of the bill that is passed will be bipartisan, and part of it will be in reconciliation,” he said. “But we’re not going to sacrifice bigness and boldness.”

The president is expected to engage with lawmakers while he sets out this week on his first foreign trip for an economic summit of the Group of Seven industrialized nations in Europe.

## **EXPLAINER: The US investigation into COVID-19 origins**

By CHRISTINA LARSON and NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Once dismissed by most public health experts and government officials, the hypothesis that COVID-19 leaked accidentally from a Chinese lab is now receiving scrutiny under a new U.S. investigation.

Experts say the 90-day review ordered on May 26 by President Joe Biden will push American intelligence agencies to collect more information and review what they already have. Former State Department officials under President Donald Trump have publicly pushed for further investigation into virus origins, as have scientists and the World Health Organization.

Many scientists, including Dr. Anthony Fauci, say they still believe the virus most likely occurred in nature and jumped from animals to humans. Virus researchers have not publicly identified any key new scientific evidence that might make the lab-leak hypothesis more likely.

Virologists also say it is unlikely that any definitive answer about virus origins will be possible in 90 days. The work to fully confirm origins and pathways of past viruses — such as the first SARS or HIV/AIDS — has taken years or decades.

A look at what is known about the U.S. investigation of the virus.

**WHAT ARE INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES REVIEWING?**

Biden ordered a review of what the White House said was an initial finding leading to “two likely scenarios,” an animal-to-human transmission or a lab leak. The White House statement says two agencies in the 18-member intelligence community lean toward the hypothesis of a transmission in nature; another agency leans toward a lab leak.

One document drawing new attention is a State Department fact sheet published in the last days of Trump’s administration. The memo notes that the U.S. believes three researchers at a Wuhan, China, lab sought medical treatment for a respiratory illness in November 2019. However, the report is not conclusive: The origin and severity of the staffers’ illness is not known — and most people in China regularly go to hospitals, not primary-care physicians, for routine care.

The memo also pointed to “gain of function” studies — which in theory could enhance the lethality or transmissibility of a virus — allegedly done at the Wuhan lab with U.S. backing. However, National Institutes of Health Director Francis Collins has since adamantly denied that the U.S. supported any “gain-of-function” research on coronaviruses in Wuhan.

David Feith, who served as deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs under Trump, said he supported Biden’s call for an enhanced review. “Implicit in the president’s statement is that there is more to analyze and more to collect than has been analyzed or collected to date,” Feith said.

The Director of National Intelligence declined to comment.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 26 of 66

## IS CHINA HAMPERING INVESTIGATIONS?

The White House statement criticized China for a lack of transparency, echoing previous criticisms by Democrats and Republicans. "The failure to get our inspectors on the ground in those early months will always hamper any investigation into the origin of COVID-19," the White House said.

The Associated Press has reported on China's interference in the World Health Organization's probes of the virus and its fanning of conspiracy theories online. China has also forced journalists to leave the country in recent years and silenced or jailed whistleblowers from Wuhan and elsewhere.

The lack of transparency in China is a significant and familiar challenge. But that does not in itself signal that something in particular is being hidden.

"The problem is when you make that announcement (Biden's call for investigation) in a highly politicized environment, it makes it even less likely that China will cooperate with efforts to find the origins of the virus," said Yanzhong Huang, a senior fellow for global health at the Council on Foreign Relations.

## WHAT DO SCIENTISTS BELIEVE ABOUT VIRUS ORIGINS?

The most compelling argument for investigating the possibility of a lab leak is not any new hard evidence, but rather the fact that another pathway for virus spread has not been 100% confirmed.

"The great probability is still that this virus came from a wildlife reservoir," said Arinjay Banerjee, a virologist at the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization in Saskatchewan, Canada. He pointed to the fact that spillover events – when viruses jump from animals to humans – are common in nature, and that scientists already know of two similar beta coronaviruses that evolved in bats and caused epidemics when humans were infected, SARS1 and MERS.

However, the case is not completely closed. "There are probabilities, and there are possibilities," said Banerjee. "Because nobody has identified a virus that's 100% identical to SARS-CoV-2 in any animal, there is still room for researchers to ask about other possibilities."

## HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO CONFIRM THE ORIGIN OF A VIRUS?

Confirming with 100% certainty the origin of a virus is often not fast, easy, or always even possible.

For example, scientists never confirmed the origin of smallpox before the disease was eradicated through a global vaccination program.

In the case of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) – a disease caused by a beta coronavirus, like the current coronavirus – researchers first identified the virus in February 2003. Later that year, scientists discovered the likely intermediary hosts: Himalayan palm civets found at live-animal markets in Guangdong, China. But it wasn't until 2017 that researchers traced the likely original source of the virus to bat caves in China's Yunnan province.

## HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO UNDERSTAND THE ORIGIN?

From a scientific perspective, researchers are always keen to better understand how diseases evolve. From a public health perspective, if a virus has transitioned to being spread mostly by human-to-human contact, discovering its origins is not as essential to strategies for containing the disease.

"Questions of origins and questions of disease control are not the same thing once human-to-human transmission has become common," said Deborah Seligsohn, an expert in environment and public health at Villanova University.

Republicans have pressed for more inquiries into a possible lab leak as part of a broader effort to blame China and vindicate Trump's handling of the pandemic. Nearly 600,000 people in the United States have died of COVID-19, the highest toll of any country.

## WHY HAPPENS AFTER THE 90 DAYS?

Many scientists caution that it's unlikely a 90-day investigation will yield definitive new answers.

"We rarely get a 'smoking gun,'" said Stephen Morse, a disease researcher at Columbia University. "Even under the best of circumstances we rarely get certainty, just degrees of likelihood."

Any findings will likely be politically explosive, especially if new evidence comes to light supporting or dismissing the zoonotic transfer or lab-leak theory. And a failure to reach definitive conclusions, almost inevitable after a 90-day review, could provide grist for Trump supporters and opponents alike, as well as

embolden conspiracy theorists.

Meanwhile experts like the Council on Foreign Relations' Huang suspect China may simply clamp down more, adding another complication to already tense relations. "This will likely make it even more challenging to extract concessions from China to allow another team to visit Wuhan, or have unfettered access to investigate there," he said.

## Blunt message, search for answers mark VP's 1st foreign trip

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris came to Latin America to deliver a message rather than clinch some kind of concrete deal.

She bluntly told migrants not to travel to the United States. She spoke of the evils of government corruption that lead to dislocation. She urged nations to increase enforcement at their borders.

She completed the journey without securing any commitments to increase immigration enforcement or expand pathways to legal migration. But she also did so without a significant mistake.

It was her first international trip aboard Air Force Two, and a first step toward establishing herself on a core foreign policy issue — one that has bedeviled American presidents at least since Ronald Reagan.

But as much as the trip offered her a chance to step onto the international stage speaking for the Biden administration on a key issue, it also highlighted the ambiguous nature of the portfolio President Joe Biden has handed her — to address the root causes of the spike in migration at the U.S. border.

Harris came away from her meetings with the Guatemalan and Mexican presidents able to talk about commitments to work more closely with them on economic development and on combating trafficking, smuggling and corruption. But she also faced persistent questions about her decision not to visit the U.S.-Mexico border. Republicans have seized on the fact that neither Biden nor Harris has visited the border to argue that the administration is absent on the issue.

Harris was called out by the Democratic left, too, for using her platform in Guatemala to tell people thinking of fleeing to the U.S. that they should not. "Do not come," she said, invoking the dangers of the trip as well as the Biden administration's commitment to border security. "Do not come."

Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York called those comments "disappointing" and noted that it is legal to seek asylum.

While White House aides have repeatedly tried to clarify that Harris' assignment is narrowly focused on diplomatic solutions to the immigration situation, she was again forced to spend part of a trip meant to showcase her diplomatic chops explaining herself.

"It would be very easy to say, 'We'll travel to one place and therefore it's solved,'" she said. "I don't think anybody thinks that that would be the solution."

Her foreign debut was a complex one as she attempted to engage in the deepest reasons people leave what they know to take on the perils of trekking to the U.S. border and trying to get across, whether illegally or through their right to ask for asylum.

Harris often speaks about her belief that "most people don't want to leave home," as she said during her meeting with Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei. She says her goal is to restore hope to the region so residents no longer feel compelled to flee their homes for better opportunities in the U.S.

The criticism from both Republicans and some Democrats underscored the politically fraught nature of the assignment and the difficulty Harris faces in finding success with an intractable challenge that's only grown in recent months.

Illegal border crossings have increased steadily since April 2020, after President Donald Trump invoked pandemic-related powers to deny migrants the opportunity to seek asylum, but they further accelerated under Biden.

The new president quickly scrapped many of Trump's hard-line border policies — most notably the program that made asylum-seekers wait in Mexico, often in dangerous conditions, for court dates in U.S. immigration court.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 28 of 66

U.S. border authorities encountered nearly 19,000 unaccompanied children in March, the highest on record. Overall, more than 170,000 encounters were reported on the border in April, the highest level in more than 20 years. The numbers aren't exactly comparable because getting stopped under pandemic-related authorities carries no legal consequences, prompting some people who are caught once to keep trying.

Still, analysts praised Harris' first in-person foray into the region, noting that even as her political opponents attempt to distill the migration issue to the situation at the border, the vice president reflected a clear grasp of the nuances of the challenge.

"You're completely unrealistic if you think there is some magic bullet to stop this stuff," said Eric Olson, director of policy at the Seattle Foundation, a group focused on good governance in Latin America. "There's very little you can do to stop migration quickly. Better to acknowledge it and set the groundwork to address the long-term issues."

Olson praised Harris for pledging during her press conference with the Guatemalan president to fight corruption and for focusing her meetings in the region on civil society groups and small-business owners rather than the private sector.

And he said that getting Mexico to commit publicly to working with the U.S. on economic opportunity in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador was a significant step forward, because traditionally Mexico has treated Central America as "an annoying guest that just walks through your yard."

"This is a first, maybe weak step, but it is something because they have not traditionally accepted that as their goal," he said.

As the first female U.S. vice president, Harris spent much of her trip focused on elevating women in the region. She met female entrepreneurs in Guatemala and Mexico and announced a \$40 million program in Guatemala focused on creating opportunities for young, primarily Indigenous women.

Harris, who is also the first Black and South Asian vice president, said her place in history was on her mind and informed her approach as she toured the region.

"I welcome showing anyone, whatever your race or gender, that you may be the first to do anything, but make sure you're not the last," she said. "And in that way, let's pave a path where we create an opportunity for others to become the first in their family or their community to do those things that perhaps others didn't think they were capable of, but God has given them that capacity to achieve, and with a little help, they will," she said in Guatemala.

The trip was Harris' busiest public foray yet. She held lengthy bilateral meetings with the Guatemalan and Mexican presidents, presided over roundtables with entrepreneurs and labor leaders, and took questions from the press multiple times a day.

She began the trip on Air Force Two with a brief visit with her traveling press, bringing cookies baked and decorated to look like her back to reporters to mark the start of her journey. She ended her time in Mexico with an extended press conference, in which she fielded questions on topics including immigration enforcement and voting rights.

She turns from one intractable problem to another back in Washington, where the White House has said she'll spend the next week hosting events focused on voting rights as Democrats struggle to find enough support in Congress to write broad voting protections into law.

## Rights group: Colombian police cause deaths of 20 protesters

By ASTRID SUAREZ Associated Press

BUCARAMANGA, Colombia (AP) — An international monitoring group on Wednesday accused police officers in Colombia of responsibility for the deaths of 20 people and other violent actions against protesters during recent civil unrest, including sexual abuse, beatings and arbitrary detentions.

Human Rights Watch said in a report said it has "credible evidence" indicating police killed at least 16 protesters or bystanders with "live ammunition fired from firearms," while three other people died when police used non-lethal weapons. The report said another person died after being beaten repeatedly.

"These brutal abuses are not isolated incidents by rogue officers, but rather the result of systemic

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 29 of 66

shortcomings of the Colombian police," said José Miguel Vivanco, the group's director for the Americas. "Comprehensive reform that clearly separates the police from the military and ensures adequate oversight and accountability is needed to ensure that these violations don't occur again."

The report presents a panorama of more widespread violence than what Colombian authorities have acknowledged. It says Human Rights Watch has received "credible information" reporting a total of 68 deaths during the protests, 34 of which it was able to confirm, including two police officers.

Colombia's government has reported 18 deaths related to the protests and says an additional nine are under investigation. The country's human rights ombudsman, meanwhile, reported late Monday that it had confirmed 58 deaths related to the protests.

Thousands of Colombians have turned out across the country for mostly peaceful protests against the administration of President Iván Duque. The protests started over proposed tax increases on public services, fuel, wages and pensions, but it has morphed into a general demand for the government to do more for the most vulnerable in society, such as Indigenous and Afro Latino people.

The administration withdrew the tax proposal just days after the protests began, but the unrest has continued and grown as reports emerged of police violence, deaths and disappearances.

Human Rights Watch said its investigation into the police response to the nationwide protests that began April 28 found that the majority of fatal victims suffered injuries to vital organs, including head and chest, which experts said "are consistent with being caused with the intent to kill."

The report says that among those killed by police was Kevin Agudelo, who died during a peaceful demonstration May 3 in Cali, a city in southwestern Colombia that has been the epicenter of the protests. Witnesses said anti-riot police fired flash bang cartridges and teargas when demonstrators blocked cars at a traffic circle, prompting several demonstrators to throw rocks.

"One witness said he heard shots that sounded like live ammunition," the report says. "He said that Agudelo, who had been hiding behind a post, then ran toward him along with another protester. The witness said he saw a police officer shoot Agudelo from a short distance. The other protester was also injured, he said. Human Rights Watch reviewed three videos that appear consistent with the witnesses' accounts, in which Agudelo is seen lying next to the injured protester"

The organization reviewed a photo of his body that showed wounds to the chest and arms, which the report said forensic experts concluded were consistent with being shot by live ammunition.

Authorities have been slow to investigate the reports of violence, and as of Saturday, only four people had been indicted in connection with two homicides that occurred during the protests. Of the 170 police officers under disciplinary investigation, only two have been suspended, according to Human Rights Watch. Official public data indicates most of these investigations are for abuse of authority and 13 are linked to homicides.

The police have also been accused gender-based and sexual violence. The Ombudsman's Office, an agency in charge of protecting human rights, has reported 14 cases of sexual assault and 71 cases of gender-based violence, including physical and verbal assault.

Police have arrested more than 1,000 people for crimes allegedly committed during the protests, but hundreds of them were released because judges found no evidence linking them to the crime or concluded they were not guaranteed due process.

The president has said all cases of police abuse will be investigated and duly punished. However, Duque has insisted that they are isolated cases.

"Colombia is not a country that violates human rights, we have difficulties, but we face them with justice," presidential counselor for human rights, Nancy Patricia Gutiérrez, told reporters Tuesday.

## US increasingly unlikely to meet Biden's July 4 vax goal

By ZEKE MILLER and LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For months, President Joe Biden has laid out goal after goal for taming the coronavirus pandemic and then exceeded his own benchmarks. Now, though, the U.S. is unlikely to meet his

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 30 of 66

target to have 70% of Americans at least partially vaccinated by July 4.

The White House has launched a month-long blitz to combat vaccine hesitancy and a lack of urgency to get shots, particularly in the South and Midwest, but it is increasingly resigned to missing the president's vaccination target. The administration insists that even if the goal isn't reached, it will have little effect on the overall U.S. recovery, which is already ahead of where Biden said it would be months ago.

About 15.5 million unvaccinated adults need to receive at least one dose in the next four weeks for Biden to meet his goal. But the pace of new vaccinations in the U.S. has dropped below 400,000 people per day — down from a high of nearly 2 million per day two months ago.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, told reporters at a briefing on Tuesday that he still hopes the goal will be met "and if we don't, we're going to continue to keep pushing."

So far 14 states have reached 70% coverage among adults, with about a dozen more on pace to reach the milestone by July 4. But the state-to-state variation is stark.

Fauci said the administration is "pleading" with states, particularly those with low vaccination rates, to step up their efforts in the coming months, though some of the states trailing behind are hardly sharing the urgency.

On a conference call Tuesday, White House COVID-19 coordinator Jeff Zients delivered an impassioned call for governors to join the administration in "pulling out all the stops" on vaccinations this month. "We need your leadership on the ground — which is where it matters the most — more than ever," he said.

In Mississippi, which trails the nation with only about 34% of its population vaccinated, Republican Gov. Tate Reeves has called Biden's goal "arbitrary, to say the least."

The vaccination rate in the state has dropped off so sharply that it would take the better part of a year for the state to reach the 70% target.

Speaking to CNN on Sunday, Reeves said he encouraged residents to get vaccinated, but that the more important marker was the decline in cases in the state.

That sentiment makes winning over people like University of Mississippi student Mary Crane all the more important to Biden meeting his goal. She hasn't felt much urgency to get the COVID-19 vaccine because she's already had the virus, and the family she's living with during the summer break has been vaccinated.

"Initially, it was to wait on everyone else to get it and not take a vaccine," she said, explaining why she hasn't been vaccinated. "But now that it's available, there's really not a reason I haven't gotten it, other than I just haven't gotten it."

Crane, 20, said she's seen classmates who were eager to get the vaccine right away — there was a trend when the vaccine first came out of posting vaccination cards on social media sites like Instagram. But now that the vaccine has been available for a few months, Crane said she sees fewer young people talking about it.

"Everything's pretty much back to normal now," she said.

Fauci on Tuesday emphasized that increased vaccination was essential to stamping out potentially dangerous variants, including the so-called "Delta variant" first identified in India that is now the dominant strain in the United Kingdom and is growing in the U.S. Vaccines have proven less effective against that variant when people are not fully immunized, and evidence points to it being more transmissible and more deadly.

In an attempt to drive up the vaccination rate, the White House has worked to encourage an array of incentives for people to get shots — from paid time off to the chance to win a million dollars. It's partnered with community groups, businesses and health providers to make it easier than ever to get a shot. Those efforts have helped sustain some of the interest, but the trends point to Biden missing the target by several percentage points.

In Ohio, Republican Gov. Mike DeWine created a lottery offering \$1 million prizes for vaccinated adults and full-ride college scholarships for children. Ohio's lottery kicked off a wave of similar incentive lotteries nationally.

DeWine's May 12 announcement of the state's Vax-a-Million program had the desired effect, leading to a 43% boost in state vaccination numbers over the previous week. But the impact was short-lived, with

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 31 of 66

vaccinations falling again the following week.

For some, the chance of winning \$1 million isn't enough to overcome skepticism about the need for the vaccine.

Joanna Lawrence of Bethel in southwestern Ohio says the COVID-19 survivability rate is so high, and the experiences of people she knows who took the vaccine are so bad, that she sees no need to risk a shot for herself. She made it through her own bout of the coronavirus in August.

"My life is not worth money," said Lawrence, 51, who farms and works in commercial real estate. "I can always get more money if I need to. I cannot get another life."

White House press secretary Jen Psaki declined to make a prediction on whether the goal would be met but said the administration was using "every tool at our disposal to get there."

"Regardless of where we are on July 4th, we're not shutting down shop," she said. "On July 5th, we're going to continue to press to vaccinate more people across the country."

Husband and wife Keila Moore 41, and Willie Moore, 42, of Pearl, Mississippi, have disagreed on whether to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

Willie said he knew he wanted to get it because he has high blood pressure and other preexisting conditions and is a frontline worker.

"As soon as I had the chance to get it, I took it," said Willie, who was vaccinated in February.

But Keila, who doesn't have preexisting conditions and works from home, has so far chosen not to be vaccinated.

After her husband was vaccinated, she tested positive for the virus. She said it was a mild case, but that it was still a scary experience. She said she's feeling more open to getting the vaccine, and is considering getting it this fall, if reports of side effects continue to be minimal.

"I'm just still weighing the options and the time frame," she said. "I'm a little bit more confident in it now as the time is going by because the time is going by and I'm not really seeing any side effects that are too worrisome."

## McAuliffe wins Democratic nomination for Virginia governor

By SARAH RANKIN Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Terry McAuliffe, the energetic former Virginia governor and longtime fixture of Democratic politics, won the party's nomination Tuesday in his quest for a second term in office.

McAuliffe will go on to face GOP nominee and political newcomer Glenn Youngkin in the November general election, when Republicans will be looking to break their more than decade-long losing streak in statewide races.

"Folks, we launched this campaign about six months ago on the simple idea that Virginia has some very big challenges ahead," McAuliffe said in a speech Tuesday night. "And I've said, we've got to go big, we've got to be bold, and we need seasoned leadership to move us forward and to lift up all Virginians."

Virginia is the only state in the nation with an open race for governor this year, and the contest is expected to be closely watched as a barometer of voter sentiment in each party heading into the midterm elections.

The race has also taken on heightened importance as Democrats aim to hold onto power after assuming full control of state government in 2020. Since then they have pushed through sweeping changes, from gun control and police reform to marijuana legalization and a higher minimum wage, transforming what was once a reliably red state into an outlier in the South.

"We are a different state than we were eight years ago, and we are not going back," McAuliffe said.

A longtime Democratic Party fundraiser and a close friend of Bill and Hillary Clinton, McAuliffe held office from 2014 to 2018. Like all Virginia governors, he was prohibited from seeking a consecutive term. He jumped into the race in December after deciding in 2019 against a run for president.

McAuliffe, 64, focused his campaign on the need for bold action to address Virginia's lagging teacher pay and inequities in education funding. He's also pledged to work to accelerate Virginia's minimum wage increase to \$15 by 2024, protect abortion access, and ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 32 of 66

He earned the endorsement of Gov. Ralph Northam, who said McAuliffe was best suited to lead Virginia out of the economic recovery from the pandemic and cement the transformational changes Democrats have implemented since taking full control of state government in the 2019 elections.

McAuliffe also raised far more money than the other candidates: state Sen. Jennifer McClellan, former Del. Jennifer Carroll Foy, Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax and Del. Lee Carter. From the jump, he had the backing of a substantial number of elected officials across the commonwealth, including many powerful Black lawmakers.

"I liked what he's done and believe he can do what he's promised. And I think he can win," said Joe Glaze, a 70-year-old retired clergy member who voted for McAuliffe Tuesday afternoon in Richmond. "That's the main thing: I want someone who will win and beat Youngkin."

McAuliffe drew criticism from some more progressive voters who criticized his record on energy and criminal justice issues and who saw him as standing in the way of Carroll Foy and McClellan, who were each trying to become the nation's first Black woman governor.

Either would have also been Virginia's first female governor. The commonwealth has elected only one woman in its history to a statewide position and never to its highest office.

Del. Hala Ayala won the Democratic nomination for lieutenant governor Tuesday, all but ensuring that Virginia will soon elect its first female lieutenant governor — her Republican opponent is Winsome Sears, the first Black woman to receive a major party's endorsement for statewide office.

Democratic Attorney General Mark Herring meanwhile secured his party's nomination in his bid for a third term, staving off a strong challenge from Del. Jay Jones, who sought to cast Herring as insufficiently progressive. Herring will face Republican state Del. Jason Miyares in November.

Republicans picked their nominees for this year's statewide races in a multisite convention process in May. Youngkin, a former executive at an investment fund with no voting record to be scrutinized, has pledged to use his personal wealth to power his campaign.

In a statement, Youngkin described Virginia as a state that over the past two Democratic governorships has gotten less safe, more expensive and has not offered enough economic opportunities.

"We need a new kind of leader to bring a new day to Virginia," Youngkin said. "Get ready, because Terry McAuliffe will default to the same political games he's played his entire life."

Bobbi Andrews, 85, said she voted for McAuliffe based on his past record as governor and, in part, because of his stance on education. But she said she's voted for Republicans before and considers Youngkin a strong candidate.

"I'm glad to see a strong Republican running because we need two parties," Andrews said. "If we don't have two parties, neither one of them will be honest."

## Biden ends GOP infrastructure talks, but new group emerges

By LISA MASCARO and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden ended talks with a group of Republican senators on a big infrastructure package on Tuesday and started reaching out to senators from both parties in a new effort toward bipartisan compromise, setting a summer deadline for Congress to pass his top legislative priority.

The president is walking away from talks with lead Republican negotiator Sen. Shelley Moore Capito after the two spoke Tuesday, but would welcome her in the new bipartisan group, according to an administrative official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private negotiations.

Shortly after the Biden-Capito talks collapsed, 10 senators huddled late Thursday over pizza — five Republicans, five Democrats — emerging after three hours with some optimism their new effort could create a viable path forward, said a person familiar with the closed-door talks and granted anonymity to discuss them.

At the same time, with anxiety running high as time slips by, Democrats are laying the groundwork to pass some or all of the ambitious package on their own. Biden conferred Tuesday with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer about launching the budget resolution process



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 33 of 66

for Senate votes in July, the White House said.

"The President is committed to moving his economic legislation through Congress this summer, and is pursuing multiple paths to get this done," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said in a statement.

The breakdown in the White House's efforts with GOP senators comes after weeks of prolonged infrastructure talks between the president and Capito as the two sides failed to broker the divide over the scope of Biden's sweeping infrastructure investment and how to pay for it.

The Republican senators offered a \$928 billion proposal, which included about \$330 billion in new spending — but not as much as Biden's \$1.7 trillion investment proposal for rebuilding the nation's roads, bridges, highways and other infrastructure, including Veterans Affairs hospitals and care centers.

Biden has proposed raising the corporate tax rate from 21% to 28%, a nonstarter for Republicans, and rejected the GOP senators' suggestion of tapping unspent COVID-19 aid money to fund the new infrastructure spending.

In a statement, Capito said she was disappointed Biden ended the talks, but also expressed interest in ongoing bipartisan work.

"While I appreciate President Biden's willingness to devote so much time and effort to these negotiations, he ultimately chose not to accept the very robust and targeted infrastructure package, and instead, end our discussions," she said. "However, this does not mean bipartisanship isn't feasible."

As Biden aims for a compromise deal, he has begun reaching out to other senators, including Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana and two key centrist Democrats, Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, whose votes will be crucial in the evenly split Senate.

Those senators receiving phone calls from Biden were among the group of 10 assembled with Sinema and Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, late Tuesday in Portman's office for what was described as a productive meeting, the person familiar with the session said.

Portman and Sinema have been engaged for months with Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, and Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, on a sizable infrastructure proposal that is expected to include proposed ways to pay for it.

The senators' group has expanded in recent weeks to include the others from both parties. Romney has described it a "back burner" group, in case the administration's talks with the GOP senators faltered.

Psaki said the president urged the senators in his conversations to continue their work "to develop a bipartisan proposal that he hopes will be more responsive to the country's pressing infrastructure needs." Biden tapped Cabinet and White House aides to meet with the senators in person.

Ahead of Biden's announcement, the White House had also spoken to other lawmakers, including from the House.

Rep. Josh Gottheimer, D-N.J., and Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., the co-chairs of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus, spoke late Monday with Brian Deese, director of the White House National Economic Council, about bipartisan efforts to reach an infrastructure deal, according to an aide who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private conversations.

The Problem Solvers group has agreed to \$761.8 billion in new spending over eight years as part of \$1.2 trillion plan, according to a draft obtained late Tuesday by The Associated Press. The one-page draft does not include any proposed ways to pay for the package.

Gottheimer is also working with Cassidy and Sinema from the senators' group, the aide said.

With the narrowly split House and the 50-50 Senate, the White House faces political challenges pushing its priorities through Congress with Democratic votes alone. Biden's party holds a slight majority in the Senate because Vice President Kamala Harris can break a tie.

The special budget rules could provide Biden with an alternative path, particularly in the Senate, because they allow legislation to be approved with a 51-vote threshold, rather than the 60 votes typically needed to advance a bill past a filibuster — in this case, led by Republicans against the Biden package.

Democrats are watching warily as time passes and anxiety builds toward an agreement, with many lawmakers worried they are not fulfilling their campaign promises to voters who put the party in control of Congress and the White House.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 34 of 66

During a private discussion of Democratic senators at lunch Tuesday, there were differing views over whether they should keep talking with Republicans or pursue an approach that would allow them to pass a bill on their own, through the budget reconciliation process.

Schumer told reporters afterward that Democrats are pursuing "a two-path approach."

The bipartisan talks led by Sinema with the other senators are underway, Schumer said, while the budget committee is preparing the legislation that would allow passage through the reconciliation process.

"It may well be that part of the bill that is passed will be bipartisan, and part of it will be in reconciliation," he said. "But we're not going to sacrifice bigness and boldness."

The president is expected to engage with lawmakers while he sets out this week on his first foreign trip for an economic summit of the Group of Seven industrialized nations in Europe.

## Global sting began by creating message service for crooks

By MIKE CORDER, NICK PERRY and ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — When the FBI dismantled an encrypted messaging service based in Canada in 2018, agents noticed users moving to other networks. Instead of following their tracks to rivals, investigators decided on a new tactic: creating their own service.

ANOM, a secure-messaging service built by the FBI and other law enforcement agencies, launched in October 2019 and solidified its following after authorities took down another rival. Popularity spread by word of mouth.

When ANOM was taken down Monday, authorities had collected more than 27 million messages from about 12,000 devices in 45 languages — a vast body of evidence that fueled a global sting operation. Authorities on Tuesday revealed the operation known as Trojan Shield and announced that it had dealt an "unprecedented blow" to organized crime around the world.

"Each and every device in this case was used to further criminal activity," said Suzanne Turner, the agent in charge of the FBI in San Diego, where the investigation began in 2016. Users were "upper-echelon, command-and-control" figures in more than 300 criminal organizations.

Unbeknown to criminals, authorities were copied on every message sent on the FBI devices, much like blind recipients of an email.

"The very devices that criminals use to hide their crimes were actually a beacon for law enforcement," Randy Grossman, the acting U.S. attorney in San Diego, said at a news conference.

More than 800 suspects were arrested and more than 32 tons of drugs seized, including cocaine, cannabis, amphetamines and methamphetamines. Police also seized 250 guns, 55 luxury cars and more than \$148 million in cash and cryptocurrencies. An indictment unsealed Tuesday in San Diego named 17 foreign distributors charged with racketeering conspiracy.

The seeds of the sting were sown when law enforcement agencies took down a company called Phantom Secure that provided customized end-to-end encrypted devices to criminals, according to court papers.

Unlike typical cellphones, the devices do not make phone calls or browse the internet — but allow for secure messaging. As an outgrowth of the operation, the FBI recruited a collaborator who was developing a next-generation secure-messaging platform for the criminal underworld called ANOM. The collaborator engineered the system to give the agency access to any messages being sent.

ANOM didn't take off immediately. But then other secure platforms used by criminals to organize drug-trafficking hits and money laundering were taken down by police, chiefly EncroChat and Sky ECC. That put gangs in the market for a new app, and the FBI's platform was ready. Over the past 18 months, the agency provided phones via unsuspecting middlemen to gangs in more than 100 countries.

The flow of intelligence "enabled us to prevent murders. It led to the seizure of drugs that led to the seizure of weapons. And it helped prevent a number of crimes," Calvin Shivers, assistant director of the FBI's criminal investigative division, told a news conference in The Hague, Netherlands.

The operation was led by the FBI with the involvement of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the European Union police agency Europol and law enforcement agencies in several countries, said Dutch National Police Chief Constable Jannine van den Berg.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 35 of 66

Australian Federal Police Commander Jennifer Hearst called it "a watershed moment in global law enforcement history."

The ANOM app became popular in criminal circles as users told one another it was a safe platform. All the time, police were looking over their shoulders as they discussed hits, drug shipments and other crimes.

Since October 2019, the FBI cataloged more than 20 million messages from a total of 11,800 devices — with about 9,000 currently active, according to documents, which cited Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Australia and Serbia as the most active countries.

They say the number of active ANOM users was only 3,000 until Sky, one of the platforms previously used by criminal gangs, was dismantled in March.

While primarily focused on drug trafficking and money-laundering, the investigation also resulted in "high-level public corruption cases," an FBI agent quoted in the documents said. A goal of Trojan Shield was to "shake the confidence in this entire industry because the FBI is willing and able to enter this space and monitor messages," the agent said.

Swedish police prevented a dozen planned killings and believe that they arrested several "leading actors in criminal networks," according to a statement from Linda Staaf, the head of Sweden's national criminal intelligence unit.

Finnish police said Tuesday that nearly 100 people have been detained and more than 500 kilograms (half a ton) of drugs confiscated, along with dozens of guns and cash worth hundreds of thousands of euros (dollars). In Germany, the general prosecutor's office in Frankfurt said that more than 70 people were arrested Monday and drugs, cash and weapons were also seized.

In Australia, authorities said they arrested 224 people and seized more than four tons of drugs and \$35 million. New Zealand police said they had arrested 35 people and seized drugs and assets worth millions of dollars.

As part of a global operation, the Australian government "struck a heavy blow against organized crime," Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison told reporters. "Not just in this country, but one that will echo around organized crime around the world."

European police last year delivered a major blow to organized crime after cracking an encrypted communications network known as EncroChat, which was used by criminal gangs across the continent.

In March, Belgian police arrested dozens of people after cracking another encrypted chat system and seizing more than 17 tons of cocaine.

The latest effort went even further before authorities decided to take down the service.

The operation will likely lead criminals to wonder whether services they use are run by a government, Turner said, and it has shown that authorities have abundant technical knowledge and international cooperation.

Nick Merrill, a cybersecurity researcher at the University of California, Berkeley, said the investigation offers "a pretty good recipe" for law enforcement agencies to compromise an existing service or build one and wait "for the right time to strike."

"Either way, these centralized services provide a central point of weakness," Merrill said.

## Senate passes bill to boost US tech industry, counter rivals

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate overwhelmingly approved a bill Tuesday that aims to boost U.S. semiconductor production and the development of artificial intelligence and other technology in the face of growing international competition, most notably from China.

The 68-32 vote for the bill demonstrates how confronting China economically is an issue that unites both parties in Congress. That's a rarity in an era of division as pressure grows on Democrats to change Senate rules to push past Republican opposition and gridlock.

The centerpiece of the bill is a \$50 billion emergency allotment to the Commerce Department to stand up semiconductor development and manufacturing through research and incentive programs previously authorized by Congress. The bill's overall cost would increase spending by about \$250 billion with most

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 36 of 66

of the spending occurring in the first five years.

Supporters described it as the biggest investment in scientific research that the country has seen in decades. It comes as the nation's share of semiconductor manufacturing globally has steadily eroded from 37% in 1990 to about 12% now, and as a chip shortage has exposed vulnerabilities in the U.S. supply chain.

"The premise is simple, if we want American workers and American companies to keep leading the world, the federal government must invest in science, basic research and innovation, just as we did decades after the Second World War," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. "Whoever wins the race to the technologies of the future is going to be the global economic leader with profound consequences for foreign policy and national security as well."

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said the bill was incomplete because it did not incorporate more Republican-sponsored amendments. He nonetheless supported it.

"Needless to say, final passage of this legislation cannot be the Senate's final word on our competition with China," he said. "It certainly won't be mine."

President Joe Biden applauded the bill's passage in a statement Tuesday evening, saying: "As other countries continue to invest in their own research and development, we cannot risk falling behind. America must maintain its position as the most innovative and productive nation on Earth."

Senators slogged through days of debates and amendments leading up to Tuesday's final vote. Schumer's office said 18 Republican amendments will have received votes as part of passage of the bill. It also said the Senate this year has already held as many roll call votes on amendments than it did in the last Congress, when the Senate was under Republican control.

While the bill enjoys bipartisan support, a core group of GOP senators has reservations about its costs.

One of the bill's provisions would create a new directorate focused on artificial intelligence and quantum science with the National Science Foundation. The bill would authorize up to \$29 billion over five years for the new branch within the foundation with an additional \$52 billion for its programs.

Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., said Congress should be cutting the foundation's budget, not increasing it. He called the agency "the king of wasteful spending." The agency finances about a quarter of all federally supported research conducted by America's colleges and universities.

"The bill is nothing more than a big government response that will make our country weaker, not stronger," Paul said.

But Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., noted that a greater federal investment in the physical sciences had been called for during the administration of President George W. Bush to ensure U.S. economic competitiveness.

"At the time, I'm pretty sure we thought we were in a track meet where our competitor was, oh, I don't know, maybe half a lap behind us. I'm pretty sure now as the decade has moved on, we're looking over our shoulder and realizing that the competition is gaining," said Cantwell, the chairman of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee.

The lead Republican on the committee also weighed in to support the bill.

"This is an opportunity for the United States to strike a blow on behalf of answering the unfair competition that we are seeing from communist China," said Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss.

Senators have tried to strike a balance when calling attention to China's growing influence. They want to avoid fanning divisive anti-Asian rhetoric when hate crimes against Asian Americans have spiked during the coronavirus pandemic.

Other measures spell out national security concerns and target money-laundering schemes or cyberattacks by entities on behalf of the Chinese government. There are also "buy America" provisions for infrastructure projects in the U.S.

Senators added provisions that reflect shifting attitudes toward China's handling of the COVID-19 outbreak. One would prevent federal money for the Wuhan Institute of Virology as fresh investigations proceed into the origins of the virus and possible connections to the lab's research. The city registered some of the first coronavirus cases.

It's unclear whether the measure will find support in the Democratic-led House, where the Science Committee is expected to soon consider that chamber's version. Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., who has been working with Schumer for two years on legislation that's included in the bill, called it the biggest investment in science and technology since the Apollo spaceflight program a half century ago.

"I'm quite certain we will get a really good product on the president's desk," Schumer said.

Biden said he looked forward to working with the House on the legislation, "and I look forward to signing it into law as soon as possible."

## **EXPLAINER: Why a rural pipeline is a climate battleground**

By JOHN FLESHER AP Environmental Writer

As Enbridge Energy prepares to finish rebuilding an oil pipeline across rural northern Minnesota, protesters are occupying part of the construction area and pledging a "summer of resistance" on the ground and in court.

Enbridge, which has obtained all necessary state and federal permits for the Line 3 project, says it will be finished by year's end.

The Canadian company describes it as essential for reliable oil supplies in both nations, saying the plan has undergone rigorous environmental permitting and will boost Minnesota's economy. Opponents contend it endangers waterways, violates indigenous treaty rights and abets dependence on fossil fuels that will further overheat the planet.

What's beyond dispute is that the project fits into an escalating battle over the future of energy pipelines, which federal regulators say are generally safer than hauling fuels by rail or highway but pose their own hazards, particularly spills in ecologically sensitive places.

### **WHAT IS THE LINE 3 PROJECT?**

The 1,097-mile (1,765-kilometer) line is part of an Enbridge network that moves oil from fields in Canada's Alberta province to refineries in southern Ontario and the U.S. Midwest. It crosses the far northeastern tip of North Dakota, then cuts through northern Minnesota to a terminal at Superior, Wisconsin.

The line carries nearly 16.4 million gallons (62 million liters) of oil used in fuels and other products.

Enbridge says the original 1960s pipe is deteriorating and carrying about half its capacity. The company is replacing it with pipe made of stronger steel that it says would enable resumption of a normal flow — about 32 million gallons (121 million liters) daily.

Work is finished in Canada, North Dakota and Wisconsin and 60% complete in Minnesota, where 337 miles (542 kilometers) of new pipe is being laid. A new section veers south around reservation land of the Leech Lake tribe, which objected to the project. The detour adds about 50 miles (80 kilometers) to the length.

### **ASIDE FROM PROTESTS AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, WHAT OPTIONS DO OPPONENTS HAVE?**

They await a ruling from the Minnesota Court of Appeals on whether the state Public Utilities Commission's approval was lawful. A pending suit challenges the Army Corps of Engineers' issuance of a permit. State and federal judges have refused to halt construction while the cases proceed.

Also, groups are pushing President Joe Biden to order the Corps to withdraw the Clean Water Act permit. During a protest Monday, actress Jane Fonda carried a placard with Biden's image and the words, "Which side are you on?"

Although Biden pleased environmentalists by canceling the Keystone XL project, his administration has not done likewise with other disputed pipelines, including the Dakota Access line near the Standing Rock Reservation in the Dakotas.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz has stayed on the sidelines while the legal process over Line 3 unfolds. His hands-off approach differs from that of Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a fellow Democrat who ordered Enbridge to shut down Line 5, which moves oil from Superior, Wisconsin, through Michigan to Sarnia, Ontario.

Whitmer's demand focuses on a roughly 4-mile (6.4-kilometer) section beneath a channel that connects Lake Huron and Lake Michigan, where the state granted an easement for the pipeline in 1953 and now seeks to revoke it. That action is also tied up in court.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 38 of 66

Line 3 opponents are focusing on blocking the rebuilding project instead of shutting down the line, although their long-term goal is making it obsolete through conversion from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

WHY ARE ENERGY PIPELINES BECOMING A CAUSE CELEBRE?

The day after Fonda joined Line 3 protesters in Minnesota, the National Wildlife Federation in Michigan announced a radio and television ad campaign against Line 5 featuring actor Jeff Daniels. While environmental and indigenous activists have fought energy pipelines for years, the involvement of celebrities is one illustration of widening resistance.

It comes after high-profile spills in the past decade, including a 2010 rupture of an Enbridge line in southern Michigan that sent oil into the Kalamazoo River. A resulting federal consent decree required Enbridge to upgrade the U.S. portion of Line 3.

Another factor: rising awareness that racial minorities suffer disproportionate harm from environmental damage.

Native Americans have been on the front lines of opposition to pipelines, some of which run through or near reservations. They say Line 3 threatens their waters and rights to gather wild rice, fish and hunt on ancestral lands. Enbridge says it consulted with tribes in rerouting the line to protect cultural resources and has employed more than 500 native people for the project.

Also fueling the battle against pipelines is climate change. Many activists consider virtually any project — whether new, an expansion or a replacement of existing pipes — a lifeline for fossil fuels that delays the transition to cleaner energy that scientists say is needed quickly to avoid catastrophic warming.

Enbridge says people will need oil for years to come and shutting down pipelines will mean more shipments by train and truck.

## Harris tells Latin Americans the US can offer them hope

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris sought to assure poor and threatened populations of Latin America on Tuesday that the United States has “the capacity to give people a sense of hope” in the region so they can make better lives without fleeing to the U.S. border.

Harris closed her first foreign trip as vice president unapologetic for her decision not to visit the U.S.-Mexico border as part of her mission to address migration to the United States.

“If you want to address the needs of a people, you must meet those people, you must spend time with those people, because the only way you can actually fix the problem is to understand the problem,” she told a news conference before the flight to Washington.

Earlier she brushed off questions about her decision not to go to the border as part of her work to address the spike in migration, saying that while it was “legitimate” to be concerned about the situation there, it wouldn’t be addressed with a simple visit.

“It must be priority for us to understand why people leave,” she told the news conference. “I cannot say it enough. Most people don’t want to leave home.”

Harris engaged in two days of diplomacy in Guatemala and Mexico as part of the Biden administration’s effort to stem the flow of people into the U.S. She met with Guatemala’s and Mexico’s presidents to discuss economic investments and increased enforcement against trafficking, smuggling and corruption.

The increase in migration at the border has become one of the major challenges confronting Biden in the early months of his first term, with Republicans seizing on an issue they see as politically advantageous. Polls suggest Americans are less favorable toward Biden’s approach to immigration than they are toward his policies on the economy and the COVID-19 pandemic.

They’ve tried to make Harris the face of that immigration policy, charging she and Biden are ignoring the issue because both have yet to visit the southern border. Harris told reporters she was focused on “tangible” results “as opposed to grand gestures.”

Harris and her aides have sought to make clear that her mission was narrowly focused on finding diplomatic solutions to the problem at the border.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 39 of 66

Without being asked to judge the result, she told the news conference: "Do I declare this trip a success? Yes I do. It is a success in terms of the pathway that is about progress. We have been successful in making progress."

After her meeting with Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the administration announced a range of agreements brokered between the two governments, including a \$130 million commitment over the next three years from the U.S. to support labor reforms in Mexico and loans to bolster southern Mexico's economy.

The administration said the meeting produced an agreement to have an economic dialogue in September on trade, telecommunications and supply chains. And the two countries will also partner on human trafficking and economic programs addressing why people leave El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras for the U.S.

Harris told López Obrador at the start of their meeting that the two nations are "embarking on a new era" and emphasized the longstanding "interdependence and interconnection" of the two nations.

Harris also met female entrepreneurs and held a roundtable with labor leaders in Mexico before heading back to Washington.

Her brief foray brought her first to Guatemala on Monday. While in Guatemala, she met President Alejandro Giammattei. To coincide with their meeting, the Biden administration announced a number of new commitments to combat trafficking, smuggling, and corruption, as well as investments in economic development in the country.

But some Democrats criticized the vice president Monday when she delivered a direct message to those considering leaving their homes and making the often dangerous trek to the U.S. border: "Do not come."

Her comments echoed those made by past U.S. officials as they've tried to dissuade migrants from seeking to cross the border, as the U.S. faces unprecedented numbers of attempted border crossings. Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York called her comments "disappointing" and noted that it is legal to seek asylum.

Harris declined to respond directly to the criticism when reporters asked, saying only: "I'm really clear: we have to deal with the root causes and that is my hope. Period."

But the criticism from both Republicans and Democrats underscored the politically fraught nature of the assignment, and the difficulty Harris faces in finding success with an intractable challenge that's only grown in recent months.

Illegal border crossings have increased steadily since April 2020, after Trump introduced pandemic-related powers to deny migrants the opportunity to seek asylum, but further accelerated under Biden. The new president quickly scrapped many of Trump's hardline border policies — most notably the program that made asylum-seekers wait in Mexico, often in dangerous conditions, for court dates in U.S. immigration court.

U.S. border authorities encountered nearly 19,000 unaccompanied children in March, the highest on record. Overall, more than 170,000 encounters were reported on the border in April, the highest level in more than 20 years.

The numbers aren't directly comparable because getting stopped under pandemic-related authorities carries no legal consequences, resulting in many repeat crossings.

## US increasingly unlikely to meet Biden's July 4 vax goal

By ZEKE MILLER and LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For months, President Joe Biden has laid out goal after goal for taming the coronavirus pandemic and then exceeded his own benchmarks. Now, though, the U.S. is unlikely to meet his target to have 70% of Americans at least partially vaccinated by July 4.

The White House has launched a month-long blitz to combat vaccine hesitancy and a lack of urgency to get shots, particularly in the South and Midwest, but it is increasingly resigned to missing the president's vaccination target. The administration insists that even if the goal isn't reached, it will have little effect on the overall U.S. recovery, which is already ahead of where Biden said it would be months ago.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 40 of 66

About 15.5 million unvaccinated adults need to receive at least one dose in the next four weeks for Biden to meet his goal. But the pace of new vaccinations in the U.S. has dropped below 400,000 people per day — down from a high of nearly 2 million per day two months ago.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, told reporters at a briefing on Tuesday that he still hopes the goal will be met "and if we don't, we're going to continue to keep pushing."

So far 14 states have reached 70% coverage among adults, with about a dozen more on pace to reach the milestone by July 4. But the state-to-state variation is stark.

Fauci said the administration is "pleading" with states, particularly those with low vaccination rates, to step up their efforts in the coming months, though some of the states trailing behind are hardly sharing the urgency.

On a conference call Tuesday, White House COVID-19 coordinator Jeff Zients delivered an impassioned call for governors to join the administration in "pulling out all the stops" on vaccinations this month. "We need your leadership on the ground — which is where it matters the most — more than ever," he said.

In Mississippi, which trails the nation with only about 34% of its population vaccinated, Republican Gov. Tate Reeves has called Biden's goal "arbitrary, to say the least."

The vaccination rate in the state has dropped off so sharply that it would take the better part of a year for the state to reach the 70% target.

Speaking to CNN on Sunday, Reeves said he encouraged residents to get vaccinated, but that the more important marker was the decline in cases in the state.

That sentiment makes winning over people like University of Mississippi student Mary Crane all the more important to Biden meeting his goal. She hasn't felt much urgency to get the COVID-19 vaccine because she's already had the virus, and the family she's living with during the summer break has been vaccinated.

"Initially, it was to wait on everyone else to get it and not take a vaccine," she said, explaining why she hasn't been vaccinated. "But now that it's available, there's really not a reason I haven't gotten it, other than I just haven't gotten it."

Crane, 20, said she's seen classmates who were eager to get the vaccine right away — there was a trend when the vaccine first came out of posting vaccination cards on social media sites like Instagram. But now that the vaccine has been available for a few months, Crane said she sees fewer young people talking about it.

"Everything's pretty much back to normal now," she said.

Fauci on Tuesday emphasized that increased vaccination was essential to stamping out potentially dangerous variants, including the so-called "Delta variant" first identified in India that is now the dominant strain in the United Kingdom and is growing in the U.S. Vaccines have proven less effective against that variant when people are not fully immunized, and evidence points to it being more transmissible and more deadly.

In an attempt to drive up the vaccination rate, the White House has worked to encourage an array of incentives for people to get shots — from paid time off to the chance to win a million dollars. It's partnered with community groups, businesses and health providers to make it easier than ever to get a shot. Those efforts have helped sustain some of the interest, but the trends point to Biden missing the target by several percentage points.

In Ohio, Republican Gov. Mike DeWine created a lottery offering \$1 million prizes for vaccinated adults and full-ride college scholarships for children. Ohio's lottery kicked off a wave of similar incentive lotteries nationally.

DeWine's May 12 announcement of the state's Vax-a-Million program had the desired effect, leading to a 43% boost in state vaccination numbers over the previous week. But the impact was short-lived, with vaccinations falling again the following week.

For some, the chance of winning \$1 million isn't enough to overcome skepticism about the need for the vaccine.

Joanna Lawrence of Bethel in southwestern Ohio says the COVID-19 survivability rate is so high, and the experiences of people she knows who took the vaccine are so bad, that she sees no need to risk a



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 41 of 66

shot for herself. She made it through her own bout of the coronavirus in August.

"My life is not worth money," said Lawrence, 51, who farms and works in commercial real estate. "I can always get more money if I need to. I cannot get another life."

White House press secretary Jen Psaki declined to make a prediction on whether the goal would be met but said the administration was using "every tool at our disposal to get there."

"Regardless of where we are on July 4th, we're not shutting down shop," she said. "On July 5th, we're going to continue to press to vaccinate more people across the country."

Husband and wife Keila Moore 41, and Willie Moore, 42, of Pearl, Mississippi, have disagreed on whether to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

Willie said he knew he wanted to get it because he has high blood pressure and other preexisting conditions and is a frontline worker.

"As soon as I had the chance to get it, I took it," said Willie, who was vaccinated in February.

But Keila, who doesn't have preexisting conditions and works from home, has so far chosen not to be vaccinated.

After her husband was vaccinated, she tested positive for the virus. She said it was a mild case, but that it was still a scary experience. She said she's feeling more open to getting the vaccine, and is considering getting it this fall, if reports of side effects continue to be minimal.

"I'm just still weighing the options and the time frame," she said. "I'm a little bit more confident in it now as the time is going by because the time is going by and I'm not really seeing any side effects that are too worrisome."

## Spacecraft buzzes Jupiter's mega moon, 1st close-up in years

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA's Juno spacecraft has provided the first close-ups of Jupiter's largest moon in two decades.

Juno zoomed past icy Ganymede on Monday, passing within 645 miles (1,038 kilometers). The last time a spacecraft came that close was in 2000 when NASA's Galileo spacecraft swept past our solar system's biggest moon.

NASA released Juno's first two pictures Tuesday, highlighting Ganymede's craters and long, narrow features possibly related to tectonic faults. One shows the moon's far side, opposite the sun.

"This is the closest any spacecraft has come to this mammoth moon in a generation," said Juno's lead scientist, Scott Bolton of the Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio. "We are going to take our time before we draw any scientific conclusions, but until then we can simply marvel at this celestial wonder — the only moon in our solar system bigger than the planet Mercury."

Ganymede is one of 79 known moons around Jupiter, a gas giant. Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei discovered Ganymede in 1610, along with Jupiter's three next-biggest moons.

Launched a decade ago, Juno has been orbiting Jupiter for five years.

## Takeaways: Senate report on 'absolutely brutal' Jan. 6 siege

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Senate report examining the security failures surrounding the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol says missed intelligence, poor planning and multiple layers of bureaucracy led to the violent siege. It does not fault former President Donald Trump, who told his supporters to "fight like hell" to overturn his defeat just before hundreds of them stormed the building.

In an effort to be bipartisan — and to find quick agreement on security improvements to the Capitol — Senate Democrats wrote the report with their Republican counterparts and largely steered clear of addressing the former president's role. The investigation by the two panels, the Senate Homeland and Governmental Affairs Committee and the Senate Rules Committee, makes 20 recommendations for immediate security changes, including legislation to give the Capitol Police chief more authority, better training

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 42 of 66

and equipment for law enforcement and an overhaul of the way intelligence is collected ahead of major events in Congress.

The report also details the violence of the day. Senate investigators collected statements from more than 50 police officers who fought the insurrectionists in brutal hand-to-hand combat. Those officers described injuries, verbal abuse from Trump's supporters and fear as the police command structure broke down. Some thought they would die.

"It's our duty to have immediate responses to what happened," and to do it on a bipartisan basis, said Senate Rules Committee Chair Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn.

Here are some takeaways from the report:

## IGNORED INTELLIGENCE

The Senate investigators revealed that the Capitol Police had intelligence in the weeks before the insurrection that some Trump supporters were openly planning a siege to stop the certification of President Joe Biden's victory. An internal report on Dec. 21 referenced a blog with a map of the Capitol campus and comments threatening armed violence. "Bring guns," wrote one poster. "It's now or never."

Separately, private citizens contacted the department and warned of people organizing on Twitter to storm the Capitol. The FBI emailed a memo around that warned of "war."

But most of that intelligence never reached senior leaders, and it wasn't briefed in key security meetings hours before the event. At a Jan. 5 meeting with Capitol Police, Secret Service, FBI and D.C. National Guard, no entity "provided any intelligence indicating that there would be a coordinated violent attack on the United States Capitol by thousands of well-equipped armed insurrectionists," the report said.

The senators recommended that Capitol Police consolidate its intelligence operations into one bureau to "improve the timely sharing of relevant intelligence up the chain of command" and improve coordination with other agencies.

## NATIONAL GUARD DELAYS

The committee interviewed multiple officials from the Defense Department and the National Guard in an attempt to make sense of the hourslong delay in deploying the National Guard as the rioters were overwhelming the Capitol Police and breaking into the building. They found that the officials described many of the events of the day differently, continuing a pattern of finger-pointing since the attack.

The investigators found that military officials were "mission planning" and seeking layers of approval as they discussed deploying the Guard, and that better preparation on all sides would have sped the process. They recommend that the Defense Department implement more contingency plans in case a quick reaction is needed again.

As Capitol Police begged for National Guard assistance, military officials "spent the afternoon assessing the situation, determining how best to provide assistance, instructing personnel on the mission, and ensuring personnel were properly equipped," the report said.

In the end, the senators write, the D.C. National Guard did not arrive at the Capitol until 5:20 p.m., "after both the House and Senate chambers had already been declared secure."

## LACK OF POLICE AUTHORITY

The slowed deployment of National Guard troops is also pinned on the Capitol Police Board, an arcane panel of three voting members — the heads of House and Senate security and the Architect of the Capitol — who must approve the Capitol Police chief's requests. The chief at the time, Steven Sund, never submitted a formal request for the troops ahead of Jan. 6, and the members of the board did not understand their own authority and could not detail the statutory requirements for requesting National Guard assistance.

Klobuchar and Missouri Sen. Roy Blunt, the top Republican on the Senate Rules Committee, said they will introduce legislation soon to give the police chief more authority. Change needs to happen "immediately," Klobuchar said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 43 of 66

## NEED FOR A COMMISSION

While praising the report, Democrats have said it also shows that a deeper look into the insurrection is necessary. Republican senators last week blocked legislation that would have formed a bipartisan, independent commission to investigate the attack, including Trump's role, his lies about the election being stolen from him and what led the rioters to lay siege to the Capitol.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said Tuesday that such a commission is "crucial," and he held out the possibility of another vote. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi urged the Senate to try again to advance the legislation, which passed the House with the support of almost three dozen Republicans.

To win bipartisan support, the Senate investigators left almost all political references out of the report — even though Trump's election defeat was very much a part of the attack. The document does not use the word insurrection, even though it was one. It includes Trump's speech ahead of the siege only as an appendix, with staff saying they did so rather than assert "editorial judgement" on his words. The staff spoke on condition of anonymity to candidly discuss the process.

## 'ABSOLUTELY BRUTAL'

The report includes more than 50 interviews with police, who described how unprepared they were as they were beaten and dragged by the Trump supporters who broke into the building. They described being left with no guidance as the force's incident command system broke down.

"Throughout the seven hours of the riot on the Capitol grounds, law enforcement officers faced verbal and 'absolutely brutal,' violent physical abuse," the investigators wrote.

One officer told the investigators that they were "horrified" that no one was on the radio giving orders or helping the officers. The person said that the screams on the radio were "horrific" and that the sights were "unimaginable" as officers begged for aid.

Another officer described the weapons used, including pieces of a fence in front of the inauguration platform that were torn apart and used to assault officers.

That person listed the objects that were thrown at them: "bricks, liquids, pepper spray, bear spray, sticks of various widths, pipes, bats." Some were armed with guns, the officer said, and others had stun guns. The person said they were sprayed with bear spray "at least 6-8 times while tussling with rioters who were trying to use the bike racks against us as weapons."

While about 300 of the 1,200 officers on duty that day had training and equipment, "the remaining 900 officers had even less training and equipment to defend themselves and the buildings and individuals they are sworn to protect," the report says.

## Global glitch: Swaths of internet go down after cloud outage

KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — Dozens of websites went down briefly around the globe Tuesday, including CNN, The New York Times and Britain's government home page, after an outage at the cloud computing service Fastly, illustrating how vital a small number of behind-the-scenes companies have become to running the internet.

The sites that could not be reached also included some Amazon pages, the Financial Times, Reddit, Twitch and The Guardian.

San Francisco-based Fastly acknowledged a problem just before 6 a.m. Eastern. About an hour later, the company said: "The issue has been identified and a fix has been applied." Most of the sites soon appeared to be back online.

The company said in an emailed statement that it was a "technical issue" and "not related to a cyber attack."

Still, major futures markets in the U.S. dipped sharply minutes after the outage, which came a month after hackers forced the shutdown of the biggest fuel pipeline in the U.S.

Fastly is a content-delivery network, or CDN. It provides vital but behind-the-scenes cloud computing

“edge servers” to many of the web’s popular sites. These servers store, or “cache,” content such as images and video in places around the world so that it is closer to users, allowing them to fetch it more quickly and smoothly.

Fastly says its services mean that a European user going to an American website can get the content 200 to 500 milliseconds faster.

Internet traffic measurement by Kentik showed that Fastly began to recover from the outage roughly an hour after it struck at mid-morning European time, before most Americans were awake.

“Looks like it is slowly coming back,” said Doug Madory, an internet infrastructure expert at Kentik. He said “it is serious because Fastly is one of the world’s biggest CDNs and this was a global outage.”

Brief internet service outages are not uncommon and are only rarely the result of hacking or other mischief. Fastly stock jumped almost 11% on Tuesday as investors shrugged off the problem.

Still, the incident highlighted the relative fragility of the internet’s architecture given its heavy reliance on Big Tech companies — such as Amazon’s AWS cloud services — as opposed to a more decentralized array of companies.

“Even the biggest and most sophisticated companies experience outages. But they can also recover fairly quickly,” Madory said.

When the outage hit, some visitors trying to access CNN.com got a message that said: “Fastly error: unknown domain: cnn.com.” Attempts to access the Financial Times website turned up a similar message, while visits to The New York Times and U.K. government’s gov.uk site returned an “Error 503 Service Unavailable” message, along with the line “Varnish cache server,” which is a technology that Fastly is built on.

Down Detector, which tracks internet outages, posted reports on dozens of sites going down.

## Deputies who killed man had body cams, couldn’t use them

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and AMY FORLITI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The two sheriff’s deputies who shot and killed a Black man while assigned to a U.S. Marshals Service fugitive task force had been told they could not use their body-worn cameras, despite a change in Justice Department policy to allow cameras months before the shooting.

The shooting of Winston Boogie Smith Jr. last week has sparked nights of protests in Minneapolis — a city still reeling from the death of George Floyd at the hands of police — and is raising questions about the implementation of a Justice Department policy change that shifted away from its longstanding rule prohibiting the tool.

Last October, the Justice Department formalized a new policy to allow local officers to wear body cameras during joint operations, reversing a policy that had strained its relationship with some law enforcement agencies. They sent guidance out to all U.S. Marshals across the country and opened an office dedicated to supporting the effort. The issue had previously hit such a boiling point that Atlanta’s police chief had withdrawn city police officers from federal task forces over the issue.

In February, the Marshals Service, which has a network of fugitive task forces nationwide with local law enforcement, sent guidance to state and local officials about how they could equip their officers with cameras and the necessary paperwork allowing the footage, according to a Justice Department official who was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity. The process, though, can take months to train officers on federal policy and because of the variety of cameras used by police departments in the U.S. and the complexity of data collection.

In Minnesota, federal officials began in February contacting agencies that had already dropped out of the task force over the issue to try to bring them back aboard, the Justice Department official said. Some agencies said they were still told cameras weren’t allowed, or they weren’t made aware of the complex legal process required to actually allow task force officers to wear the cameras. Under the new rule, local law enforcement agencies could equip their officers with body cameras, though they need to sign an amendment to the legal paperwork between the agency and the Marshals Service.

Members of the federal fugitive task force in Minnesota were trying to apprehend Smith last week on a

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 45 of 66

warrant for a charge of being a felon in possession of a firearm. The Marshals Service said Smith was in a parked car at the time and then "produced a handgun" before two sheriff's deputies on the task force opened fire. Later, the state agency investigating the shooting said evidence showed Smith also fired his gun.

In the wake of the shooting, Deputy U.S. Attorney General Lisa Monaco has ordered Justice Department law enforcement officers to wear body cameras when making planned arrests or serving search warrants. The directive orders the heads of the Marshals Service, FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to develop body-worn camera policies within 30 days.

But even as Justice makes a major policy shift to bring federal agents a tool that has been common for years with most local police agencies, there is still confusion about the process for local task force officers -- and the length of time it will take to actually allow them to be worn in the field.

In Minnesota, the task force members who fired at Smith were sheriff's deputies from Ramsey and Hennepin counties. Ramsey County Sheriff Bob Fletcher decided to pull his deputies from the task force on Monday, saying he would remain off the federal task force "until body cameras are actually authorized."

His office said deputies were told they could wear body cameras on Friday, a day after the shooting. He then signed an amended memorandum that would allow the deputies to wear the cameras, but said he received a call Monday from the U.S. Marshal in Minnesota, Ramona Dohman, telling him they still couldn't.

"It could take a while for this to get approved ... so, your deputies still won't be allowed to use their body cameras... until the onboarding process has gone on," Fletcher said Dohman told him in a voicemail. The sheriff's office said five deputies assigned to the task force had been issued body cameras but were told they could not use them during task force work.

Even after the memo has been signed, there could be a delay for local officers to be able to use the cameras because the Marshals Service needs to train both local and federal officials in the district on their use and the rules surrounding what can be recorded during federal operations, the Justice Department official said.

Fletcher said despite regular requests from local law officers, the Marshals Service has repeatedly said they were working on the issue. He said that as recently as last month, federal representatives told local law enforcement that the cameras were still not allowed.

The day after Smith was fatally shot by officers, the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension -- the agency leading the investigation -- said in a statement that the U.S. Marshals Service "currently does not allow the use of body cameras for officers serving on its North Star Fugitive Task Force." But the U.S. Marshals Service said that while deputy marshals do not yet wear body cameras, the Justice Department permits state, local and tribal task force officers to do so.

Smith's family members and activists have called for transparency, demanding to see any footage that exists, though officials have said there is none.

The Hennepin County Sheriff's Office, where the other deputy involved in the shooting works, said it had issued the deputy a body camera but sheriff's officials were told it could not be used while the deputy was working on task force operations. Sheriff's officials were also told that the new policy "remains in the implementation phase," nearly eight months after it was announced, and has "not yet been implemented" on the task force.

The issue has kept some local departments off task forces altogether. John Elder, the spokesman for the Minneapolis Police Department, said that agency does not participate in any task forces where officers are not allowed to use their body cameras.

St. Paul police officers stopped participating in the fugitive task force in 2019. St. Paul Police Chief Todd Axtell sent a letter to the local U.S. Marshals Service in 2018 saying he was "unwavering" in his decision to require all St. Paul police officers to use body cameras while on duty -- even if they are on a federal task force. In 2019, the U.S. Marshals Service responded to Axtell, saying in a letter that if the St. Paul department held firm on its decision to require cameras, those officers would be removed from the task force.

Since then, Axtell has had some conversations with federal officials about the use of body worn cameras

by task force officers and has raised concern about language that gives DOJ control over the release of footage. He said he'd be willing to reengage in federal task forces if that issue is worked out.

"To me, I was not willing to give up that necessary tool of transparency," he said. "They wanted to have final say in when and if the video could be released to the public."

Axtell has been an advocate for federal agencies using body cameras for years, and says he's grateful the Biden administration is taking on the issue, which he says they inherited. He called the DOJ's new order that federal officers conducting search warrants and takedowns must wear the cameras a "seismic shift."

"I couldn't be more happy to hear of this seismic shift in the DOJ approach to body worn cameras," he said.

## Senate report details broad failures around Jan. 6 attack

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Senate investigation of the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol found a broad intelligence breakdown across multiple agencies, along with widespread law enforcement and military failures that led to the violent attack.

There were clear warnings and tips that supporters of former President Donald Trump, including right-wing extremist groups, were planning to "storm the Capitol" with weapons and possibly infiltrate the tunnel system underneath the building. But that intelligence never made it up to top leadership.

The result was chaos. A Senate report released Tuesday details how officers on the front lines suffered chemical burns, brain injuries and broken bones, among other injuries, after fighting the attackers, who quickly overwhelmed them and broke into the building. Officers told the Senate investigators they were left with no leadership or direction when command systems broke down.

The Senate report is the first — and could be the last — bipartisan review of how hundreds of Trump supporters were able to push violently past security lines and break into the Capitol that day, interrupting the certification of Joe Biden's presidential election victory. The failures detailed in the report highlighted how, almost 20 years after the Sept. 11 attacks, U.S. intelligence agencies are still beset by a fundamental issue: a failure of imagination.

The report recommends immediate changes to give the Capitol Police chief more authority, to provide better planning and equipment for law enforcement and to streamline intelligence gathering among federal agencies.

But as a bipartisan effort, the report does not delve into the root causes of the attack, including Trump's role as he called for his supporters to "fight like hell" to overturn his election defeat that day. It does not call the attack an insurrection, even though it was. And it comes two weeks after Republicans blocked a bipartisan, independent commission that would investigate the insurrection more broadly.

"This report is important in the fact that it allows us to make some immediate improvements to the security situation here in the Capitol," said Democratic Sen. Gary Peters of Michigan, the chair of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, which conducted the probe along with the Senate Rules Committee. "But it does not answer some of the bigger questions that we need to face, quite frankly, as a country and as a democracy."

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said Tuesday that the findings show an even greater need for a bipartisan commission to investigate the root causes of the attack, referring to Trump's unfounded claims about the 2020 election.

"As the 'big lie' continues to spread, as faith in our elections continues to decline, it is crucial — crucial — that we establish a trusted, independent record of what transpired," said Schumer, D-N.Y.

But Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, who led the blockade against such a commission, said he's confident the ongoing reviews by lawmakers and law enforcement will be sufficient.

The House in May passed legislation to create a commission that would be modeled after a panel that investigated the Sept. 11 attacks.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., told colleagues in a letter Tuesday that if the Senate fails to ap-

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 47 of 66

prove the commission, her chamber will launch its own investigations.

The top Republican on the rules panel, Missouri Sen. Roy Blunt, has opposed the commission, arguing that investigation would take too long. He said the recommendations made in the Senate can be implemented faster, such as legislation that he and Democratic Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, the rules committee chair, intend to introduce soon that would give the chief of Capitol Police more authority to request assistance from the National Guard.

The Senate report recounts how the Guard was delayed for hours Jan. 6 as officials in multiple agencies took bureaucratic steps to release the troops. It details hours of calls between officials in the Capitol and the Pentagon and as the then-chief of the Capitol Police, Steven Sund, begged for help.

It finds that the Pentagon spent hours "mission planning" and seeking multiple layers of approvals as Capitol Police were being overwhelmed and brutally beaten by the attackers. It also says the Defense Department's hesitant response was influenced by criticism of its heavy-handed response to protests in the summer of 2020 after the killing of George Floyd in police custody.

The senators are heavily critical of the Capitol Police Board, a three-member panel made up of the heads of security for the House and Senate and the Architect of the Capitol. The board now is required to approve requests by the police chief, even in urgent situations. The report recommends that its members "regularly review the policies and procedures" after senators found that the three board members on Jan. 6 did not understand their own authority and could not detail the statutory requirements for requesting National Guard assistance.

Two of the three board members, the House and Senate sergeants-at-arms, were pushed out in the days after the attack. Sund, the Capitol Police chief, resigned under pressure.

The report recommends a consolidated intelligence unit within the Capitol Police after widespread failures from multiple agencies that did not predict the attack even though insurrectionists were planning it openly on the internet.

The police intelligence unit "knew about social media posts calling for violence at the Capitol on January 6, including a plot to breach the Capitol, the online sharing of maps of the Capitol Complex's tunnel systems, and other specific threats of violence," the report says, but agents did not properly inform leaders of everything they had found.

On Dec. 28, for example, the report notes that someone emailed a public Capitol Police account and warned about "countless tweets from Trump supporters saying they will be armed on January 6th" and "tweets from people organizing to 'storm the Capitol.'" There were also internal warnings of an uptick in posts on various websites that showed maps of the Capitol, including its underground tunnels. But those specifics were never disseminated widely.

In a response to the report, the Capitol Police acknowledged the need for improvements and said some are already being made. "Law enforcement agencies across the country rely on intelligence, and the quality of that intelligence can mean the difference between life and death," the statement said.

During the attack, the report says, Capitol Police were compromised by bad intelligence, poor planning, faulty equipment and a lack of leadership. The force's incident command system "broke down during the attack," leaving officers on the front lines without orders. There were no functional incident commanders, and some senior officers were fighting instead of giving orders. Capitol Police "leadership never took control of the radio system to communicate orders to front-line officers," the investigation found.

"I was horrified that NO deputy chief or above was on the radio or helping us," one officer told the committee in an anonymous statement. "For hours the screams on the radio were horrific(,) the sights were unimaginable and there was a complete loss of control. ... For hours NO Chief or above took command and control. Officers were begging and pleading for help for medical triage."

The acting chief, Yogananda Pittman, who replaced Sund after his resignation, told the committees that the lack of communication resulted from "incident commanders being overwhelmed and engaging with rioters, rather than issuing orders over the radio."

The committee's interviews with police officers detail "absolutely brutal" abuse from Trump's supporters as they ran over them and broke into the building. The officers described hearing racial slurs and seeing Nazi salutes. One officer trying to evacuate the Senate said he had stopped several men in full tactical

gear, one of whom said, "You better get out of our way, boy, or we'll go through you to get (the senators)."

The insurrectionists told police officers they would kill them, then members of Congress.

At the same time, the senators acknowledge the officers' bravery, noting that one officer told them, "The officers inside all behaved admirably and heroically and, even outnumbered, went on the offensive and took the Capitol back."

## **AP analysis: COVID prolonged foster care stays for thousands**

By SALLY HO and CAMILLE FASSETT The Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Leroy Pascubillo missed his daughter's first step, her first word and countless other precious milestones. After being born addicted to heroin, she had been placed with a foster family, and he anxiously counted the days between their visits as he tried to regain custody. But because of the pandemic, the visits dwindled and went virtual, and all he could do was watch his daughter — too young to engage via computer — try to crawl through the screen.

They are among thousands of families across the country whose reunifications have been snarled in the foster care system as courts delayed cases, went virtual or temporarily shut down, according to an Associated Press analysis of child welfare data from 34 states.

The decrease in children leaving foster care means families are lingering longer in a system intended to be temporary, as critical services were shuttered or limited. Vulnerable families are suffering long-term and perhaps irreversible damage, experts say, which could leave parents with weakened bonds with their children.

The AP's analysis found at least 8,700 fewer reunifications during the early months of the pandemic compared with the March-to-December period the year before -- a decrease of 16%. Adoptions, too, dropped — by 23%, according to the analysis. Overall, at least 22,600 fewer children left foster care compared with 2019.

"Everybody needed extra help, and nobody was getting extra help," said Shawn Powell, a Parents for Parents advocacy program coordinator in King County, Washington.

For months, King County, like many parts of the country, suspended nearly all hearings except emergency orders, which led to prioritizing child removals -- sparked by child welfare reports or other red flags -- over family reunifications. Adoptions slowed to a trickle. Services needed for reunification — psychiatric evaluations, random drug testing, group therapy, mental health counseling, housing assistance, and the public transportation to access these services — also were limited.

For foster care children, even doctor's appointments must be approved by a judge, and frustrated lawyers say matters as routine as that were affected.

During the period examined in AP's analysis, the total foster care population dropped 2% overall -- likely a result of the significant decrease in child abuse and neglect reports, where the process to remove a child from a home typically begins.

National data show that the average stay in foster care is about 20 months, which means the children most affected during the early months of the pandemic were those in the foster care system long before the pandemic.

Those in foster care are disproportionately children of color and from poor families, national data also show. Those groups tend to have more contact with social service agencies that are mandated to report potential abuse and neglect, which means the pandemic has amplified not just the challenges of poor parenting but of parenting while poor.

"The systemic problems around racism and poverty in COVID and how people are treated in the child welfare system may be compounding," said Sharon Vandivere of the national think tank group Child Trends, who noted that longer stays in foster care are inherently traumatic and make reunifications less likely. "It was bad before, and it's probably made it even worse."

For D.Y., a Black teenager living at a Seattle-area group home, the pandemic has magnified the loneliness and isolation of being in the care of child protective services. He's been out of his mother's custody



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 49 of 66

since 2016, after an abuse report found she physically disciplined her children. He had visits with her in the years following, and lawyers expected his mom would regain custody and D.Y. could go home in the fall of 2020. Then the pandemic rocked his case and life.

Because of new COVID-19 protocols and staffing shortages, already-limited privileges at the institutional group home were scaled back or revoked. In-person visits with his mom ended. Group activities all but disappeared. Inside, he resented wearing a mask and washing his hands constantly. With each exposure scare in the living facility, he and others had to quarantine.

When he resumed in-person school, he hoped officials would find it safe to see his mom again, too — but that didn't happen for months. He watched helplessly as his sister - who was placed with relatives and had a case further along in the system when the pandemic began - was returned home to their mom last summer. D.Y. was happy for them, but he wants the same: to taste his mom's cooking, to make eggs in his own kitchen, to sit on the couch with his family with no masks.

"I still want her to baby me," the 13-year-old boy said of his mother, who declined to comment for this story while the cases of D.Y. and her third child remain active. "I can tell she has high faith of when I'll come home. I don't know if it's going to happen anymore."

The AP is not naming D.Y., instead referring to him by the initials used in his lawsuit against the Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families. The lawsuit accuses the state of providing inadequate care as D.Y. was bounced through 50 placements before the pandemic, some days housing him in a motel or the agency's office building. The state declined to comment on his case and lawsuit.

But Frank Ordway, chief of staff at the state's child welfare agency, blamed the court system's closures for the drop in reunifications and implored those that still haven't fully reopened to prioritize cases like D.Y.'s.

"When those systems aren't working, those families and those children are left in limbo," Ordway said. "Our job as an agency is to help keep those families together and to get them together. Not being able to do so because of the pandemic was a wrenching experience."

King County Superior Court Commissioner Nicole Wagner, a presiding judge in the family court system, said court staff, attorneys, social workers and counselors did their best, but that no one knew how to address unprecedented issues in the pandemic. For example, she said, she wanted in-person visits for children but couldn't order social workers with underlying conditions to monitor them when required by law.

Wagner said she hopes lessons from the pandemic will help redefine how the system supports already struggling families in the process of reunification.

"It's scary, it's overwhelming, it's frightening. And it's about the most important things in your life: your children," Wagner said. "There's no doubt in my mind that the pandemic absolutely, 100% has disproportionately impacted the more vulnerable populations."

Illinois was the only state that saw an increase in foster care exits. Others in AP's analysis acknowledged a significant drop but said that each foster care case has unique circumstances beneath the numbers.

Many states, for example, extended support to those on the cusp of aging out of state care during the pandemic. This policy change effectively protected foster care youths from being kicked out of their living arrangements if they still needed a place to stay, but it also affected the number of foster care exits.

Connecticut — which had one of the largest drops in exits, at 36% — waited until May 2021 to fully return to in-person visits, which serve as a key metric to judge whether parents are prepared to regain care and custody of their children.

The state "never stopped serving children and families, and we found that conducting some of our work virtually is both more efficient and, in some cases, preferred by our clients," a Connecticut Department of Children and Families spokesman said in a statement.

Leroy Pascubillo, now 51, had used drugs over the course of four decades, but said he started working toward sobriety immediately after his daughter's birth in February 2019.

The court put him in the only drug rehab center in the Seattle area that allows children to stay on site with their fathers. He had a few in-person visits with his daughter each week, and he was told that if he got through the initial stages of the program, she could join him there in March 2020 while he completed

treatment. The pandemic upended that plan.

"You start building that relationship, and then it's taken away and you try to start it all over again," he said. All the more painful was that he knew his daughter, now 2, also had no contact with her mother. Pascubillo said she hasn't participated in the custody case, and she couldn't be reached by the AP.

Once courts began to hear existing cases again, Pascubillo was able to reunite with his daughter, complete rehab and land a Seattle apartment with the help of state and nonprofit services. He wants to work as a parent advocate to help other fathers find their way back to their kids. He still weeps over the time he's lost and the four-month delay in reuniting with his daughter.

"It felt like 40 years. I figured she would have forgotten me. But as soon as I looked at her and sang 'baby, baby, baby,' she started kicking like she was in the womb," Pascubillo said. "We have this bond."

## Bosnian Serb commander Ratko Mladic loses genocide appeal

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Ratko Mladic, the military chief known as the "Butcher of Bosnia" for orchestrating genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in the Balkan nation's 1992-95 war, lost his final legal battle Tuesday when U.N. judges rejected his appeals and affirmed his life sentence.

The ruling involving his 2017 convictions and sentence closed a grim chapter in European history that included the continent's first genocide since World War II — the 1995 Srebrenica massacre of more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys.

The now-frail Mladic, often belligerent at his court appearances in The Hague, showed no reaction other than a scowl as Presiding Judge Prisca Matimba Nyambe of Zambia said the panel had dismissed, by a vote of 4-1, his appeals of convictions for crimes including genocide, murder, extermination and terror for atrocities throughout the war that killed more than 100,000 and left millions homeless.

The 79-year-old former general is the last major figure to face justice from the conflict that ended more than a quarter century ago.

His former political chief, ex-Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadzic, already is serving a life sentence after being convicted for the same crimes. Former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, who was accused of fomenting the ethnic conflicts that tore apart the Balkans in the 1990s, died in a U.N. cell in 2006 before judges at his trial could reach verdicts.

Serge Brammertz, the prosecutor who finally brought both Karadzic and Mladic to justice, said Mladic "ranks among the most notorious war criminals in modern history" who abused his position of power to commit crimes including genocide.

"Mladic should be condemned by all responsible officials in the former Yugoslavia and around the world," Brammertz said. "His name should be consigned to the list of history's most depraved and barbarous figures."

U.S. President Joe Biden said the "historic judgment shows that those who commit horrific crimes will be held accountable. It also reinforces our shared resolve to prevent future atrocities from occurring anywhere in the world."

"My thoughts today are with all the surviving families of the many victims of Mladic's atrocities. We can never erase the tragedy of their deaths, but I hope today's judgment provides some solace to all those who are grieving," a statement from Biden said.

The court also rejected an appeal by prosecutors of Mladic's acquittal on one other count of genocide linked to ethnic purges early in the war.

As commander of the Bosnian Serb Army, the once-swaggering Mladic led troops responsible for atrocities ranging from "ethnic cleansing" campaigns to the siege of Sarajevo and the war's bloody climax in the 1995 Srebrenica massacre.

In Sarajevo, applause broke out among those watching the proceedings. Mayor Benjamina Karic called it "a day of justice" for Sarajevo, Bosnia and innocent victims of the war.

Mladic's toxic legacy continues to divide Bosnia and his dark shadow has spread far beyond the Balkans.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 51 of 66

To Serbs in Bosnia, he is a war hero who fought to protect his people. To Bosniaks, mostly Muslims, he will always be a villain responsible for their wartime suffering and losses.

Nedziba Salihovic, who lost her son and husband in the bloodshed, watched the court hearing on a large screen in Srebrenica.

"This means a lot to me, my heart is racing," she said. "He was punished. It is not important where he'll end up (to serve his sentence). Like mothers of Srebrenica, he'll spend the rest of his life without his family."

Bosnian Serb separatist leader Milorad Dodik blasted the final verdict as "selective justice" and "satanization of Serbs" which will only deepen the existing ethnic divide in Bosnia so many years after the war.

"The court did not prove Mladic's direct guilt," Dodik said. "It is clear that genocide in Srebrenica never happened."

Mladic's son, Darko, who was part of his defense team, said in The Hague: "This traveling circus (the tribunal) has finished its job like it started. The general had no chance of a fair trial."

Mladic was first indicted in July 1995. After the war in Bosnia ended, he went into hiding and was finally arrested in 2011 and handed over to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia by the then-ruling pro-Western government of Serbia.

The judgment was welcomed as "an important affirmation of the rule of law" by Kathryne Bomberger, director-general of the International Commission on Missing Persons that helped locate and identify victims of atrocities in Bosnia.

"Ramifications of the judgment in case of Mladic and in previous cases, such as that of Radovan Karadzic, go beyond the Western Balkans. This gives hope to survivors of atrocity, including families of the missing and disappeared persons around the world, that justice can be delivered," Bomberger said.

Amnesty International's Europe Director Nils Muižniek said the ruling "sends a powerful message around the world that impunity cannot, and will not, be tolerated."

Nedžad Avdic, who survived a mass execution in Srebrenica, said he was satisfied "even though nothing can erase what we've been through nor bring back our dead."

The judgment "will make denying the crimes more difficult. This and other verdicts will be the starting point for anyone who cares about truth," he added.

The shadow of Mladic and Karadzic has spread far beyond the Balkans. They have been revered by foreign far-right supporters for their bloody wartime campaigns.

The Australian who shot dead dozens of Muslim worshippers in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2019 was believed to be inspired by the wartime Bosnian Serb leaders, as was Anders Breivik, the Norwegian white supremacist who killed 77 people in Norway in 2011.

The U.N. tribunal that initially indicted Mladic has since shut its doors. His appeal and other legal issues left over from the tribunal were being dealt with by the U.N.'s International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, which is housed in the same building as the now-defunct court for the former Yugoslavia.

Outside the court, another mother from Srebrenica, Munira Subasic had a message for young people in Serbia and the Serb part of Bosnia.

She urged them to study the court's judgments and indictments, and "stop hating and create a better future for themselves and our children."

## Israel claims Hamas tried to hamper defenses from Gaza tower

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel's ambassador to the United States said Tuesday that Hamas militants tried to disrupt Israel's Iron Dome rocket defense system from a Gaza building housing The Associated Press and other news outlets, prompting the Israeli air force to destroy the high rise last month. The AP said it has not seen evidence to support the claim.

Ambassador Gilad Erdan issued his statement a day after meeting the AP's president and chief executive, Gary Pruitt, and Ian Phillips, vice president for international news, at the AP's New York headquarters.

The Israeli air force bombed the 12-story al-Jalaa tower on May 15, roughly an hour after ordering all

occupants to evacuate. No one was injured, but the building was destroyed. The building was home to offices belonging to the AP, the Al Jazeera satellite channel as well as dozens of families.

The airstrike came during an 11-day war between Israel and Gaza's ruling Hamas militant group.

In a statement on Twitter, Erdan said he told AP executives that the building was used by Hamas to disrupt the Iron Dome, which intercepted hundreds of incoming rockets fired by the militant group during the fighting.

Erdan said the airstrike did not intentionally target journalists.

"AP is one of the most important news agencies in the world and Israel does not suspect its employees were aware a covert Hamas unit was using the building in this way," he said.

"I reaffirmed that Israel upholds the importance of press freedom and strives to ensure the safety of journalists wherever they are reporting. Israel is willing to assist AP in rebuilding its offices and operations in Gaza," he added.

The meeting with Erdan "was a positive and constructive conversation," the AP said in a statement. The agency expressed its appreciation for his pledges to help rebuild an AP bureau in Gaza.

The AP renewed its call to see evidence backing Israel's claim that Hamas militants were operating in the building.

"Israeli authorities maintain that the building housing our bureau was destroyed because of a Hamas presence that posed an urgent threat," the AP said. "We have yet to receive evidence to support these claims. AP continues to call for the full release of any evidence the Israelis have so that the facts are public."

The AP has repeatedly urged Israel to share any evidence supporting its claims of Hamas activity in the building. It also has urged an independent investigation into the incident.

## French leader Macron slapped in face on visit to small town

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — French President Emmanuel Macron denounced "violence" and "stupidity" after he was slapped in the face Tuesday by a man during a visit to a small town in southeastern France.

The incident prompted a wide show of support for the head of state from politicians across the ideological spectrum.

Macron was greeting the public waiting for him behind barriers in the town of Tain-l'Hermitage after he visited a high school.

Two videos show a man slapping Macron in the face and his bodyguards pushing the assaulter away as the French leader is quickly rushed from the scene.

"I'm always going to meet people," Macron told reporters on Tuesday evening, as he was greeting a crowd in the nearby city of Valence, accompanied this time by his wife, Brigitte Macron.

"Some people express anger, sometimes disarray ... that's legitimate anger, and we will continue to respond. Stupidity and violence, no, not in democracy," he said.

A few hours earlier, Macron had taken another 25-minute walk in the narrow streets of the city, posing for selfies with a small crowd and chatting with many people in a laid-back atmosphere.

Macron described the incident as an "isolated act," in an interview with local newspaper Le Dauphine Libere.

"We must not let isolated acts, ultra-violent individuals, like there had been some also in (street) protests, dominate the public debate: they don't deserve it," he said.

Macron said he didn't have specific concerns after the assault.

"I greeted the people who were by the man's side and made pictures with them. I continued and will continue. Nothing will stop me," he said.

A bodyguard, who was standing right behind Macron, raised a hand in defense of the president, but was a fraction of a second too late to stop the slap. The bodyguard then put his arm around the president to protect him.

Macron just managed to turn his face away as the aggressor's right hand connected, making it appear

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 53 of 66

that the president took more of a glancing blow than a direct slap.

The man, who was wearing a mask, appears to have cried out "Montjoie! Saint Denis!" a centuries-old royalist war cry, before finishing with "A bas la Macronie," or "Down with Macron."

Another video showed Macron immediately coming back after the incident, seemingly to face his assailant, and then to say hello to other members of the crowd.

Valence prosecutor Alex Perrin said in a statement that police have detained the man who slapped Macron and another man who was accompanying him. Their motives aren't known at this stage, he said.

They are both 28 and live in the region. They weren't armed and not previously known to police. They are being detained on suspicion of "violence on a person in a position of public authority," the statement said.

In 2018, "Montjoie! Saint Denis!" was cried out by someone who threw a cream pie at far-left French lawmaker Eric Coquerel. At the time, the extreme-right, monarchist group Action Francaise took responsibility. Coquerel on Tuesday expressed his solidarity with Macron.

Speaking at the National Assembly, the lower house of the French parliament, Prime Minister Jean Castex said "through the head of state, that's democracy that has been targeted." Lawmakers from across the political spectrum got to their feet and applauded loudly in a show of support.

"Democracy is about debate, dialogue, confrontation of ideas, expression of legitimate disagreements, of course, but in no case can it be violence, verbal assault and even less physical assault," Castex said.

Far-right leader Marine Le Pen firmly condemned on Twitter "the intolerable physical aggression targeting the president of the Republic."

Visibly fuming, she said later that while Macron is her top political adversary, the assault was "deeply, deeply reprehensible."

Former President Francois Hollande of the Socialist Party tweeted that the slap was an "unbearable and intolerable blow against our institutions... The entire nation must show solidarity with the head of state."

Less than one year before France's next presidential election, centrist Macron embarked last week on a political "tour de France," saying he plans to visit French regions in the coming months to "feel the pulse of the country" as the government works to revive the nation's pandemic-hit economy.

Macron has said in an interview he wants to engage with people in a mass consultation with the French public aimed at "turning the page" of the pandemic — and preparing his possible campaign for a second term.

Mounting concerns about violence against elected officials and police have been aired in France, particularly after unruly members of "yellow vest" economic protest movement repeatedly clashed with riot-control officers in 2019.

Village mayors and lawmakers also have been targeted with physical assaults, death threats and harassment.

But France's well-protected head of state had been spared, which compounded the shockwaves that rippled through French politics in the wake of Tuesday's assault.

Macron, like his predecessors, enjoys spending time in meet-and-greets with members of the public. Called "crowd baths" in French, they have long been a staple of French politics and only very rarely produce shows of disrespect for the president.

A bystander yanked then-President Nicolas Sarkozy's suit during a crowd bath in 2011. His successor, Hollande, was showered with flour the next year, months before winning the presidential election.

## **ProPublica: Many of the uber-rich pay next to no income tax**

By PAUL WISEMAN and MARCY GORDON AP Business Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — The rich really are different from you and me: They're better at dodging the tax collector.

Amazon founder Jeff Bezos paid no income tax in 2007 and 2011. Tesla founder Elon Musk's income tax bill was zero in 2018. And financier George Soros went three straight years without paying federal income tax, according to a report Tuesday from the nonprofit investigative journalism organization ProPublica.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 54 of 66

Overall, the richest 25 Americans pay less in tax — an average of 15.8% of adjusted gross income — than many ordinary workers do, once you include taxes for Social Security and Medicare, ProPublica found. Its findings are likely to heighten a national debate over the vast and widening inequality between the very wealthiest Americans and everyone else.

An anonymous source delivered to ProPublica reams of Internal Revenue Service data on the country's wealthiest people, including Warren Buffett, Bill Gates, Rupert Murdoch and Mark Zuckerberg. ProPublica compared the tax data it received with information available from other sources. It reported that "in every instance we were able to check — involving tax filings by more than 50 separate people — the details provided to ProPublica matched the information from other sources."

Using perfectly legal tax strategies, many of the uber-rich are able to shrink their federal tax bills to nothing or close to it.

A spokesman for Soros, who has supported higher taxes on the rich, told ProPublica that the billionaire had lost money on his investments from 2016 to 2018 and so did not owe federal income tax for those years. Musk responded to ProPublica's initial request for comment with a punctuation mark — "?" — and did not answer detailed follow-up questions.

The federal tax code is meant to be progressive — that is, the rich pay a steadily higher tax rate on their income as it rises. And ProPublica found, in fact, that people earning between \$2 million and \$5 million a year paid an average of 27.5%, the highest of any group of taxpayers.

Above \$5 million in income, though, tax rates fell: The top .001% of taxpayers — 1,400 people who reported income above \$69 million — paid 23%. And the 25 very richest people paid still less.

The wealthy can reduce their tax bills through the use of charitable donations or by avoiding wage income (which can be taxed at up to 37%) and benefiting instead mainly from investment income (usually taxed at 20%).

President Joe Biden, in seeking revenue to finance his spending plans, has proposed higher taxes on the wealthy. Biden wants to raise the top tax rate to 39.6% for people earning \$400,000 a year or more in taxable income, estimated to be fewer than 2% of U.S. households. The top tax rate that workers pay on salaries and wages now is 37%.

Biden is proposing to nearly double the tax rate that high-earning Americans pay on profits from stocks and other investments. In addition, under his proposals, inherited capital gains would no longer be tax-free.

The president, whose proposals must be approved by Congress, would also raise taxes on corporations, which would affect wealthy investors who own corporate stocks.

ProPublica reported that the tax bills of the rich are especially low when compared with their soaring wealth — the value of their investment portfolios, real estate and other assets. People don't have to pay tax on an increase in their wealth until they cash in and, say, sell their stock or home and realize the gains. Using calculations by Forbes magazine, ProPublica noted that the wealth of the 25 richest Americans collectively jumped by \$401 billion from 2014 to 2018. They paid \$13.6 billion in federal income taxes over those years — equal to just 3.4% of the increase in their wealth.

Chuck Marr, a senior director at the left-leaning Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, suggested that Biden's proposals, which face fierce opposition from Republicans in Congress and from businesses, are "modest" given how much the wealthy have benefited in recent years and how comparatively little tax many of them pay.

"It always seems like the solutions are cast as radical when there's less focus on the current situation being radical," Marr said.

Democratic Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders, among others, have proposed taxing the wealth of the richest Americans, not just their income.

On Tuesday, Warren tweeted in response to the ProPublica report:

"Our tax system is rigged for billionaires who don't make their fortunes through income, like working families do. The evidence is abundantly clear: it is time for a #WealthTax in America to make the ultra-rich finally pay their fair share."

Gabriel Zucman, an economist at the University of California, Berkeley, who is a leading expert on financial

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 55 of 66

inequality, says there are three ways to ensure that the wealthy pay more: Impose a direct tax on their wealth like the one Warren has proposed; tax the gains in their wealth, whether or not they cash in and realize a gain; or raise taxes on corporate profits.

ProPublica's data "reveals that the country's wealthiest, who have profited immensely during the pandemic, have not been paying their fair share of taxes," Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., who leads the tax-writing Senate Finance Committee, said at the start of a hearing Tuesday on the IRS' budget with Commissioner Charles Rettig.

Wyden has proposed legislation that would tighten enforcement of tax collection against wealthy individuals and corporations that use artifices and loopholes to skirt paying taxes. It also would eliminate the ability of high earners to defer paying taxes on capital gains until they are realized, so that wealth would be taxed the same way as wages.

For his part, Rettig said that the IRS is investigating the leak of the tax data to ProPublica and that any violations of law would be prosecuted. (ProPublica reported that it doesn't know the identity of the source who provided the data.)

"We will find out about the ProPublica article," Rettig said. "We have turned it over to the appropriate investigators, both external and internal."

Now controlling the White House and Congress, Democrats are focusing on the tax gap — the hundreds of billions of dollars' difference between what Americans owe the government in taxes and what they pay — and its connection to economic inequality. The top 10% of earners have accounted for most of that gap, experts say, by underreporting their liabilities, intentionally or not, as tax avoidance or as outright evasion.

The tax gap is under a spotlight as a potential source for recouping some revenue to help pay for Biden's proposed spending on infrastructure, families and education. Democrats have been pushing the IRS to invigorate its enforcement of tax collection and make it fairer, by pursuing the big corporations and wealthy individuals who manage to game the system.

At Tuesday's hearing, Wyden told Rettig that it's wrong "how the wealthy always seem to skip out on their obligations."

"You have a better chance of being struck by lightning than being audited if you're a partner in a partnership," Wyden said.

Rettig responded, "We are outgunned."

Democrats have argued that the tax gap has widened mainly because big U.S. corporations have parked revenue overseas and wealthy individuals have failed to pay their fair share. They assert that the IRS, long understaffed and underfunded, has tended to pursue taxpayers of modest means more aggressively than high-powered businesspeople and corporations.

The agency's funding has been slashed about 20% since 2010. Biden's new spending proposals include an extra \$80 billion over 10 years to bolster IRS audits of upper-income individuals and corporations, with an eye toward recovering an estimated \$700 billion.

Much of the gap comes from the use of overseas havens. The government loses between an estimated \$40 billion and \$120 billion a year from offshore tax evasion. Biden's tax plan includes measures to stop corporations from stashing profits in countries with low tax rates. Last weekend, the Group of Seven wealthy democracies, which includes the United States, agreed to support a global minimum corporate tax of at least 15% to deter multinational companies from avoiding taxes by stashing profits in low-rate countries.

## Kemper apologizes for role with group that had racist past

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Actress Ellie Kemper has apologized for participating in a debutante ball hosted by a St. Louis organization that she now says had "an unquestionably racist, sexist and elitist past."

The 41-year-old St. Louis native and star of TV's "Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt" was criticized on Twitter after it was revealed that when she was 19, she was named "Queen of Love and Beauty" at St. Louis' Veiled Prophet Ball.

The Veiled Prophet Organization dates to the late 1800s. It didn't allow Black members until 1979. Daughters of many prominent St. Louis families have held the same title as Kemper, whose family founded

Commerce Bancshares.

Kemper, who rose to fame on TV's "The Office," said on Instagram that she was unaware at the time of the history of the Veiled Prophet, but "ignorance is no excuse."

The Veiled Prophet Organization put out its own statement saying it "acknowledges our past and recognizes the criticism levied our way." The statement said that the organization today "rejects racism, in any form."

## Study: Racial diversity stagnated on corporate boards

By ALEXANDRA OLSON and STAN CHOE AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Many U.S. companies have rushed to appoint Black members to their boards of directors since racial justice protests swept the country last year.

But in the two preceding years, progress on increasing racial diversity on boards stagnated, a new study revealed Tuesday. Black men even lost ground.

The study, conducted by the Alliance of Board Diversity and the consulting firm Deloitte, points to the steep deficit companies face when it comes to fulfilling pledges to diversity in their ranks. An overwhelming 82.5% of directors among Fortune 500 company boards are white, according to the Missing Pieces Report: A Board Diversity Census of Women and Minorities on Fortune 500 Boards.

The study suggests that, until the May 2020 police killing of George Floyd galvanized a national reckoning on systemic racism, attention to racial diversity took something of a backseat to gender equality in boardrooms.

Between July 2020 and May 2021, some 32% of newly appointed board members in the S&P 500 were Black, according to an analysis by ISS Corporate Solutions, which advises companies on improving shareholder value and reducing risk. That was a leap compared to 11% during the previous year.

But the time before then shows a sudden shift in priorities. The Missing Pieces Report found that the number of women serving on Fortune 500 boards rose 4 percentage points to 26.5% between 2018 and June of 2020 — a faster pace of progress than the 2% increase over the preceding two years.

In contrast, the number of racial minorities on Fortune 500 boards rose by just above a percentage point. That was a slower pace than the 2% increase during the previous two years. In a telling finding, the number of Black men on Fortune 500 boards fell by 1.5% between 2018 and June 2020, even as the representation of Black women rose by 18%.

Attention to gender equality did bolster the ranks of minority women on Fortune 500 boards, though their numbers remain small at 6%, according to the census. The number of minority men remained virtually unchanged at just under 12%.

With racial minorities holding so few seats to begin with, the findings underscore the need to pick up the pace of change, said Linda Akutagawa, chair for the Alliance for Board Diversity.

Asian, Hispanic and Black women directors made the biggest percentage increases since 2018. But the raw number of seats each of those groups gained paled in comparison to the 209 seats gained by white women, according to the study. White women held three new seats for every new seat occupied by a woman from a racial minority.

The Board Diversity Census based its findings on a two-year review of public filings through June 30, 2020. During that period, companies responded to pressure to appoint more women to their boards. California passed a law in 2017 requiring publicly traded firms headquartered in the state to have at least two or three women directors by 2021, depending on the size of their boards.

Over the past year, more pressure has arisen for boards to focus on racial diversity. California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a new law last year giving companies until the end of 2021 to have at least one board member from an underrepresented ethnic community, or who identify as LGBT. In December, Nasdaq filed a proposal with the Securities and Exchange Commission to adopt new listing rules requiring companies to publicly disclose their board diversity statistics.

More than a dozen companies, including Zillow and M.M.LaFleur, signed a pledge in September to add



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 57 of 66

at least one Black director to their boards within a year.

Carey Oven, national managing partner of Deloitte's Center for Board Effectiveness, said that kind of rapid shift shows that progress on diversity is matter of corporate will, rather than a lack of qualified minority candidates.

"It's really a choice for boards to take steps to become more diverse," Oven said.

In April, 140 racial justice leaders published a letter in the Financial Times demanding that the country's largest asset managers oppose all-white boards at this year's shareholder meetings. But the letter also called for them to oppose boards "with arguably token representation by a single person of color."

"Boards draw a circle around everyone who is not a white male and call themselves diverse," said Eli Kasargod-Staub, executive director of Majority Action, a nonprofit group that sponsored the letter. "That way of framing it often obscures that fact that they only have one person of color on their boards."

In December, Majority Action, along with the Service Employees International Union, released a report showing that 56 of the S&P 500 companies had all-white boards as of November 2020. The asset manager BlackRock voted to approve the entire board at 52 of those companies at their 2020 shareholder meetings, according to the report, which cited research from ISS Analytics and public filings. Vanguard voted to support the entire board at 51 of the companies.

Some fund giants have acknowledged they have been slower to push boardrooms to appoint more people of color, compared to their advocacy to add more women. But many say the momentum is turning.

BlackRock said this year that it's raising its expectations for ethnic and gender diversity on corporate boards, and it voted against more than 130 boards in the early part of 2021 because of a lack of it. But it does not have a bright-line rule for how many people of color should be on a board, similar to how it expects U.S. companies to have at least two women on their board.

Vanguard revised its proxy voting guidelines to warn it will vote against some board nominees at companies where lack of diversity is a concern. But a Vanguard spokeswoman said the investing giant believes "there is no one-size-fits-all mandate for board diversity" and will evaluate each board individually.

State Street Global Advisors, the company behind the "Fearless Girl" statue that stared down the iconic charging bull statue near Wall Street, said it will start voting against the chair of the board nominating committee at S&P 500 companies next year if it doesn't have at least one underrepresented minority. This year, it began voting against nominating committee chairs of companies that fail to disclose the racial and ethnic composition of their boards.

"We did see that progress was not being made quickly enough," said Benjamin Colton, State Street's global co-head of asset stewardship. "It was difficult for us to even gauge progress because we did not have that disclosure available."

## Judge rips Iowa police chief for using stun gun on partiers

By RYAN J. FOLEY Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) — A judge has condemned an Iowa police chief for using his city-issued stun gun to shock guests at two parties in 2016, calling it an "immoral activity" that could have caused serious injuries or death.

Judge Nancy Whittenburg recently rejected arguments by Craig Merrill, the police chief in Armstrong, that his deployment of the Taser device in an off-duty, social setting against voluntary participants was not a criminal act.

"Merrill did not have justification to use a defensive weapon with the intent to cause pain for entertainment purposes on compliant partygoers," Whittenburg wrote in a ruling dated May 27.

Noting that the weapon is capable of causing injuries ranging from burning skin to death, she added, "Merrill is exceptionally lucky that no one suffered a medical emergency or died at the party."

Merrill was charged in February with two counts of assault with a dangerous weapon for using the stun gun against Armstrong's then-maintenance director Tylor Evans and several others who attended parties at Merrill's home in April and July 2016.

"Defendant Merrill announced that he knew he was 'not supposed to do this,' attempted to prevent par-

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 58 of 66

tygoers from documenting the crime, and told partygoers he would lie to the City Council about whether the TASER darts had been deployed," prosecutors said in a recent filing.

Prosecutors say Merrill collected \$30 from guests to pay for the city to replace the cost of the gun's cartridge but never deposited the funds.

At a second gathering around July 4, Merrill admitted that he had shocked everyone who attended multiple times using the device's drive-stun function, which delivers electrical shocks as a method of pain compliance, prosecutors allege.

Merrill also allegedly tried to erase the device's memory before it was seized by investigators, but a state official was able to extract data showing bursts of activity on the dates of the parties.

Authorities arrested Merrill in February along with his father-in-law, then-Armstrong mayor Greg Boom, and former city clerk Connie Thackery, in what prosecutors have described as a long-running and wide-ranging corruption scheme in the town of 900 people. Two other former city clerks have pleaded guilty and are cooperating with investigators.

Prosecutors say Merrill, 43, collected \$24,000 in unused paid time off to which he was not entitled and accepted a free vacation in 2017 to the Black Hills in South Dakota paid for by his political supporters in violation of state law. He's also charged with ongoing criminal conduct, first-degree theft and non-felonious misconduct in office. The city placed Merrill on unpaid administrative leave after his arrest and is relying on the Emmett County sheriff's office for policing services. Boom has resigned as mayor.

Attorneys for Merrill had asked the judge to dismiss the assault charges. They argued that Evans had signed a document consenting to be stunned and that Merrill's use of the stun gun during a voluntary social activity was legal under an exemption to the assault law for contact sports.

Whittenburg rejected those arguments, writing that consent is not a defense to assault and "TASERing will never be considered a proper sport or social activity." She noted that the exemption for sports activities only covered assaults that are "reasonably foreseeable" and do not create unreasonable risks of injury, neither of which applied in this case.

"Typical birthday party attendees do not expect the hired clown or magician to start electrocuting and incapacitating people," she wrote.

She said that while the drive-stun function in which the device is pressed against the body may seem safer than shooting electrical probes from a distance, it still carries the risk of burning and permanently scarring skin.

Whittenburg also rejected arguments that the charges were barred by the statute of limitations.

Merrill, Boom and Thackery have pleaded not guilty to the charges, and an Aug. 20 hearing has been scheduled to set a trial date. They are all free on bond.

## Tearful reunion after mom saw AP photo of daughter at border

By ACACIA CORONADO Report for America/Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Six years had passed since Glenda Valdez kissed her toddler goodbye and left for the United States — six years since she held Emely in her arms.

But here she was, at Texas' Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, tearfully embracing the little girl she left behind. And it happened only because she had glimpsed a televised photo of Emely, part of an Associated Press story on young people crossing the Mexican border alone.

"I love you so much," she whispered in Spanish in her 9-year-old daughter's ear. "My God, thank you."

It was a fairy tale ending — for the moment — to a complicated story, one that began in Honduras and with an unhappy relationship, according to Valdez, 26.

Emely's father, she said, was absent and did not provide for them. When Valdez emigrated in pursuit of a better life, the girl was left in the custody of Valdez's mother. But Emely's father took her back.

Valdez said she only had sporadic contact with her daughter — the father preferred that they not speak regularly. Every so often, Valdez would get a video call; eventually, Emely told her that she had a new stepmother who was not kind to her.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 59 of 66

Emely told her that her father — seeing that she was unhappy with her life in that household — had decided to send her away, without telling her where. He placed her in the care of an adult who over several weeks helped her journey to the U.S.-Mexico border.

Around midnight as the day turned to May 13, Border Patrol agents encountered Emely in La Joya, on the Texas side of the Rio Grande Valley. She had been walking in the brush for six hours with a group of strangers and had lost a shoe in the mud. She was sobbing uncontrollably.

"I was thirsty and we didn't have anything to drink and I didn't like it and I didn't know where I was going," Emely said in Spanish on Sunday.

When the agents found her, she said she had lost her mother's number, and did not know where her mother lived. Desperate, she gave reporters details she thought might identify her mom: "Her hair is curly, but sometimes she straightens it. And she has a lip ring."

Her mother was expecting her, she said. But Valdez said Sunday she had no idea her child had been sent to cross the border.

Valdez was at her home in Austin, watching a Univision newscast one afternoon in May, when she saw the picture of Emely in a red hoodie. She knew at once that it was her daughter. Desperate, she immediately began making calls to U.S. authorities, the network and refugee agencies.

"I was like in shock, honestly, because imagine you are watching the TV and you suddenly see your daughter," Valdez said. "And then even more to see her crying and everything she was saying broke my heart, honestly, everything she said there, that she was upset and crying and all that, and to see her image, barefoot and all was very difficult for me."

Emely said she was taken to a group home. But Valdez didn't know that, and for weeks she said she got only vague answers to her pleas for information. Be patient, she was told.

"I was just traumatized, like I spent many days crying, watching her video, looking through her photos and crying and crying and crying," Valdez said.

Last Wednesday, she got a call: Emely was in a government shelter. They would be reunited soon. And then, on Saturday, she was told to meet her daughter at the airport the next day. At the appointed time, she raced to the bottom of the stairs at the crowded arrivals terminal to hug her daughter.

Emely is part of a large increase in children traveling alone who are entering the United States from Mexico — nearly 19,000 in March (the highest number on record) and nearly 17,200 in April (the second highest). Almost one of every three unaccompanied children appearing at the border is from Honduras, second only to Guatemala.

Guided by federal law and a decades-old court settlement, the U.S. Health and Human Services Department seeks to place unaccompanied children in the "least restrictive setting" possible, which, in the vast majority of cases is a parent or close relative already living in the United States. It took an average of 35 days to place children in a home at the end of May; Emely was reunited with her mother 10 days less than that.

Children are typically released with instructions to appear in immigration court, where a judge rules on their asylum claims. Decisions can take years — the court system has a backlog of 1.3 million cases.

While Emely awaits her court date, the girl has moved in with Valdez, her husband and their two daughters, who are excited to get to know this new sister they had only met virtually.

And to Valdez's immense satisfaction, she is reconnecting with the little girl she said goodbye to six years ago.

"Well, the plan is everything that God wants and to be with her here," Valdez said.

"To never be separated again. To ask God that we may never be separated again. To give her all of the love that I haven't been able to give her. Everything that she is missing. To give her everything I can and to take her to school. That she has a better future, to remedy a little of what has happened."

## Fed lawyers: Trump not liable for 'crude' remarks at accuser

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 60 of 66

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump cannot be held personally liable for “crude and disrespectful” remarks he made about a woman who accused him of rape because he made the comments while he was president, U.S. Justice Department lawyers told an appeals court late Monday.

Responding to misconduct allegations is part of the president’s job, the government’s lawyers told the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. As such, it is the United States itself — and not Trump — who should be the defendant in a defamation lawsuit brought by columnist E. Jean Carroll, who says Trump raped her in the mid-1990s in an upscale Manhattan department store.

In defending Trump in its filing Monday, the Justice Department is carrying on an effort that began under former U.S. Attorney General William Barr while Trump was still in office.

Barr’s intervention last October was criticized on the campaign trail by then-Democratic candidate Joe Biden, who said it was inappropriate for the Justice Department to attempt to intervene in a private legal battle over Trump’s personal conduct.

The Justice Department’s consistency in sticking with the case, even after Trump lost the election, has been cited by some as proof that Biden is keeping his word that he won’t try to influence the department’s moves.

Roberta Kaplan, Carroll’s attorney, said in a statement that it was “horrific” that Trump raped her client but it was “truly shocking that the current Department of Justice would allow Donald Trump to get away with lying about it, thereby depriving our client of her day in court.”

“The DOJ’s position is not only legally wrong, it is morally wrong since it would give federal officials free license to cover up private sexual misconduct by publicly brutalizing any woman who has the courage to come forward,” she said. “Calling a woman you sexually assaulted a ‘liar,’ a ‘slut,’ or ‘not my type,’ as Donald Trump did here, is not the official act of an American president.”

In a statement, Carroll said: “As women across the country are standing up and holding men accountable for assault — the DOJ is trying to stop me from having that same right. I am angry! I am offended!”

Washington Justice Department lawyers wrote that Trump was acting “within the scope of his office” in denying wrongdoing after White House reporters asked him about Carroll’s claims.

They said: “Elected public officials can — and often must — address allegations regarding personal wrongdoing that inspire doubt about their suitability for office.”

“Even reprehensible conduct ... can fall within the scope of employment,” the lawyers wrote, conceding that Trump used “crude and disrespectful” language in questioning Carroll’s credibility.

They said comments attacking her appearance, impugning her motives and implying she had made false accusations against others “were without question unnecessary and inappropriate.” But they said they “all pertained to the denial of wrongdoing.”

The papers were filed after the Justice Department appealed a decision by Judge Lewis A. Kaplan, who ruled in October that Trump cannot use a law protecting federal employees from being sued individually for things they do within the scope of their employment.

Arguments supporting the Justice Department’s position were also filed Monday by a personal lawyer for Trump.

## Review: ‘In the Heights’ is the infusion of joy we needed

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

“I am Usnavi and you prob’ly never heard my name,” declares bodega owner Usnavi at the start of “In the Heights,” Lin-Manuel Miranda’s contagiously joyous ode to his beloved Washington Heights neighborhood. “Reports of my fame are greatly exaggerated.”

Um ... maybe not for long. Projects by Miranda tend to attract a wee bit of attention.

Even in the annals of musical theater, by nature filled with Cinderella stories, “In the Heights” has an amazing backstory. It began two decades ago when a college student at Wesleyan had extra time on his hands — his girlfriend was studying abroad — so he started to write a show. A show that represented the Latino immigrant experience as he, son of Puerto Rican parents, saw it. A show that melded the things

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 61 of 66

he loved: hip-hop, Latin music and dance, rap, and of course musical theater.

The kid was Miranda, and "In the Heights" eventually made it all the way to the Tony podium, winning best musical. Of course, Miranda's own story was just beginning. "Hamilton," his genre-bending phenomenon, was years away.

Comparisons between the two are inevitable, but they're different animals. "In the Heights," directed with unabashed exuberance by Jon M. Chu from a screenplay by Quiara Alegria Hudes, doesn't seek to reframe American history; it uses Miranda's rapid-fire wordplay and hybrid of traditional and contemporary styles to tell the story of one community — one intersection, even — through universal experiences, like encroaching gentrification. This updated version also touches on the Dreamers, and a golf reference to Donald Trump has been switched to Tiger Woods. But its main thrust is still the bonds of community, family and home. (If you look closely during one song, you can even spot Miranda's parents.)

"In the Heights" also benefits from an exquisite sense of timing — cultural timing. The release was postponed a year; theaters are now open. "Lights up," begins the infectious opening number, and those words are perfect: Lights up on Washington Heights, yes, but also on a reawakened New York, where many are tentatively returning to pre-pandemic rhythms after a miserable year, eager for shared experience. "In the Heights" is a work that reads the room: a film without an ounce of cynicism, that wears its big heart proudly on its sleeve and dares you not to join in. Two lovers, suddenly dancing up the side of an apartment building? A Busby Berkeley-style dance number in a city pool? Yup. And yup.

Usnavi, we learn, aches to return to the Dominican Republic, where his late father owned a beach kiosk. Miranda played Usnavi onstage but has handed off to Anthony Ramos, a "Hamilton" alum (that's him with the "ten-dollar founding father" line) who eases into leading-man duties with warmth, humor and charm.

Though the film begins with a framing device of Usnavi recounting history to children on a beach — a choice that comes off as overly sentimental — it kicks into gear in that opening number, in which Usnavi introduces all the important characters.

There's Abuela Claudia, de facto matriarch of the community (Olga Merediz, a Broadway alum, in a deeply poignant performance). There's Usnavi's cousin Sonny (Gregory Diaz IV) — wiry, fast-talking, funny. There's Daniela (Daphne Rubin-Vega), owner of a local salon threatened by gentrification.

There's Benny (Corey Hawkins, terrific), who works at the taxi service owned by Kevin Rosario (Jimmy Smits). There's Vanessa (Melissa Barrera), for whom Usnavi secretly pines -- she works at the salon but dreams of being a fashion designer. This eight-minute number culminates in a street dance sequence (with ebullient choreography by Christopher Scott) in the center of Washington Heights. Most striking about these dancers: they're different ages, and different body shapes. They look like people.

Soon Nina (singer Leslie Grace) arrives for the summer from Stanford, harboring a secret. Always the smartest kid on the block, Nina feels marginalized as a Latina student, and has dropped out, putting her on a collision course with her proud father. Another plot addition: young Sonny is a Dreamer, and his future in the US is a risk. This side plot seems rather rushed, and a street protest scene seems an afterthought.

But the plot was always the lesser part of this equation. What shines are the inventive and joyous musical numbers — like "96,000," in that swimming pool, in which everyone imagines how they'd spend lottery winnings. Or "Carnaval del Barrio," in which Daniela urges friends to celebrate amid a blackout. The stirring "Paciencia y Fe (Patience and Faith)" gives Merediz her moment.

All characters are beautifully cast, but a standout is Hawkins, who has the soulful voice of a young Christopher Jackson (the original Benny, who has a cameo here) and charisma that burns through the screen.

Then there's Piragua Guy -- he sells those shaved ice treats, drenched in flavored syrup. The small role was originally scratched, for length — until a guy named Miranda decided to play it. His sugary concoctions seem an apt metaphor for the film itself: Sweet relief at the right moment, and a treat for a hot summer filled with hope and possibility.

"In the Heights," a Warner Brothers release, has been rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America "for some language and suggestive references." Running time: 143 minutes. Three and a half stars out of four.

## Spirituality underpins migrant activism in US borderlands

By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — Alvaro Enciso plants three or four crosses each week in Arizona's desert borderlands, amid the yellow-blossomed prickly pear and whip-like ocotillo, in honor of migrants who died on the northbound trek.

Each colorful wooden memorial denotes where a set of bones or a decomposing body was found. Over eight years, the artist has marked more than 1,000 locations across public lands dotted with empty black plastic water jugs and camouflage backpacks beneath circling turkey vultures.

"Anything out here can kill you," Enciso said. "A blister, a snake, not enough water."

Protecting migrants and honoring the humanity of those who died on the perilous trail is a kind of religion in southern Arizona where spiritual leaders four decades ago founded the Sanctuary Movement, a campaign to shelter Central Americans fleeing civil war, and scores of volunteers carry on their legacy today.

Faith-based groups working in migrant activism run the gamut from the Tucson Samaritans, which leaves lifesaving caches of water, food and other provisions in the remote wilderness, to Catholic Community Services of Southern Arizona, which operates a shelter, to Methodists providing asylum-seeking families with legal aid and a place to stay, to name a few.

Enciso's art project, "Where Dreams Die," fits squarely in that spiritual tradition, though he believes there's nothing overtly religious in memorializing the dead.

On a recent day he placed a golden cross where the bones of an unknown male were found Sept. 24, 2020, amid the jumping cholla cactus. The cause and approximate year of the man's death, about a mile north of state Highway 86, are undetermined.

"Can you imagine what their families go through, not knowing what happened to them?" Enciso said.

Volunteer Michele Maggiora kissed a fist of fresh sage and faced east, south, west and north, then held the fist down for the Earth Mother and up for the Sky Father in prayer.

"I feel like we have to recognize that something happened here," Maggiora said.

Such activism has roots in the 1981 founding of the Sanctuary Movement, which spread to a dozen Tucson churches and synagogues and more than 500 U.S. Protestant, Catholic and Jewish congregations, drawing on the ancient tradition of protecting people inside houses of worship.

Now 81 and retired, the Rev. John Fife III was pastor at Tucson's Southside Presbyterian Church back then when his Quaker friend Jim Corbett told him Central Americans were fleeing to the U.S. to escape violence back home.

The men recalled the Book of Matthew 25:35: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in."

Soon Fife and Corbett, who died in 2001, were smuggling Central American migrants into the U.S. and sheltering them in their homes, despite their wives' protests. The church hosted some 13,000 asylum seekers in the '80s, with up to 100 people sleeping on the floor on a given night.

"I felt that if I didn't help, I would have to resign as pastor," Fife said recently in Southside's worship hall, which was modeled after an indigenous ceremonial structure known as a kiva.

Fife was convicted in 1986 of violating U.S. immigration laws and served five years' probation, but that didn't deter him.

In 2000 he helped create Humane Borders, which maintains water stations with 55-gallon (208-liter) plastic blue barrels accompanied by a blue flag visible from a distance. Two years later he co-founded Tucson Samaritans, a ministry of Southside, which along with partner organizations in Ajo and Green Valley-Sahuarita sends volunteers into the wilderness to leave water and food. Fife also had a hand in the 2004 creation of No More Deaths, which staffs remote aid camps for weeks at a time.

"We couldn't stop what we were doing, because people's lives were on the line," Fife said.

Many of those volunteering with the groups are of retirement age, like Gail Kocourek.

Every week the Tucson Samaritan volunteer drives donations of clothes and food to Casa de la Esperanza,

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 63 of 66

a new daytime migrant help center just south of the border in the Mexican town of Sasabe where about 50 migrants a day can get a meal, a shower and clothes. They usually sleep at hotels or guest houses in town.

"I don't think anyone deserves to die for trying to make a better life for their family," Kocourek said.

Often traveling there as well is Dora Rodriguez, who was among 13 Salvadorans who survived in 1980 when 13 others died in the broiling sun near Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. Then 19, she remained in Tucson and eventually became an American citizen.

"And now, 41 years later, people are still dying out here in the desert," said Rodriguez, who formed a nonprofit called Salvavision to aid migrants in Arizona and encourage people in Central America not to make the dangerous journey. "The only difference now is that there is no longer a civil war. But you still have the aftermath of war — the gangs, crime, corruption."

Rampant poverty is another reason for leaving, according to Vicente Lopez, a 19-year-old from Guatemala who was staying elsewhere in town. "It's because we're so poor."

Groups that seek to restrict immigration, such as the Washington-based think tank Center for Immigration Studies, contend the border wall and other barriers are a better way to keep deaths down by keeping migrants out.

"I have no question about the good intentions of these groups, and we don't want people dying in the desert," said Andrew Arthur, a former immigration judge and the center's resident fellow. "But you don't want to create a magnet for people expecting to find water."

For its part, the Border Patrol, in a recent statement on the 20th anniversary of the deaths of 14 people in the Devil's Highway region southeast of Yuma, noted the danger remains: "Smugglers and guides regularly risk the lives of the migrants who pay them thousands of dollars for help to get to the United States."

Humane Borders, which works with Pima County chief medical examiner Dr. Greg Hess to map the discoveries of human remains, in 2020 documented 227 deaths, including those in Maricopa County, the highest in a decade after the hottest, driest summer in state history. Hess' office received the remains of 79 apparent border crossers this year as of late May, and activists fear 2021 could prove especially treacherous with large numbers of people launching journeys.

Customs and Border Protection reports that apprehensions of migrants are way up, with 20,246 such encounters in the Tucson sector alone in April — a 674% increase over the same month last year — out of 178,622 along the entire four-state border. Rescues of migrants found in dangerous areas are also up.

"I'm not looking forward to this summer," said Douglas Ruopp, chairman of Humane Borders. "No matter what we do, people keep dying."

Yet the danger doesn't dissuade people like Josue Hernandez Ruiz, a tour guide from the Mexican resort of Huatulco who was laid off during the coronavirus pandemic and ventured north seeking to support his wife and two children. After staying at a guest house in Sasabe, he and a friend planned to set out into the desert without a guide.

"I'm going to use my phone," Hernandez Ruiz said. "It has GPS."

In Tucson, activists regularly gather at a shrine to pray for migrants who didn't survive that journey.

The local cumbia band Vox Urbana pays homage by writing and recording songs about migrants, including one about a transgender asylum seeker named Karolina.

"We are a community of migrants," guitarist and vocalist Kike Castellanos said, "and it is important to tell the stories of our community."

## Retailers shine a spotlight on Black-owned beauty brands

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — When Rose Ingleton launched her own namesake skincare line two years ago, she couldn't break into the big chains and was forced to use her own funds and get financial help from family and friends.

But things changed after the nationwide Black Lives Matter protests last year. Ingleton, a Manhattan-based Black dermatologist with more than 20 years of experience, reconnected with beauty chain Sephora

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 64 of 66

and now her products can be found on the retailer's website as well as at Neiman Marcus and Saks Fifth Avenue.

"There was this sudden awareness," Ingleton said. "I am now at the top food chain. I'm now getting ready to approach deeper pocket investors."

As corporations continue to face a racial reckoning, the beauty industry is trying to address the criticism that it centers too many of its products around whiteness by pushing more items onto store shelves that better represent the diverse women they serve.

Retailers from Sephora to Walmart and Target have focused on increasing their offerings of Black-owned brands across all categories as a key strategy to combat racial bias. They're also developing entrepreneurship programs and trying to create a pipeline of new talent.

More than 20 companies including Sephora and most recently Ulta Beauty have signed onto a nationwide campaign called 15 Percent Pledge, which aims to have companies from all industries commit to at least 15% of their products on their shelves to Black-owned businesses — in line with the U.S. Black population.

Plenty more have not yet signed it, but some are forging their own path. Target, for instance, said it currently has 50 Black-owned and Black-founded beauty brands, with plans to continue increasing that number as part of its broader commitment to add more than 500 Black-owned brands by the end of 2025.

Retailers can't afford to ignore this lucrative segment.

Last year, Hispanic consumers spent 6.1% more on beauty and other items compared with 2019, while Blacks spent 5.4% more, according to NielsenIQ. That pace exceeded the 3.5% increase for the total U.S. population.

And while NPD Group Inc. found that Black-owned brands represent just 4% of sales in prestige makeup, they performed 1.5 to 4 times better in May, June and July 2020 — during the peak months of the Black Lives Matter movement — than the rest of the market, reversing their declines and reflecting a consumer appetite to support such businesses.

Still, overall progress has been slow. Ulta wants to double the number of Black-owned brands to 26 by year-end, but that will only get the penetration to 5%, says its chief merchandising officer Monica Arnaudo. Ulta and Sephora say they want to make sure the brands are financially successful.

Black entrepreneurs also argue they continue to be pigeon-holed by retailers and investors who think their products are only for women of color. And beauty brands catering to women of color continue in some cases to be locked up in stores — even after a number of stores including Walmart, CVS Health and Walgreens pledged last year they would end that practice.

Taydra Mitchell Jackson is the marketing director of The Lip Bar, a Black-owned brand based in Detroit, Michigan that's now in more than 1,200 stores including Target and Walmart. She says retailers have to be careful not to think of adding merchandise from Black owners as just a token gesture.

"Merchandising is critical, but messaging and how I feel when I walk in the store are just as important," Jackson said.

She noted some social media influencers complaining about Lip Bar items being locked up at Walmart, "creating a feeling of being inferior." The brand is following up with the company.

Walmart responded that it does "not tolerate discrimination of any kind at Walmart. We serve millions of customers weekly, crossing all demographics, and are focused on meeting their needs while providing the best shopping experience at each store."

The problems facing Black-owned brands are not new.

Beauty brands for Black women have been around for years, but they've struggled to get shelf space in stores, says Tiffany Gill, an associate professor of history at Rutgers University who wrote a book called "Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry."

"The fantasy of beauty has often been constructed around a celebration of white bodies," Gill said. "And to even have makeup for darker skinned women or to put them in campaigns in visible ways means to completely undermine the whole foundation of the industry."

Even when brands did create makeup for darker skin shades, those products would be sold online in-



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 65 of 66

stead of stores.

"As a black consumer, you often do not have the opportunity to have the in-store retail experience," Gill said.

Things began to change in 2017, when pop superstar Rihanna launched her Fenty Beauty makeup line. In two years, it became one of the top 10 selling beauty brands, alongside decades-old brands such as Mary Kay and L'Oreal-owned Urban Decay, says market research firm Euromonitor. Other companies took notice, adding more shades for darker skin or promising to give more shelf space to Black-owned brands in stores.

Still, it wasn't until last summer's Black Lives Matter protests that Black-owned brands started to see more interest from investors and retailers.

As of mid-2020, a study by a resource called digitalundivided identified 183 Black and Hispanic women founders who had secured at least \$1 million in investor backing for their businesses, more than double the number in 2018, says Lauren Maillian, CEO of digitalundivided, which has a data base of more than 800 Black and Hispanic-women-founded companies.

But it also found that these women received less than half of 1% of venture capital investment. That's even as their failure rate in its data base is 27% — lower than the 40% national fail rate for startups founded in 2017.

Black entrepreneur Monique Rodriguez, who co-founded natural hair care company Mielle Organics, saw her sales increase at a faster rate last year over previous years. And this year, she secured a big investment from Boston-based private equity firm Berkshire Partners.

"I don't think it will fade," she said of the efforts to diversify beauty. "It is here to stay, but we have to put forth an effort that our voices continue to be heard."

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, June 9, the 160th day of 2021. There are 205 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 9, 1969, the Senate confirmed Warren Burger to be the new chief justice of the United States, succeeding Earl Warren.

On this date:

In 1588, construction began on the present-day Rialto Bridge in Venice, Italy, with the laying of the first stone; the structure was completed in 1591.

In 1870, author Charles Dickens died in Gad's Hill Place, England.

In 1940, during World War II, Norway decided to surrender to the Nazis, effective at midnight.

In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Current Tax Payment Act of 1943, which reintroduced federal income tax withholding from paychecks.

In 1954, during the Senate Army-McCarthy hearings, Army special counsel Joseph N. Welch berated Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy, R-Wis., asking: "Have you no sense of decency, sir? At long last, have you left no sense of decency?"

In 1972, heavy rains triggered record flooding in the Black Hills of South Dakota; the resulting disaster left at least 238 people dead and \$164 million in damage.

In 1973, Secretariat won the Belmont Stakes, becoming horse racing's first Triple Crown winner in 25 years.

In 1978, leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints struck down a 148-year-old policy of excluding black men from the Mormon priesthood.

In 1980, comedian Richard Pryor suffered almost fatal burns at his San Fernando Valley, Calif., home while freebasing cocaine.

In 1983, Britain's Conservatives, led by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, won a decisive election victory.

In 2004, the body of Ronald Reagan arrived in Washington to lie in state in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, June 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 337 ~ 66 of 66

before the 40th president's funeral.

In 2008, retail gas prices rose above \$4 per gallon.

Ten years ago: The entire top echelon of Newt Gingrich's presidential campaign resigned in a mass exodus that left his bid for the Republican nomination in tatters; the former House speaker vowed defiantly to remain a candidate. (Gingrich would remain in the race until May 2012.) Alabama passed a tough law against illegal immigration, requiring schools to find out if students were in the country lawfully and making it a crime to knowingly give an illegal immigrant a ride. (Federal courts later blocked parts of the law.)

Five years ago: President Barack Obama endorsed Hillary Clinton to succeed him and urged Democrats in a web video to line up behind her.

One year ago: Hundreds of mourners packed a Houston church for the funeral of George Floyd, a Black man whose death during a Minneapolis arrest inspired a worldwide reckoning over racial injustice. In a primary election plagued by hours-long lines, voting machine malfunctions and provisional ballot shortages, Georgia Democrats chose Jon Ossoff to face Republican Sen. David Perdue in November. (Perdue finished 88,000 votes ahead of Ossoff in November, forcing a January runoff that was won by Ossoff.) The Senate unanimously confirmed Gen. Charles Brown Jr. as chief of staff of the U.S. Air Force, making him the first Black officer to lead one of the nation's military services. The Paramount Network said it was dropping the long-running reality series "Cops" after 33 seasons on the air.

Today's Birthdays: Comedian Jackie Mason is 93. Media analyst Marvin Kalb is 91. Former baseball manager and player Bill Virdon is 90. Sports commentator Dick Vitale is 82. Author Letty Cottin Pogrebin is 82. Rock musician Mick Box (Uriah Heep) is 74. Retired MLB All-Star Dave Parker is 70. Film composer James Newton Howard is 70. Mystery author Patricia Cornwell is 65. Actor Michael J. Fox is 60. Writer-producer Aaron Sorkin is 60. Actor Johnny Depp is 58. Actor Gloria Reuben is 57. Gospel singer-actress Tamela Mann is 55. Rock musician Dean Felber (Hootie & the Blowfish) is 54. Rock musician Dean Dinning is 54. Musician Ed Simons is 51. Actor Keesha Sharp is 48. Bluegrass singer-musician Jamie Dailey (Dailey & Vincent) is 46. Actor Michaela Conlin is 43. Actor Natalie Portman is 40. Actor Mae Whitman is 33. Actor Lucien Laviscount is 29.