

# Groton Daily Independent

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**Greetings from the Minneapolis Airport Terminal. Jeslyn and I, along with a lot of other freshmen and sophomore students and parents, are on their way to Washington, D.C. We have a little free time this morning so I can get the GDI out before departing on the airplane.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



## **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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shift  
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**Britton**



## Groton Carnival of Silver Skates

by Dorene Nelson

With its 82-year history, the Carnival of Silver Skates is probably one of the oldest organizations in Groton. Although it started with a hockey game between two Aberdeen teams, figure and stunt skating were also included during the 1938 event.

The original ice skating rink was east of the high school but was moved in 2009 to the west of Highway 37 near the baseball complex. The warming house was finished in the fall of 2010. The tradition of "decorating" the rink with used Christmas trees was done from the very first carnival.

The Carnival of Silver Skates elected its first queen in 1938 with more decorations and the back ground on one end



**Two Friends of the Silver Skates were recognized during the afternoon performance. Karyn Babcock painted the skate that is north of the building and Katie Anderson for your work on redoing the scenery. Pictured left to right are Silver Skates Chairman Lindsey Tietz, Karyn Babcock, Dawn Imrie, Deb Schuelke, Coralee Wolter, Tina Kosel, Amanda Sperry, Katie Anderson and Sarah Hanten.** (Photo

lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

of the rink. Costumes for most of the skaters were first used in 1942.

The Carnival of Silver Skates has been held almost every year since. When the weather is too warm or too cold, the event might be canceled or moved to another location. There was no carnival in 1943, 1944, or 1945 because of World War II.

The event was officially named the "Carnival of Silver Skates" in 1949 and included many guest skaters as well as local ones.

The Carnival of Silver Skates provides an opportunity for the youth of Groton and surrounding areas to be involved in outdoor ice skating as a past time, an organized activity, and a performance.

Volunteers teach basic skating skills that will not only be used to participate in the Carnival but will also serve them in their future as both a past time or for exercise.

In addition to the nine officers, there are about 90-100 skaters who participate every year.

The current club officers are as follows: Lindsey Tietz, Chairperson;

Tina Kosel, Co-Chairperson; Katie Anderson, Secretary; Dawn Imrie, Treasurer; Sarah Hanten, Communications Chairperson; Deb Schuelke, Costume Chairperson; Coralea Wolters, Skating Instructor Chairperson; Jaymie Overacker, City Liaison; and Amanda Sperry, Member at Large.

The board meets about 8 times a year, less often in the spring and summer months and becoming more frequent as the Carnival approaches. The group usually meets at the Dairy Queen in Groton, but the past year most of the meetings were held via zoom with only a few in person meetings at the warming house. The meeting times are set at the convenience of the board members, usually on a weeknight or a Sunday afternoon.

Obviously the major and only event sponsored by the club is Groton's Annual Carnival of Silver Skates. Each skater pays a \$20 registration fee.

Not only is this an eighty-two year old event, the Carnival of Silver Skates is a community event and the longest running outdoor show of its kind! In 1988 Governor George S. Mickleson proclaimed the days of January 30-31 as Carnival of Silver Skates Days in South Dakota to recognize the 50th anniversary of the event.

Youth from preschoolers to seniors in high school are involved. It is a fun and safe activity that both boys and girls can participate in. There are also many opportunities for adults to get involved through serving on the executive board, being a skating instructor, or volunteering to help on the day of the Carnival. Many of the adults that are involved are past skaters that want to ensure this community tradition/event continues on as strong as it always has been.



## **Worker shortage in South Dakota could raise wages but slow economic growth**

**Danielle Ferguson**

**South Dakota News Watch**

South Dakota businesses in the midst of a vigorous post-pandemic economic recovery are scrambling to attract new employees from what has become a limited pool of potential workers.

The vast number of open positions and reduced available workforce are the latest wrinkles in the state economy caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and have led to a number of unexpected outcomes.

Some experts say the labor shortage could ultimately lead to better pay and benefits for South Dakota workers, who on average make some of the lowest wages in the nation.

Meanwhile, one development official said the imbalance could hold back long-term growth and economic expansion in the state and prevent South Dakota from fully engaging in the post-pandemic recovery.

"It's hindering South Dakota's growth," said Tom Johnson, director of Elevate Rapid City, a regional economic-development agency.

Throughout the state, businesses cannot expand if they can't find workers to fill open positions or if industries related to construction or development are unable to build new homes or businesses in a timely manner.

"It affects rural areas and suburban areas; this is an issue across the spectrum," Johnson said. "You cannot find any company not struggling to find folks at this point."

Employers are offering sign-on incentives, wage increases and additional benefits to attract hesitant employees. Many working people, especially in the bustling tourism and food service industries, are working overtime and risking burnout to keep up with the demand. And most customers — from those seeking car repairs or home improvements to those just trying to get a quick meal — are experiencing longer wait times for goods and services.

The need for workers is so high, the state is targeting eligible students, people who are in retirement and people who travel the country living in recreational vehicles to join the workforce, said South Dakota Department of Labor Secretary Marcia Hultman.



**Marcia Hultman**

Hultman said efforts are specifically focused on funnelling workers into the seasonal employment and tourism sectors, industries that already see an increased need each spring. Those sectors are experiencing exceptional growth this year as out-of-state visitors flock to the state as worries over the coronavirus have ebbed.

Hultman suspects the shortage will lead to increased wages across all sectors. Anecdotally, she's seen local businesses offer increases, but the state won't have new wage data for the next few months.

Hultman said the labor shortage is a challenge, but a welcome one. "It's the best challenge to have; I would rather have this than to be facing what we were facing a year ago," she said.

Economic experts say there is not a single, all-encompassing reason for the labor shortage.

Some employees who left the workforce because of the pandemic have been hesitant to get back into in-person employment. And, though experts



**Like many businesses in South Dakota, the Harbor Freight hardware store in Rapid City is seeking employees of any skill level to fill multiple job openings.** Photo: Bart Pfankuch,

South Dakota News Watch

as the recession and now the pandemic, the labor market lags behind the rebounding economy, he said. "As the economy expands, it's typically true that labor markets kind of lag in healing or correcting back to normal," Santos said.

## **Added unemployment payments small factor**

Some South Dakota employers and politicians have pointed to the extra federal unemployment benefits provided during the pandemic as a major factor in the worker shortage, but Hultman said that is far from the primary cause.

say it's a small fraction of the unemployed, some unemployed people are clinging to the extra federal benefits tacked on to state unemployment payments.

There are also social and cultural aspects to the shortage. The pandemic was a time of reflection for many workers. Some are shifting careers, leaving current jobs or going back to school. Many either chose to or were forced to lead a different lifestyle, such as staying at home to care for family members.

A lack of housing or affordable childcare can limit some communities from accepting new workers or prevent some people from returning to work.

"A lot of those features are coming together to create a situation where, clearly in the state and nation, we just don't see the kind of reattachment to the labor force that we expect to see," said South Dakota State University economics professor Joe Santos. "A bunch of jobs are now open and a bunch of people are waiting to get jobs, but the matchmaking has not occurred."

As of June 15, more than 24,000 jobs were listed on the state's largest job database, SD WORKS. For the entire month of May, more than 41,000 jobs were listed, compared to under 30,000 positions posted in May 2020. Nationally, a historic record high of 9.3 million jobs were available in early June.

Santos said he is not surprised by the labor shortage. Typically after massive economic interruptions, such

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**Jordan Hartshorn, owner and operator of Hart2Hart, Inc., which operates 17 McDonald's restaurants in South Dakota, Iowa and Minnesota, said applications in May were way down compared to normal but have recently increased in number. He said more people may be getting more comfortable with going back to work amid lower COVID-19 infection rates in South Dakota.** Photo: Danielle Ferguson, South

Dakota News Watch

Labor department data show that fewer than 1,500 people in South Dakota are receiving the extra unemployment benefits.

"Many people think once those federal benefits end, it will solve the issue," Hultman said. "It's not going to solve the issue. It's not the sole contributing factor. The numbers don't support it."

South Dakotans who ended up filing for unemployment during the pandemic on average earned about \$694 each week, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. With the \$300 additional stimulus money tacked on to the roughly \$321 from the state unemployment, unemployment claimants earned \$621 each week, or about 90% of what they had earned before losing their jobs. That's not far off from the state's median per capita individual income of about \$31,000, according to the Census Bureau.

"There's no doubt that someone can have a slightly less incentive to search or attach themselves to a position, but you can't identify one source. I suspect there has been a distortion that is being caused by the underlying force of massive disruption in the labor market in an economy that continues to change," said Santos, the SDSU professor.

Johnson, of Elevate Rapid City, said the pandemic forced people to look at their relationship with their work and consider lifestyle changes, he said. Some people cannot find affordable childcare, which makes it harder to take a job, he said.

"There's a story behind each one of those unemployed numbers," he said. "A pandemic is a once-in-a-generation type event, and certainly it's hard to predict exactly how that will affect work for the foreseeable future."

The competitive labor market is giving more Americans the comfort to quit their jobs at the highest rates since 2000, according to the U.S. Department of Labor Job Openings and Labor Turnover Summary. In South Dakota, more than 25,000 people who currently have a job said they would consider a different one, according to the department of labor.

Hart2Hart, Inc. owner Jordan Hartshorn said the company's 17 McDonald's stores across South Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa had to shift gears to keep and attract workers. They raised their starting wage from \$13 to \$15. They started offering more benefits and emphasized opportunities for growth.

"If they feel they aren't making a sufficient amount of money, they're going to work for your competitor across the street," Hartshorn said.

Hartshorn said the company also tried unconventional methods of recruitment, targeting students and young people through an ad on TikTok.

Mike Scott, executive director for the Winner Area Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development, said a lack of available housing, especially in smaller communities, is another barrier to finding workers.

"It always comes back to housing as a recruitment tool, and the lack thereof makes it difficult at times," he said. "You put the cart before the horse or the horse before the cart. You've got to decide which one is the horse and which is the cart."

## Need for workers great in many fields



**Some South Dakota businesses, including the Goodcents restaurant in Sioux Falls, are offering bonuses and increased wages to attract new employees.** Photo: Danielle Ferguson, South Dakota News Watch

most 30,000 workers they lost in March and April 2020. But the new job openings from a quick economic rebound have outpaced the workforce.

About 12,900 people in South Dakota were unemployed in May, according to the latest data from the department of labor, a sharp decrease from last May when more than 32,000 people were jobless.

While tourism and seasonal employment needs are highest in the state, the worker shortage is also present in general construction, manufacturing and production, said Crystal Litton, a staffing specialist at People Ready, a temporary staffing firm in Sioux Falls.

Litton has been helping people find work for more than 10 years, and she said the past few months have been the most difficult in her career.

"We have a lot of jobs that need workers now and we're just having a hard time and struggling with getting workers out in the field," she said. "This is the hardest time I've had to fill the jobs."

Litton said some job-seekers are waiting to go back to work until the additional federal unemployment benefits provided during the pandemic expire. South Dakota is halting those extra benefits on June 26, and 23 other states plan to stop the program by July 3.

Howard Nold, owner of Nold Excavating in Rapid City, said he is behind schedule because he can't find skilled or unskilled workers in his field. Fewer people are responding to help wanted advertisements, and those who do often don't show up for an interview, he said.

"We're struggling," Nold said. "We can't keep up with what we're supposed to be doing just because I can't find help. Maybe when we get done paying people to stay at home they might come to work."

Nold, 68, has reached out to other contractors in the area to see if they would be willing to share any available workers, but he has always been turned down because other employers are also in need of workers.

"I'm getting too old to be in the trenches doing the work, but right now I don't have a choice. Just got to keep plugging away, I guess," he said.

The shortage may be a more long-range problem in rural areas of South Dakota.

Many small-town business owners are reaching or have exceeded retirement age. Attorneys and other

The leisure and hospitality industry is seeing a great need for workers, but the labor shortage is affecting almost all industries.

The leisure and hospitality sector, fueled mostly by tourism, had the largest year-over-year increase of any industry, expanding from 26,000 workers in April 2020 to 39,400 workers in April 2021, a 52% jump.

Sales and food service jobs are in the top three occupations with the highest projected employment in South Dakota for the rest of the decade, according to the labor department.

"There are a lot of businesses in the tourism sector where people are just working their tails off, 12 hours a day, seven days a week," said South Dakota Department of Tourism Secretary James Hagen. "I've never seen a more resilient, less-complaining industry. The concern is burnout. Can they maintain this pace?"

Hagen said he has seen indicators that employers may be increasing wages in the tourism industry, long among the lowest-paid industries in the state.

The state labor department estimates that in April 2021 businesses had recouped about 98% of the al-



**Crystal Litton, a staffing specialist at People Ready employment service in Sioux Falls, shows where the firm stores the safety equipment it gives to day laborers who use their services.** Photo: Danielle Ferguson, South Dakota News Watch

tions have risen recently, and she expects them to increase again next

skilled professionals are wanting to retire, and recruiting younger professionals to rural towns is difficult, Scott said.

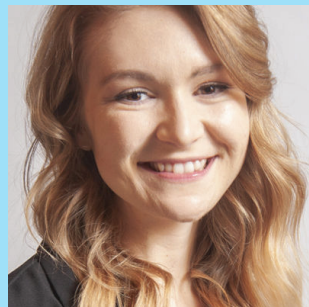
Heather Petersen, the finance officer for Mission, S.D., said the city has had some jobs open for more than a year. A need for housing and the town's remote location, roughly 100 miles from the nearest Walmart, create employee recruitment challenges.

Petersen said she expects the labor shortage to force some employers to raise wages. "When there are a lot more jobs than people, you're going to have to pay them more," she said.

The past few weeks have shown some easing of the labor shortage, Hartshorn said.

More people have applied to work at his McDonald's restaurant in the past two weeks than in all of last June, he said.

Litton also said worker applications have risen recently, and she expects them to increase again next week when federal benefits end.



## ABOUT Danielle Ferguson

Danielle Ferguson, Sioux Falls, S.D., is an investigative reporter for South Dakota News Watch.

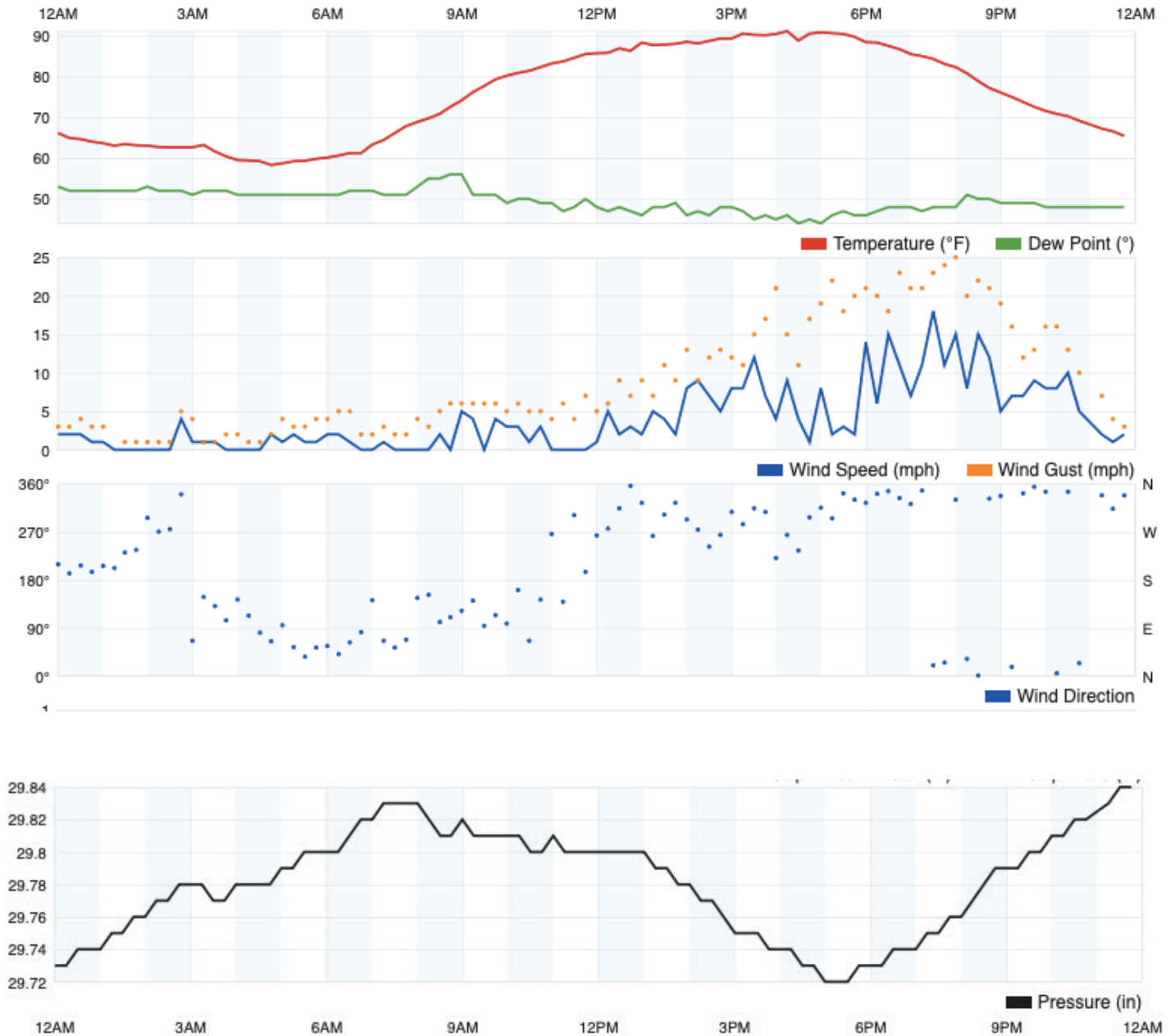
She grew up in Salem, S.D. and previously worked as a watchdog reporter at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.



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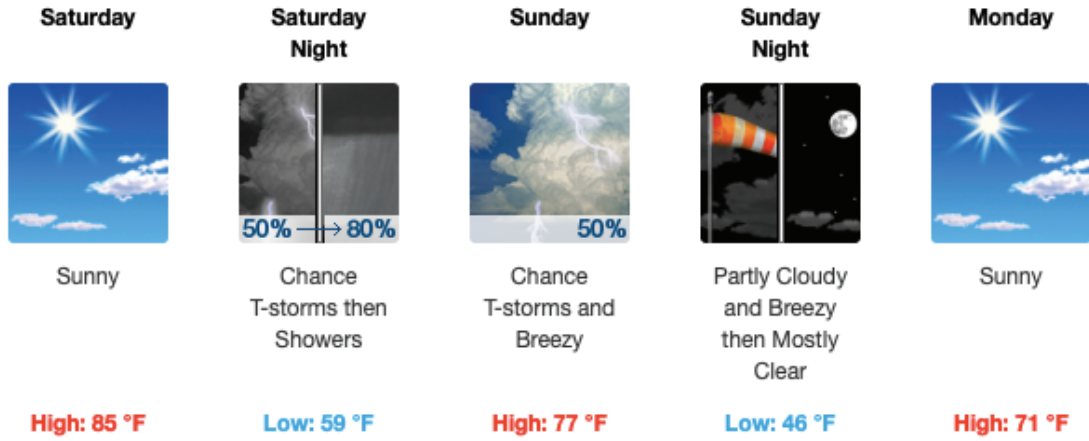
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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## Sat-Sun: Potential Timing of Rainfall

### Probability of Precipitation Forecast

#### What We Know

- Showers & storms develop across the area Saturday afternoon & evening, and exit through the day Sunday
- Heaviest rains with this system are most likely to fall across and east of the Prairie Coteau
- Severe weather is unlikely, but can't be ruled out across south central SD Saturday night.
- Breezy to windy conditions on Sunday usher in cooler air (highs of 65-75 F Monday)

#### What Could Change

- Exact rainfall totals over the period

	6/19 Sat						6/20 Sun						6/21 Mon		Maximum		
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm		12am	3am
McIntosh	7	7	25	25	65	65	65	60	60	45	45	44	44	16	16	14	65
Eagle Butte	19	19	36	36	51	51	51	42	42	37	37	28	28	13	21	21	51
Mobridge	7	7	28	28	71	71	71	68	68	45	45	38	38	15	15	14	71
Murdo	30	30	44	44	45	45	45	19	22	22	23	23	23	15	28	28	45
Pierre	21	21	41	41	56	56	56	36	36	31	31	25	25	11	22	22	56
Gettysburg	10	10	29	29	67	67	67	65	65	38	38	28	28	10	15	15	67
Kennebec	19	19	39	39	53	53	53	36	36	24	24	24	24	11	24	24	53
Eureka	3	3	18	18	66	66	78	78	78	50	50	38	38	11	11	7	78
Miller	14	14	28	28	63	63	69	69	69	39	39	30	30	9	14	14	69
Aberdeen	4	4	13	13	55	55	80	80	80	53	53	40	40	9	9	4	80
Redfield	10	10	20	20	60	60	78	78	78	48	48	38	38	11	11	9	78
Britton	1	1	8	8	41	41	81	81	81	64	64	49	49	9	9	2	81
Watertown	5	5	9	9	43	43	81	81	81	63	63	47	47	9	9	4	81
Sisseton	1	1	5	5	32	32	82	82	82	68	68	49	49	10	10	3	82
Milbank	3	3	5	5	31	31	82	82	82	71	71	52	52	9	9	3	82
Wheaton	1	1	3	3	24	24	79	79	79	74	74	55	55	12	12	3	79

\* Table values in %

\*\*Created: 1 pm CDT Fri 6/18/2021

\*\*\*Values are maximums over the period beginning at the time shown.



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Updated: 6/18/2021 1:52 PM Central

A storm system will bring chances for showers and storms this weekend, and while unlikely, severe weather can't be ruled out across portions of south central SD Saturday night. Cooler air is expected behind this system as well!

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## Today in Weather History

June 19, 1894: A tornado moved NNE, passing 12 miles northwest of Bowdle, ending in extreme south-eastern Campbell County. A child was killed, and the mother and four other children were severely injured. A man was killed in another home, and his wife was injured. Fourteen homes were damaged or destroyed. Clothes were said to be torn to shreds and scattered for miles. This tornado was estimated to be an F3.

June 19, 1931: A tornado moved east from just south of St. Lawrence, passing south of Wessington. Buildings were destroyed on eight farms. Two farms were said to be wiped out, house and all. A woman was injured as she tried to rescue chickens. Cattle, horses, and over 100 hogs were killed. This tornado had an estimated strength of an F3.

June 19, 2013: Slow moving thunderstorms brought some large hail along with very heavy rains and flash flooding to parts of northeast South Dakota. One thunderstorm produced quarter hail and winds over 50 mph, which caused significant damage to a bean field along with damaging the siding of the house south of Wilmot in Roberts County. Several roads in Wilmot had water running over them for several hours. Over three inches of rain caused water to go over a part of Highway 123 south of Wilmot. The heavy rain of three to four inches brought many flooded roads in and around Veblen in Marshall County.

1794: A violent tornado commenced west of the Hudson River in New York. The tornado traveled through Poughkeepsie then crossed the border into Connecticut where it went through the towns of New Milford, Waterbury, North Haven, and Branford. It then continued into Long Island Sound. The tornado did extensive damage, and the funnel was reported by one observer to look like the "aurora borealis."

1835 - A tornado tore through the center of New Brunswick NJ killing five persons and scattering debris as far as Manhattan Island. The tornado provided the first opportunity for scientists to study firsthand the track of such a storm. (David Ludlum)

1938 - A cloudburst near Custer Creek, MT, (near Miles City) caused a train wreck killing forty-eight persons. An estimated four to seven inches of rain deluged the head of the creek that evening, and water flowing through the creek weakened the bridge. As a result, a locomotive and seven passenger cars plunged into the swollen creek. One car, a tourist sleeper, was completely submerged. (David Ludlum)

1972 - Hurricane Agnes moved onshore near Cape San Blas FL with wind gusts to 80 mph, and exited Maine on the 26th. There were 117 deaths, mainly due to flooding from North Carolina to New York State, and total damage was estimated at more than three billion dollars. Up to 19 inches of rain deluged western Schuylkill County PA. The rains of Hurricane Agnes resulted in one of the greatest natural disasters in U.S. history. Agnes caused more damage than all other tropical cyclones in the previous six years combined (which included Celia and Camille). (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - It was a warm June day, with plenty of thunderstorms east of the Rockies. Lightning knocked out power at Throckmorton, TX, and ignited an oil tank battery. A woman in Knox City TX was struck by lightning while in her car, and a man was struck by lightning near his home in Manatee County FL. Strong thunderstorm winds overturned several outhouses near Bixby OK, but no injuries were reported. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Temperatures soared above 100 degrees in the central U.S. for Father's Day. Fifteen cities reported record high temperatures for the date. Severe thunderstorms in Minnesota and Wisconsin produced softball size hail near River Falls WI, and wind gusts to 80 mph at Menomonie WI. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Fourteen cities reported record high temperatures for the date as searing heat spread from the southwestern deserts into the High Plains Region. Record highs included 98 degrees at Billings, MT, 107 degrees at Valentine, NE, and 112 degrees at Tucson, AZ. (The National Weather Summary)

2006 - Up to 11 inches of rain fell in the Houston, Texas area, causing widespread flash flooding. The Houston Fire Department rescued more than 500 people from flood waters, but no serious injuries or fatalities were reported.

2004: Annette Island, Alaska set an all-time record high temperature of 93 degrees. Since record keeping began in 1941, Annette Island has seen 90-degree temperatures four times.

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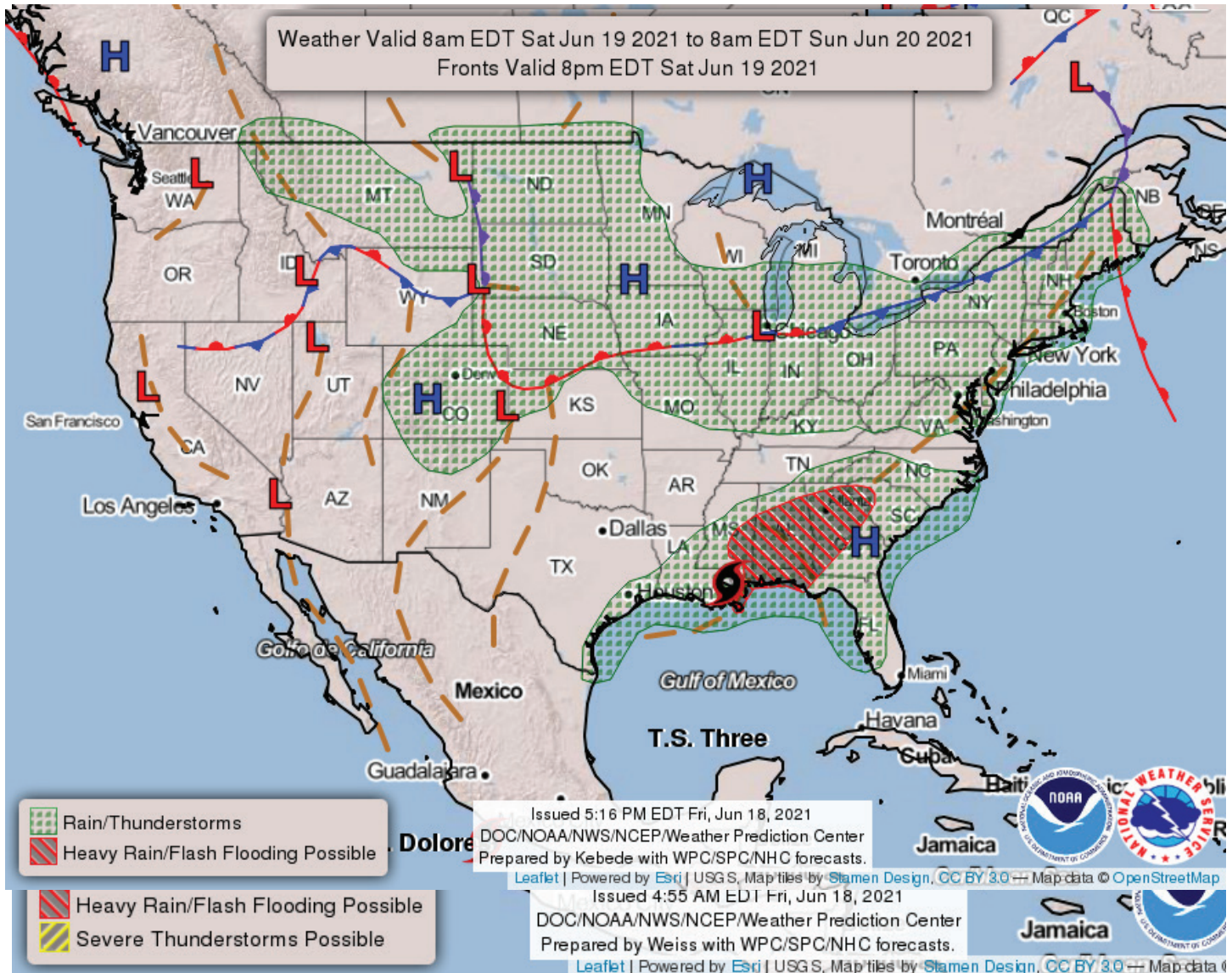
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 91 °F at 4:12 PM**  
**Low Temp: 58 °F at 4:46 AM**  
**Wind: 25 mph at 7:52 PM**  
**Precip: .00**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 108° in 1933**  
**Record Low: 38° in 1902**  
**Average High: 81°F**  
**Average Low: 56°F**  
**Average Precip in June.: 2.16**  
**Precip to date in June.: 0.53**  
**Average Precip to date: 9.41**  
**Precip Year to Date: 4.50**  
**Sunset Tonight: 9:26 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:45 a.m.**



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## THE TRIUMPHANT TONGUE

A Greek philosopher asked his attendant to prepare a dinner for his closest friends. He advised him to "prepare your best meal for my distinguished guests."

On the day before the banquet, he asked, "What are you going to serve my friends?"

"Tongue," he replied.

With curiosity he asked, "Why tongue?"

"Well, my lord, tongue is my best meal. With it we may bring happiness, dispel sorrow, remove despair and inspire others," he said quietly.

A few days later the philosopher went again to his attendant and said, "I want you to prepare your worst meal for my guests next week."

On the day before the banquet, he asked the same question, "What are you going to serve my guests?"

"Tongue," was the reply.

"Tongue?" he asked in amazement. "You said that tongue was your best meal. Now it's your worst."

"Yes," said the attendant. "With the tongue we break hearts, destroy reputations, promote discord and begin wars."

David said, "The righteous will 'use their tongues' to rejoice in the Lord and take refuge in Him. All the upright in heart will glory in Him."

James said, "No human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison."

The tongue: It can be used to honor, praise, and glorify God or used to destroy others.

Prayer: What a power we have in our tongues, Lord. Help us to use them wisely to speak Your love to others and praise Your name and rejoice in Your greatness. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and trust in Him. And all the upright in heart shall glory. Psalm 64:10

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## 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 **Postponed to Aug. 28th:** 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  
08/28/2021 Lions Club Crazy Golf Fest 9am 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

### Tragic accident doesn't keep paraplegic woman from dream job

By TANYA MANUS Rapid City Journal

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The accident that left Leah Nixon a paraplegic has led her to a dream career. Nixon debuts as a children's book illustrator this month with the release of "Best Day Ever!"

The book tells the story of a boundary-pushing pup and her exasperated boy, unconditional love and the challenges of always trying to be on your best behavior.

"Best Day Ever!" is written by award-winning author and poet Marilyn Singer of Brooklyn, New York, who has authored more than 100 books for children and young adults. "Best Day Ever!" will be released on June 29 and can be pre-ordered at Books-A-Million, Target and Amazon.

Singer and Nixon have never met, but their story and illustrations are an ideal pairing.

"At the heart of it, it's a story about a dog and her boy and it goes through a typical day of waking up and the trouble this little dog gets into," Nixon said. "When I read the story, I said, 'It sounds exactly like me and my dog.' ... Energetic, super loving and sweet. ... She'll pick things up off the floor for me. She likes sitting on my lap. She's a little naughty, too.

"The publishing company (Clarion Books/Houghlin Mifflin Harcourt Books for Young Readers) reached out to me. They were looking for an illustrator in a wheelchair. They had this (story) for a long time," Nixon said. "After the accident happened ... they asked if I would want to submit illustrations. It's kind of like a magical thing that it all worked out. It was a perfect first book for me. It was pretty wild."

Nixon, 32, of Rapid City, has been drawing since the age of 3. She dreamed of a career in art. She earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in oil painting from Washington University in St. Louis, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Finding a way to support herself as an artist was challenging, she said, and Nixon eventually went to work for Habitat for Humanity as a full-time builder.

"I loved getting to work with women who would be owning their own homes in the future and teaching them skills with power tools," she said.

On the same day in 2017 she started working for Habitat, Nixon and her sister, Grace, launched the website for their own stationery company, Tiny & Snail. Nixon illustrates greeting cards and other Tiny & Snail products.

In August 2018, Nixon was working on a Habitat for Humanity home build when a forklift tipped over and fell on her, leaving her trapped under the machine's crushing weight for about 30 minutes until she was removed by the Rapid City Fire Department and rushed to the hospital.

Her spine was severed, leaving her back, core and legs paralyzed from the armpits down. Nixon had multiple surgeries including an above-the-knee amputation on her right leg.

One of the first questions Nixon asked in the intensive care unit when she was able to communicate was, "Can I still draw?"

"Miraculously ... I still have my hands and my brain. I feel so fortunate I didn't have a traumatic brain injury," she said. "It was like the universe saying, 'Stop puttering around and do your art.'"

"It's been a strange mixed blessing. I've been able to dive into Tiny & Snail, and this book opportunity came up," she said. "It's kind of amazing what can happen out of tragedy."

Nixon spent about 2-1/2 years working on the book illustrations, which she hand draws aided by the program Procreate on her iPad. Her own dog, a Chihuahua-terrier mix named Lucy, inspired the illustrations for the dog in "Best Day Ever!" Nixon said she also had photos of herself taken doing various activities, and she referenced those as she drew the boy for the story.

"I think the publishing company had simplistic illustrations in mind but as time went on, I was able to include a lot more details and I had a lot of fun. It was definitely a learning experience," she said. "It's fun that I had my dog as a model and I can insert myself in the story, and I think that's why they wanted

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a wheelchair user. There's an authenticity of the way the boy moves and the tasks the dog does for the boy ... somebody who's not in a wheelchair couldn't quite know.

"I could not have written a more suitable book for me to illustrate," Nixon said. "Illustrating this book has honestly been part of my healing process."

Rapid City residents may recognize some familiar settings in "Best Day Ever!"

"I used several different parks in Rapid City as a reference for the parks that the boy goes to. There's a scene with Canyon Lake in there, and a scene with the dog park, so that might be fun for people who live here," Nixon said.

Nixon said she and Singer talked after the book's illustrations were complete.

"She's just delightful. I think she's very happy with how the whole thing turned out, as am I," Nixon said.

"Best Day Ever!" will undoubtedly be one of the stories Nixon reads to her own daughter. Nixon and her husband, Kelsey Fitzgerald, are expecting their first child in mid-July.

Nixon hopes "Best Day Ever!" is the first of many children's books to come.

"I would love to illustrate some more," she said. "I hope my debut book has a strong enough launch that I might be considered for other books. ... It's been a crazy journey, but I'm ultimately very grateful."

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

14-36-44-46-53, Mega Ball: 18, Megaplier: 2

(fourteen, thirty-six, forty-four, forty-six, fifty-three; Mega Ball: eighteen; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$30 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$52 million

## Declaration of Juneteenth holiday sparks scramble in states

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Congress and President Joe Biden acted with unusual swiftness this week in approving Juneteenth as a national holiday. That shifted the battle to the states, where the holiday faces a far less enthusiastic response.

Nearly all states recognize Juneteenth in some fashion, at least on paper. But most have been slow to move beyond proclamations issued by governors or resolutions passed by lawmakers. So far, at least nine states have designated it in law as an official paid state holiday — Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Texas, Virginia and Washington. All but Texas, where the events of the original Juneteenth took place, acted after the killing of George Floyd last year.

This year alone, legislation to make Juneteenth a paid state holiday died in Florida and South Dakota and stalled in Ohio, all states controlled by Republicans. But even in Maryland, where Democrats control the Legislature, a Juneteenth bill passed one chamber only to die in the other.

The effort recalls the drawn-out battles over recognizing Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the last time the federal government designated a new holiday. That legislation, finally passed in 1983, scheduled the holiday to begin three years later. It set off bitter debates in the states over whether to enact their own holidays.

Only a handful of states headed into Thursday's signing of the federal Juneteenth law with the paid holiday on the books to be celebrated in 2021. The governors of Washington, Illinois, Louisiana and Maine, by contrast, all signed more recent laws that were set to kick in for 2022, when June 19 falls on a Sunday.

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards closed state offices for a half-day Friday, only a few days after he signed Juneteenth legislation, and Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker was among governors who changed their states' start dates to 2021.

In another twist, many states have laws that automatically recognize all federal holidays — even those



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not named in state statute.

Such was the case in Ohio, where Republican Gov. Mike DeWine issued a Juneteenth statement late Thursday and closed state offices in the manner of a hastily called school snow day. West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice also declared Juneteenth a state holiday at a last-minute virtual press conference. The governors of Connecticut and Florida issued their Juneteenth proclamations Friday.

Ohio state Sen. Hearcel Craig, a Columbus Democrat who is Black, said codifying Juneteenth in state law remains essential. He is sponsoring a bill that passed the Ohio Senate unanimously last session, but time ran out for consideration in the House. Republicans control both of Ohio's legislative chambers.

Georgia law caps the number of state holidays at 12, meaning Juneteenth could be added only if another holiday were dropped. In other states, including Oregon, whether Juneteenth becomes a paid holiday will depend on union negotiations.

In Mississippi, Democratic state Rep. Bryant Clark has filed bills to make Juneteenth a state holiday for about 15 years. All have stalled.

Clark said Friday that he will keep trying. He noted that Mississippi legislators took four years to create a state holiday honoring King after the federal holiday was established. In 1987, Mississippi legislators revised a holiday named for Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee that had been in place for decades, creating a joint holiday honoring both Lee and King.

Two other Mississippi lawmakers said Friday that they plan to file a bill to eliminate Confederate Memorial Day as a state holiday and replace it with Juneteenth.

"Sometimes progress is extremely slow," said Clark, a member of the Legislative Black Caucus. Several communities in Mississippi already hold Juneteenth celebrations. One is the capital city of Jackson, where the population is more than 80% Black.

Minnesota has recognized the third Saturday in June as Juneteenth since 1996, but the statute only obligates the governor to issue a proclamation each year honoring the observance. That's a common situation in the U.S., where the holiday is sometimes called Emancipation Day.

Calls by Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, a Democrat, to make it an official state holiday have failed to gain traction so far in the Legislature, the only one in the nation where Democrats control one chamber and Republicans control the other.

Hawaii had been one of only three states left not to recognize the holiday at all. A bill marking Juneteenth was signed there Wednesday and in a second holdout state, North Dakota, in April. Neither created a paid state holiday, however.

South Dakota still does not officially recognize the holiday, but Gov. Kristi Noem has issued a proclamation celebrating it. The governor does not have the power to make it an official state holiday — that must be done through the Legislature. A bill to recognize it as a working holiday fell a handful of votes short of passing this year.

It was defeated by an unusual coalition of Democrats who felt the day should be recognized as a full-fledged holiday, rather than a working holiday, and conservative lawmakers who opposed recognizing the holiday at all.

Vaney Hariri, a Black business owner who organized a march after Floyd's death, said that vote showed the entrenched attitude of many lawmakers who "would turn down a day off rather than celebrate your freedom from pain and captivity."

In Tennessee, an attempt to designate Juneteenth as a state holiday stalled last year after some Republican lawmakers raised questions about the \$647,000 price tag. Others questioned why it was necessary when the state already recognizes Aug. 8 as Emancipation Day.

Arizona dragged its feet for years on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, until it became the only state that did not have some sort of holiday inspired by the slain civil rights leader.

That long delay cost Arizona a Super Bowl and millions of dollars in tourism revenue from canceled conventions and other events. It also inspired a boycott by singer Stevie Wonder and a protest song by Public Enemy called "By the Time I Get to Arizona."

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Gov. Bruce Babbitt, a Democrat, issued an executive order in 1986 declaring Martin Luther King Jr. Day a state holiday. Babbitt's Republican successor, Evan Mecham, rescinded the order a year later, saying Babbitt exceeded his authority.

Mecham's action led to years of divisive political maneuvering, including a ballot measure that ended in defeat for King holiday supporters, before Arizona voters ultimately approved the holiday in 1992.

Warren H. Stewart Sr., pastor of the Institutional Baptist Church in Phoenix, helped lead a grassroots campaign to establish Arizona's King holiday. But he said he did not rejoice when Biden signed the June-teenth law. He fears it will distract from legislation on vital issues such as voting rights and police reform.

"I see it as a distraction," Stewart said, "almost as a handout of some candy, but the meat of justice is still going to be denied."

Associated Press writers Stephen Groves in Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Steve Karnowski in Minneapolis; Michael Kunzelman in College Park, Maryland; Emily Wagster Pettus in Jackson, Mississippi; Kimberlee Kruesi in Nashville; and AP statehouse reporters across the U.S. contributed to this report.

## Feds: Man suspected of stealing at least 63 golf carts

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — Federal authorities have charged a Minnesota man with transportation of stolen vehicles in what they say was a litany of thefts of golf carts.

An FBI affidavit filed in North Dakota this week says the man is suspected of stealing at least 63 carts in at least seven states, including Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin in recent years.

KVRR reports the man was arrested June 11 in Georgia while trying to steal golf carts in a city there.

An attorney who represented the man at an initial appearance in that state didn't immediately respond to a message seeking comment.

## Smithfield Foods meatpackers approve new union contract

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The union representing workers at the Smithfield Foods plant in Sioux Falls said Friday its members have voted in favor of a new contract.

Union leaders say the new contract sends a message to the meatpacking industry that companies need to recognize the sacrifices its employees made during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Smithfield plant was the nation's most active hot spot for COVID-19 cases in the early weeks of the pandemic. Nearly 1,300 workers at the Sioux Falls pork processing plant tested positive for COVID-19 and four workers died.

B.J. Motley, president of the Union Food and Commercial Workers Local 304A, said in a statement the new contract includes fair pay, good benefits and safety protections that workers have earned and deserve.

"Ensuring these jobs continue to provide the good pay and benefits working families need is the best way for us to honor our country's essential workers," Motley said.

The new contract includes a base rate of \$18.75 an hour, up from \$17, and a \$520 bonus.

The union had voted earlier this month to authorize a strike after Motley said that Smithfield wanted the workers to pay more for health care and refused to increase pay to comparable rates of other meatpacking plants in the region.

## Man accused of trying to burn pride flag in Sioux Falls

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A man is facing charges after he was accused of taking down a gay pride flag from a Sioux Falls business and trying to burn it.

Police spokesman Sam Clemens says an officer saw the 24-year-old man take the flag down about 10:30 p.m. Wednesday and use a small lighter to try to ignite it.

Clemens said that by the time the officer stopped the man, a small hole had burned in the flag and the pole had been broken, KSFY-TV reported.

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The man was arrested on possible charges of reckless burning and intentional damage to property. Clemens said the act did not constitute a hate crime because South Dakota's law does not cover intent to intimidate or harass someone for their sexual orientation.

## Fire at state prison in Sioux Falls sends 3 to hospital

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Investigators are looking into what caused a fire at the South Dakota State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls.

The fire that damaged the carpentry shop at the prison sent three staff members to the hospital for possible smoke inhalation, KELO-TV reported.

According to authorities, Sioux Falls Fire Rescue was called to the prison about 1 p.m. Thursday. Inmates and staff working in the Pheasantland Industries shops were evacuated. The nearby classrooms were also evacuated.

Pheasantland Industries provides work opportunities and marketable job skills for inmates who build cabinets, produce custom furniture and refurbish furniture.

## Hard-line judiciary head wins Iran presidency as turnout low

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran's hard-line judiciary chief won the country's presidential election in a landslide victory Saturday, propelling the supreme leader's protege into Tehran's highest civilian position in a vote that appeared to see the lowest turnout in the Islamic Republic's history.

Initial results showed Ebrahim Raisi won 17.8 million votes in the contest, dwarfing those of the race's sole moderate candidate. However, Raisi dominated the election only after a panel under the watch of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei disqualified his strongest competition.

His candidacy, and the sense the election served more as a coronation for him, sparked widespread apathy among eligible voters in the Islamic Republic, which has held up turnout as a sign of support for the theocracy since its 1979 Islamic Revolution. Some, including former hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, called for a boycott.

In initial results, former Revolutionary Guard commander Mohsen Rezaei won 3.3 million votes and moderate Abdolnasser Hemmati got 2.4 million, said Jamal Orf, the head of Iran's Interior Ministry election headquarters. The race's fourth candidate, Amirhossein Ghazizadeh Hashemi, had around 1 million votes, Orf said.

Hemmati offered his congratulations on Instagram to Raisi early Saturday.

"I hope your administration provides causes for pride for the Islamic Republic of Iran, improves the economy and life with comfort and welfare for the great nation of Iran," he wrote.

On Twitter, Rezaei praised Khamenei and the Iranian people for taking part in the vote.

"God willing, the decisive election of my esteemed brother, Ayatollah Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, promises the establishment of a strong and popular government to solve the country's problems," Rezaei wrote.

The quick concessions, while not unusual in Iran's previous elections, signaled what semiofficial news agencies inside Iran had been hinting at for hours: That the carefully controlled vote had been a blowout win for Raisi amid the boycott calls.

As night fell Friday, turnout appeared far lower than in Iran's last presidential election in 2017. At one polling place inside a mosque in central Tehran, a Shiite cleric played soccer with a young boy as most of its workers napped in a courtyard. At another, officials watched videos on their mobile phones as state television blared beside them, offering only tight shots of locations around the country — as opposed to the long, snaking lines of past elections.

Balloting came to a close at 2 a.m. Saturday, after the government extended voting to accommodate what it called "crowding" at several polling places nationwide. Paper ballots, stuffed into large plastic boxes, were to be counted by hand through the night, and authorities said they expected to have initial results

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and turnout figures Saturday morning at the earliest.

"My vote will not change anything in this election, the number of people who are voting for Raisi is huge and Hemmati does not have the necessary skills for this," said Hediye, a 25-year-old woman who gave only her first name while hurrying to a taxi in Haft-e Tir Square after avoiding the polls. "I have no candidate here."

Iranian state television sought to downplay the turnout, pointing to the Gulf Arab sheikhdoms surrounding it ruled by hereditary leaders, and the lower participation in Western democracies. After a day of amplifying officials' attempts to get out the vote, state TV broadcast scenes of jam-packed voting booths in several provinces overnight, seeking to portray a last-minute rush to the polls.

But since the 1979 revolution overthrew the shah, Iran's theocracy has cited voter turnout as a sign of its legitimacy, beginning with its first referendum that won 98.2% support that simply asked whether or not people wanted an Islamic Republic.

The disqualifications affected reformists and those backing Rouhani, whose administration both reached the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers and saw it disintegrate three years later with then-President Donald Trump's unilateral withdrawal of America from the accord.

Voter apathy also has been fed by the devastated state of the economy and subdued campaigning amid months of surging coronavirus cases. Poll workers wore gloves and masks, and some wiped down ballot boxes with disinfectants.

If elected, Raisi would be the first serving Iranian president sanctioned by the U.S. government even before entering office over his involvement in the mass execution of political prisoners in 1988, as well as his time as the head of Iran's internationally criticized judiciary — one of the world's top executioners.

It also would put hard-liners firmly in control across the government as negotiations in Vienna continue to try to save a tattered deal meant to limit Iran's nuclear program at a time when Tehran is enriching uranium at its highest levels ever, though it still remains short of weapons-grade levels. Tensions remain high with both the U.S. and Israel, which is believed to have carried out a series of attacks targeting Iranian nuclear sites as well as assassinating the scientist who created its military atomic program decades earlier.

Whoever wins will likely serve two four-year terms and thus could be at the helm at what could be one of the most crucial moments for the country in decades — the death of the 82-year-old Khamenei. Speculation already has begun that Raisi might be a contender for the position, along with Khamenei's son, Mojtaba.

## Hit by a ransomware attack? Your payment may be deductible

By ALAN SUDERMAN and MARCY GORDON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For Sat PMs

As ransomware attacks surge, the FBI is doubling down on its guidance to affected businesses: Don't pay the cybercriminals. But the U.S. government also offers a little-noticed incentive for those who do pay: The ransoms may be tax deductible.

The IRS offers no formal guidance on ransomware payments, but multiple tax experts interviewed by The Associated Press said deductions are usually allowed under law and established guidance. It's a "silver lining" to ransomware victims, as some tax lawyers and accountants put it.

But those looking to discourage payments are less sanguine. They fear the deduction is a potentially problematic incentive that could entice businesses to pay ransoms against the advice of law enforcement. At a minimum, they say, the deductibility sends a discordant message to businesses under duress.

"It seems a little incongruous to me," said Rep. John Katko, the top Republican on the House Committee on Homeland Security.

Deductibility is a piece of a bigger quandary stemming from the rise in ransomware attacks, in which cybercriminals scramble computer data and demand payment for unlocking the files. The government doesn't want payments that fund criminal gangs and could encourage more attacks. But failing to pay can have devastating consequences for businesses and potentially for the economy overall.

A ransomware attack on Colonial Pipeline last month led to gas shortages in parts of the United States.

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The company, which transports about 45% of fuel consumed on the East Coast, paid a ransom of 75 bitcoin — then valued at roughly \$4.4 million. An attack on JBS SA, the world's largest meat processing company, threatened to disrupt food supplies. The company said it had paid the equivalent of \$11 million to hackers who broke into its computer system.

Ransomware has become a multibillion-dollar business, and the average payment was more than \$310,000 last year, up 171% from 2019, according to Palo Alto Networks.

The companies that pay ransomware demands directly are well within their rights to claim a deduction, tax experts said. To be tax deductible, businesses expenses should be considered ordinary and necessary. Companies have long been able to deduct losses from more traditional crimes, such as robbery or embezzlement, and experts say ransomware payments are usually valid, too.

"I would counsel a client to take a deduction for it," says Scott Harty, a corporate tax attorney with Alston & Bird. "It fits the definition of an ordinary and necessary expense."

Don Williamson, a tax professor at the Kogod School of Business at American University, wrote a paper about the tax consequences of ransomware payments in 2017. Since then, he said, the rise of ransomware attacks has only strengthened the case for the IRS to allow ransomware payments as tax deductions.

"It's becoming more common, so therefore it becomes more ordinary," he said.

That's all the more reason, critics say, to disallow ransomware payments as tax deductions.

"The cheaper we make it to pay that ransom, then the more incentives we're creating for companies to pay, and the more incentives we're creating for companies to pay, the more incentive we're creating for criminals to continue," said Josephine Wolff, a cybersecurity policy professor at the Fletcher School of Tufts University.

For years, ransomware was more of an economic nuisance than a major national threat. But attacks launched by foreign cybergangs out of reach of U.S. law enforcement have proliferated in scale over the past year and thrust the problem of ransomware onto the front pages.

In response, top U.S. law enforcement officials have urged companies not to meet ransomware demands.

"It is our policy, it is our guidance, from the FBI, that companies should not pay the ransom for a number of reasons," FBI Director Christopher Wray testified this month before Congress. That message was echoed at another hearing this week by Eric Goldstein, a top official at the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency.

Officials warn that payments lead to more ransomware attacks. "We're in this boat we're in now because over the last several years people have paid the ransom," Stephen Nix, assistant to the special agent in charge at the U.S. Secret Service, said at a recent summit on cybersecurity.

It's unclear how many companies that pay ransomware payments avail themselves of the tax deductions. When asked at a congressional hearing whether the company would pursue a tax deduction for the payment, Colonial CEO Joseph Blount said he was unaware that was a possibility.

"Great question. I had no idea about that. Not aware of that at all," he said.

There are limits to the deduction. If the loss to the company is covered by cyber insurance — something that also is becoming more common — the company can't take a deduction for the payment that's made by the insurer.

The number of active cyber insurance policies jumped from 2.2 million to 3.6 million from 2016 to 2019, a 60% increase, according to a new report from the Government Accountability Office, Congress' auditing arm. Linked to that was a 50% increase in insurance premiums paid, from \$2.1 billion to \$3.1 billion.

The Biden administration has pledged to make curbing ransomware a priority in the wake of a series of high-profile intrusions and said it is reviewing the U.S. government's policies related to ransomware. It has not provided any detail about what changes, if any, it may make related to the tax deductibility of ransomware.

"The IRS is aware of this and looking into it," said IRS spokesperson Robyn Walker.

**Voting debate roils Washington but leaves many voters cold**

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By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

PLANO, Texas (AP) — Brenda Martinez, a 19-year-old community college student, thinks the government should help immigrant students more. Donald Huffman is worried about turning 50 next week with no work available because the federal government is delaying the pipelines he usually helps build. Binod Neupane, who just moved to Texas to research alternative fuels, wants action on climate change.

The three Texas voters have little in common politically other than one thing — none considers voting and election reform, the issue that has dominated partisan debate this year, a top priority.

As politicians from Austin to Washington battle over the practical aspects of how to run elections — clashing over details such as polling booth hours and the number of ballot drop boxes per county — many voters are disconnected from the fight. A passionate base of voters and activists on both sides may be intensely dialed in on the issue, but a disengaged middle is baffled at the attention.

“Unemployment, climate change — this stuff should be on the top of the list, not the voting thing,” said Neupane, 34.

That disconnect is now the challenge before Democrats, who are trying to marshal public support for federal legislation that would thwart a series of new state laws tightening election procedures. With rallies, ads, White House events and a certain-to-fail vote in the Senate next week, Democrats are aiming to fire up their voters around the issue, hoping their passions hold through next year’s midterms.

Republicans face their own pressures. Donald Trump’s false claims of massive fraud in the 2020 election have so eroded some GOP voters’ confidence that they say they won’t vote again. Meanwhile, the party’s push for additional restrictions runs the risk of driving away moderate voters.

That debate is still roiling in Texas, where the legislature is due to return to a special session to consider voting legislation. That comes after Texas Republicans, following the lead of Republican-controlled legislatures in more than a dozen states, tried to muscle through a sweeping elections bill that increased the power of partisan poll watchers, limited the power of local election officials and prevented voting on Sunday mornings when Black churchgoers traditionally flock to the polls. Democrats in the Texas House walked out in the final hours of the legislative session, depriving the GOP of the quorum needed to pass the bill.

Since then, advocacy groups have stepped up organizing and outreach. Former congressman and presidential candidate Beto O’Rourke has seized on the issue, holding rallies and knocking on doors to discuss voting, as he considers launching a campaign for governor. On Wednesday, Vice President Kamala Harris, the Biden administration’s point person on the voting debate, hosted the Texas Democrats at the White House.

“We have a great challenge before us and a fight, which is to fight for every American’s right — meaningful right — to vote,” Harris said as she was flanked by the Texas lawmakers.

But Harris’ message has yet to reach many back in the politically mixed suburbs north of Dallas, a potential battleground in next year’s midterm elections. The swath of comfortable, diversifying neighborhoods was once dominated by the GOP but is now politically divided.

As a heat wave this week brought fresh warnings of blackouts reminiscent of the electrical grid’s collapse during a February snowstorm, several voters were confused about why legislators are spending so much time on election issues.

“Making it difficult for people to vote, it’s just ridiculous,” said Marcin Mazurek, a 50-year-old construction worker who only started following politics during the Trump era because he was so outraged by the former president.

Of more than a dozen voters interviewed, only one brought up the issue unprompted: Nathan Nowasky, a retired certified public accountant, Texas native and lifelong Republican whom Trump drove out of the party. He cited the state voting bill as one of the reasons he and his wife were “thinking about moving elsewhere, because Texas is a political backwater.”

A self-professed news junkie, Nowasky was familiar with the conspiracy theories and false allegations about the 2020 election. He believes the Texas voting bill is fueled by those ideas and illustrates the political extremism that pushed him out of the GOP. “There’s conservative, and then there’s this,” Nowasky said.

The major political parties for years have fought furiously in the courts over the mechanics of elections.

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But rarely does the fight become a central part of the parties' pitch to voters. That changed when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, many states liberalized their voting laws to make it safer to vote and Trump seized on the changes as a source of fraud, triggering new state laws often billed as making it "hard to cheat."

"It's more of a live issue than it has been probably since the civil rights movement," Anna Greenberg, a Democratic pollster, said of voting rights. Still, she noted, voting remains relatively simple for most citizens. The voters most animated by the issue are those who believe the system is rigged against them or those who see a pattern of racial discrimination in new laws.

"There are lots of people keeping it on the agenda even if, for your average swing voter, it's not their No. 1 issue," Greenberg said.

Kevin Bivens is one of those voters who's paying attention to the issue. He followed the debate in the legislature carefully and was frustrated that Republicans brushed off Democrats' attempts for a compromise. He sees the push as the latest in a long line of racial injustice.

"As African Americans, it's nothing new to us," said Bivens, who said he is in his 50s and has lived in Texas for decades, acutely aware that he is both a political and racial minority. "We know we have no power over what's going on but our votes, and if you take that away from us ...," he said, trailing off.

In a December poll from The Associated Press-NORC, only 7% of voters listed voting laws as a top issue, though it gained disproportionate interest from Republicans, 14% of whom cited it.

Martinez, who's studying to teach English as a second language, is one of those people who hasn't thought much about voting. She cast her first vote for Biden in November, and neither she nor anyone else in her family had any issues or concerns. "Everything was fine," Martinez said. Martinez thinks it would be nice to vote by mail — something Texas makes difficult for most voters — but it's not an issue that drives her.

Voting may be a side issue for many, but it could still play a role in helping Democrats solidify the coalition they assembled last year. Barbara Van Hollenbeck is a longtime Republican who voted for Biden last year — but still voted for Republicans for the legislature and Congress. She says she wanted a counterbalance to the Democratic president. Now, Van Hollenbeck says she's most worried about climate change and the economy, but she's also confused and concerned about what the GOP-led legislature is doing with voting.

"Instead of punishing them, help them find a way to vote," she said of voters.

Andy Wojtovec came at the issue from the opposite end of the political spectrum. "The last election was like communism," said the 66-year-old Polish immigrant, who owns an air conditioning company and has cheered the lawmakers' voting changes. He claimed that Venezuela helped hack voting machines to hand the election to Biden — a common, discredited conspiracy theory in pro-Trump circles.

Huffman, the pipeline welder, also was suspicious about the election, "like everyone I know," he said. A Trump supporter, he is convinced the only reason the former president didn't win in a blowout was some kind of fraud.

But as he sat in a booth in a branch of the Texas fast food chain Whataburger, Huffman was despondent. Though he has real estate assets to help him, he hasn't worked in months. He says he doesn't know what he'll do now that the Biden administration has put a moratorium on new energy projects on federal land.

And, in a worrying sign for the GOP, he not only had not heard of the party's election push, but he also wasn't convinced there was anything politicians could do to prevent massive fraud from happening again.

"I probably won't ever vote again," Huffman said. "It feels like a waste of time."

## Fierce Capitol attacks on police in newly released videos

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

Videos released under court order provide a chilling new look at the chaos at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, including body camera footage that shows a man charging at a police officer with a flagpole and tackling him to the ground.

Federal judges ordered the release of the videos after media organizations, including The Associated Press, went to court to request that the Department of Justice provide access. The videos are being pre-

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sented as evidence in prosecutors' cases against three men charged with assaulting police.

The new videos show a Marine Corps veteran and former New York City police officer wielding a flagpole as he attacks police, as well as rioters crushing another officer into a door as he screams in pain. Still another video shows a New Jersey man punching an officer in the head.

The release comes at a time when Republican lawmakers in Washington increasingly try to downplay the siege, portraying the breach of the Capitol as a mostly peaceful protest despite the shocking violence that unfolded.

Supporters of former President Donald Trump fought past police lines to storm the building and interrupt the certification of President Joe Biden's election win over Trump.

The Justice Department has brought hundreds of criminal cases against the rioters. This week, a man linked to the antigovernment Three Percenters extremist movement was indicted on a new charge that he brought a semi-automatic handgun with him to the Capitol.

Body camera video released in the case against former New York City policeman Thomas Webster shows the man holding a flagpole and shouting profanities at officers standing behind a metal barricade. Webster pushes the barricade and swings toward an officer with the flagpole. There's a violent scuffle, the officer manages to take the flagpole away from the man, and Webster appears to tackle the officer to the ground.

Other images in court documents show Webster pinning the officer to the ground and grabbing at his face.

Webster's lawyer wrote in court documents seeking his release from jail while he awaits trial that his client got upset when he saw police using pepper spray on the crowd. The lawyer, James Monroe, wrote that "as a former U.S. Marine and a member of law enforcement, defendant's moral instinct was to protect the innocent."

Monroe said the officer provoked Webster by reaching across the barrier and punching him. The lawyer says Webster never actually struck the officer with the flagpole.

Other footage released in the case against Patrick McCaughey III, a Connecticut man charged with assault, show police wearing helmets and face shields gathered in a Capitol doorway as the crowd pushes aggressively forward and shouts at them.

At one point, Daniel Hodges of Washington's Metropolitan Police Department gets pinned against a door and a rioter rips off his mask. The mob shouts "heave ho" as it pushes forward. Hodges, whose mouth appears bloody, cries out as he's crushed between a riot shield and the door. McCaughey at one point points to Hodges and says "he's hurt," seemingly trying to alert the other officers. Hodges has recovered from his injuries.

An email seeking comment was sent to an attorney for McCaughey.

Democrats used the video of Hodges, which had been previously obtained by some media outlets, in their impeachment case against Trump accusing him of inciting the insurrection. The House impeached him — the second of his presidency — a week after the riot for telling his supporters that morning to "fight like hell" to overturn his defeat. The Senate acquitted him weeks later.

Footage released in a third case shows a man identified as Scott Fairlamb and others yelling at police as the officers walk through the crowd outside the Capitol. Fairlamb then shoves an officer and punches at his head, hitting his face shield. An email seeking comment was sent to Fairlamb's attorney.

Court documents filed this week also show another man, Guy Reffitt of Texas, has been indicted on new charges that he brought a rifle and handgun to Washington and carried the handgun onto Capitol grounds. He was arrested in January and previously pleaded not guilty to charges including obstruction of an official proceeding.

Reffitt's wife told authorities he's a member of a Three Percenters group, according to court documents. Prosecutors say Reffitt led a group of rioters up the Capitol steps and was stopped only after officers used pepper balls, impact projectiles and pepper spray.

An email seeking comment was sent to Reffitt's attorney on Friday.

More than 480 people are facing federal charges in the riot. Four have pleaded guilty so far, including a member of the Oath Keepers extremist group who has agreed to cooperate with investigators.

A 49-year-old Indiana grandmother is expected next week to become the first Jan. 6 person to be sen-



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tenced. Anna Morgan Lloyd is pleading guilty to a misdemeanor charge for entering the Capitol. Prosecutors are asking for a sentence of probation with community service and \$500 in restitution.

After the riot, Morgan Lloyd described it on Facebook as the "most exciting day of my life," according to prosecutors. She wrote in a letter to the judge filed in court that she didn't see any violence at the Capitol and was "shocked" when she returned to her hotel and saw the news coverage.

"At first it didn't dawn on me, but later I realized that if every person like me, who wasn't violent, was removed from that crowd, the ones who were violent may have lost the nerve to do what they did. For that I am sorry and take responsibility," she wrote.

The powerful video footage was made public as Senate Republicans have blocked a bipartisan inquiry into the insurrection and as an increasing number of House Republicans have defended the rioters and played down the violence of the day.

At a House Oversight and Reform hearing Tuesday, several Republicans questioned Democrats' efforts to examine the attack and said they should instead be focused on issues like border security or COVID-19 restrictions.

Wisconsin Rep. Glenn Grothman grilled FBI Director Christopher Wray on whether some of those who were arrested for illegally entering the Capitol were in fact innocent. Arizona Rep. Paul Gosar repeated his arguments that a Trump supporter who was shot and killed by police while breaking into the House chamber, Ashli Babbitt, was "executed."

At a hearing last month, GOP Rep. Andrew Clyde of Georgia said one video feed of the rioters looked like they were on a "normal tourist visit."

Also Tuesday, 21 House Republicans voted against giving congressional medals of honor to Capitol Police and Metropolitan Police to thank them for their service that day. Dozens of those officers suffered injuries, including chemical burns, brain injuries and broken bones as the rioters overran them and broke into the building.

## Federal holiday pressures companies to give Juneteenth off

By ALEXANDRA OLSON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The declaration of Juneteenth as a federal holiday is putting the pressure on more U.S. companies to give their employees the day off, accelerating a movement that took off last year in response to the racial justice protests that swept the country.

Hundreds of top companies had already pledged last year to observe Juneteenth in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd and the national reckoning on racism that followed.

But most private companies take their cues from the federal government — the country's largest employer — in drawing up their holiday calendars. President Joe Biden signed legislation Thursday establishing Juneteenth as a federal holiday commemorating the end of slavery, following the passage of a bipartisan Congressional bill.

More than 800 companies have publicly pledged to observe Juneteenth, according to HellaCreative, a group of Black creative professionals in the San Francisco Bay Area that launched a campaign last year to build corporate support for making the June 19th an official holiday. That is nearly double the number of companies that had joined the pledge last year.

Patagonia, the outdoor apparel retailer, announced that all of its U.S. stores will be closed Saturday, and its corporate offices would be closed Monday. Other brands, including Target, J.C. Penney and Best Buy had pledged last year to adopt Juneteenth as a paid holiday, though they are keeping stores open. Several major banks have said employees will get a floating paid day off.

Many companies, however, had little time to shuffle their holiday calendars. Some offered employees a regular paid day off or promised to consider adding it to their calendars next year.

Nasdaq said its U.S. exchange would stay open Friday and Monday "to maintain a fair and orderly market and to minimize operational risks" but that it would discuss its future holiday schedule with regulators and companies.

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State governments that had not already declared Juneteenth a holiday were also scrambling to respond to the new federal holiday. Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker announced that all state government offices will be closed Friday, superseding a state law signed just two days earlier that would have made June 19 a state holiday next year.

Even though federal holidays like Thanksgiving are widely observed, private companies are under no obligation to offer any particular day off. But since many workers don't know that, they will likely wonder why they are not getting a paid holiday for Juneteenth this year, said Carolina Valencia, a vice president in research firm Gartner's human resource practice.

In an era of increasing employee activism and a fierce competition for talent, Valencia said she expects the number of companies offering Juneteenth to surge next year after employers have had more time to react.

"Many employees are going to resent their employers for not giving them the holiday because they don't understand that it's a complicated process," Valencia said.

But she said the devil will be in the details. Many companies will likely offer it as a floating day off, making it unlikely that Juneteenth will become a national holiday on par with July 4th or Memorial Day anytime soon.

And many notable companies have not joined the movement. Walmart, which employs 300,000 Black hourly workers and is the country's largest private sector employer, told The Associated Press in an email that its employees are free to use paid time off to observe any holiday they wish, including Juneteenth.

Raheem Thompson, a social media specialist for a retail company, said he was disappointed he didn't get a paid day off. Instead, he said the company sent an email acknowledging the federal holiday and pledging to consider time off in the future.

"It's kind of bare minimum," said Thompson, who lives in Atlanta but didn't want his company named for fear of repercussions. "I don't think as people of color, we really care that you acknowledge it via email ... that doesn't really have any true meaning to it."

Juneteenth commemorates June 19, 1865, when Union soldiers brought the news of freedom to enslaved Black people in Galveston, Texas — two months after the Confederacy had surrendered. That was also about 2 1/2 years after the Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves in the Southern states.

Black Americans, especially in Texas, have long celebrated Juneteenth with church picnics and speeches. But the federal holiday declaration brought it to the attention of some Americans for the first time.

Jamie Hickey, founder small fitness company in Philadelphia, said he had never heard of Juneteenth until he heard about it last week on the radio. Then, his four trainers started talking about it at lunch, and he asked them if it was important to them. He decided to make it a day off next year since it was too late to cancel on clients this year.

"They said, 'are you serious, you are just now hearing about this?'" said Hickey, who founded Truism Fitness last year after the chain fitness company where he and he other trainers worked closed because of the pandemic.

Hickey said he took the lead from his employees because, as a white man, he worried about jumping into trends only to be accused of tokenism.

"I don't want to fake. If you are fake, you get caught and it's a million times worse," Hickey said.

That's a major concern among even the biggest employees, said Erin Eve, CEO of Ichor Strategies, which advises firm on connecting businesses with their communities. Eve said companies will get called out by their employees, customers and even investors if they take steps like observing Juneteenth without investing in Black communities or looking at their own internal diversity.

Still, Eve said the declaration of Juneteenth as a federal holiday will make companies that don't follow suit increasingly look bad.

"For current employees, it will reaffirm a dissonance with their values," Eve said.

**Western heat wave threatens health in vulnerable communities**

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By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Extreme temperatures like the ones blistering the American West this week aren't just annoying, they're deadly.

The record-breaking temperatures this week are a weather emergency, scientists and health care experts say, with heat responsible for more deaths in the U.S. than all other natural disasters combined. With more frequent and intense heat waves likely because of climate change and the worst drought in modern history, they say communities must better protect the vulnerable, like homeless people and those who live in ethnically and racially diverse low-income neighborhoods.

"This heat has an important effect on people and their health," said Dr. Suganya Karuppana, chief medical director at the Valle del Sol community health clinics in Arizona.

People — along with plants and animals — need cooler temperatures at night to recover from the stress of high heat, scientists and doctors said. But with overnight temperatures in the 90s, that's not happening.

Karuppana noted that many people she sees may have no car and have to take public transportation in the Phoenix heat, walking through neighborhoods with few trees and waiting at bus and light rail stops with no or little shade. Some people live in poorly ventilated mobile homes or without air conditioning. Or they may work outside in the sun as construction workers or landscapers.

Phoenix has been baking in temperatures above 115 degrees (46 Celsius) all week. The high Friday hit a record 117 degrees (47 Celsius) after breaking another Thursday at 118 degrees (48 Celsius). Daily records also were set this week in places across the U.S. West, such as Nevada and California, including 128 degrees (53 Celsius) in Death Valley on Thursday.

Those who are vulnerable to high temperatures include the very young, the very old and people with heart or kidney disease, ailments that disproportionately affect communities of color.

"We are activated for Phoenix and monitoring it closely," said Nicolette Louissaint, executive director of the Washington nonprofit Healthcare Ready, which was founded after Hurricane Katrina to help communities deal with natural disasters.

Louissaint said her organization has helped in heat emergencies by funding cooling centers that offer bottled water and shade or arrange transportation for older people without cars who need dialysis or heart checkups.

"Extreme heat really exacerbates those kind of serious medical conditions," she said. "It's tough on people who don't have a lot of money."

Phoenix and other local governments around the Southwest remind people on social media to drink lots of water, stay out of the sun if possible and take frequent breaks on hot days. They warn people to not leave children or pets in vehicles, and they work with nonprofits like the Salvation Army to open facilities that allow people to cool off.

The rising risks of the heat became painfully clear three years ago when 72-year-old Stephanie Pullman died at her Phoenix-area home after Arizona's largest electric utility turned off her service for failure to pay \$51. A coroner listed "environmental heat exposure" as one of the causes of her 2018 death.

It led to a series of moratoriums on overdue electrical bills in Arizona that continued through the end of last year amid the coronavirus pandemic. The utility, Arizona Public Service, says it has suspended service disconnections and waived late fees through Oct. 15.

The county that includes Phoenix has reported three heat-related deaths as of Saturday, with an additional 20 fatalities being investigated as possibly caused by high temperatures.

Heat-related deaths in Maricopa County have been rising dramatically in recent years, with 323 reported last year, the highest ever recorded. The highest rates were reported among Black people and Native Americans. About 80% of those who died were men.

People living on the street are especially at risk. The Maricopa County medical examiner has said heat was a primary or secondary cause in the death of 146 homeless people last year, when the summer was the hottest ever recorded in Phoenix.

Scientists say the number of heat deaths in the U.S. West and the world over were only expected to rise.

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As average temperatures rise worldwide, heat is becoming more extreme, said Gerald Meehl, senior scientist with the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado.

"As the average climate warms up from increasing human-produced greenhouse gases, we are seeing more intense, more frequent and longer lasting heat waves," Meehl said.

A study last month estimated the number of heat deaths each year that can be attributed to human-caused global warming. It included about 200 U.S. cities and found more than 1,100 deaths a year from climate change-caused heat, many of them in the East and Midwest, where many people don't have air conditioning or are not acclimated to hot weather.

Joellen Russell, climate science professor at the University of Arizona in Tucson, said the Southwest is an early example of what will hit the rest of the nation later when it comes to the dangers of heat extremes caused by global warming.

"I think we'd better hurry up," she said. "Our kids are counting on us."

## Declaration of Juneteenth holiday sparks scramble in states

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Congress and President Joe Biden acted with unusual swiftness this week in approving Juneteenth as a national holiday. That shifted the battle to the states, where the holiday faces a far less enthusiastic response.

Nearly all states recognize Juneteenth in some fashion, at least on paper. But most have been slow to move beyond proclamations issued by governors or resolutions passed by lawmakers. So far, at least nine states have designated it in law as an official paid state holiday — Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Texas, Virginia and Washington. All but Texas, where the events of the original Juneteenth took place, acted after the killing of George Floyd last year.

This year alone, legislation to make Juneteenth a paid state holiday died in Florida and South Dakota and stalled in Ohio, all states controlled by Republicans. But even in Maryland, where Democrats control the Legislature, a Juneteenth bill passed one chamber only to die in the other.

The effort recalls the drawn-out battles over recognizing Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the last time the federal government designated a new holiday. That legislation, finally passed in 1983, scheduled the holiday to begin three years later. It set off bitter debates in the states over whether to enact their own holidays.

Only a handful of states headed into Thursday's signing of the federal Juneteenth law with the paid holiday on the books to be celebrated in 2021. The governors of Washington, Illinois, Louisiana and Maine, by contrast, all signed more recent laws that were set to kick in for 2022, when June 19 falls on a Sunday.

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards closed state offices for a half-day Friday, only a few days after he signed Juneteenth legislation, and Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker was among governors who changed their states' start dates to 2021.

In another twist, many states have laws that automatically recognize all federal holidays — even those not named in state statute.

Such was the case in Ohio, where Republican Gov. Mike DeWine issued a Juneteenth statement late Thursday and closed state offices in the manner of a hastily called school snow day. West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice also declared Juneteenth a state holiday at a last-minute virtual press conference. The governors of Connecticut and Florida issued their Juneteenth proclamations Friday.

Ohio state Sen. Hearcel Craig, a Columbus Democrat who is Black, said codifying Juneteenth in state law remains essential. He is sponsoring a bill that passed the Ohio Senate unanimously last session, but time ran out for consideration in the House. Republicans control both of Ohio's legislative chambers.

Georgia law caps the number of state holidays at 12, meaning Juneteenth could be added only if another holiday were dropped. In other states, including Oregon, whether Juneteenth becomes a paid holiday will depend on union negotiations.

In Mississippi, Democratic state Rep. Bryant Clark has filed bills to make Juneteenth a state holiday for about 15 years. All have stalled.

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Clark said Friday that he will keep trying. He noted that Mississippi legislators took four years to create a state holiday honoring King after the federal holiday was established. In 1987, Mississippi legislators revised a holiday named for Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee that had been in place for decades, creating a joint holiday honoring both Lee and King.

Two other Mississippi lawmakers said Friday that they plan to file a bill to eliminate Confederate Memorial Day as a state holiday and replace it with Juneteenth.

"Sometimes progress is extremely slow," said Clark, a member of the Legislative Black Caucus. Several communities in Mississippi already hold Juneteenth celebrations. One is the capital city of Jackson, where the population is more than 80% Black.

Minnesota has recognized the third Saturday in June as Juneteenth since 1996, but the statute only obligates the governor to issue a proclamation each year honoring the observance. That's a common situation in the U.S., where the holiday is sometimes called Emancipation Day.

Calls by Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, a Democrat, to make it an official state holiday have failed to gain traction so far in the Legislature, the only one in the nation where Democrats control one chamber and Republicans control the other.

Hawaii had been one of only three states left not to recognize the holiday at all. A bill marking Juneteenth was signed there Wednesday and in a second holdout state, North Dakota, in April. Neither created a paid state holiday, however.

South Dakota still does not officially recognize the holiday, but Gov. Kristi Noem has issued a proclamation celebrating it. The governor does not have the power to make it an official state holiday — that must be done through the Legislature. A bill to recognize it as a working holiday fell a handful of votes short of passing this year.

It was defeated by an unusual coalition of Democrats who felt the day should be recognized as a full-fledged holiday, rather than a working holiday, and conservative lawmakers who opposed recognizing the holiday at all.

Vaney Hariri, a Black business owner who organized a march after Floyd's death, said that vote showed the entrenched attitude of many lawmakers who "would turn down a day off rather than celebrate your freedom from pain and captivity."

In Tennessee, an attempt to designate Juneteenth as a state holiday stalled last year after some Republican lawmakers raised questions about the \$647,000 price tag. Others questioned why it was necessary when the state already recognizes Aug. 8 as Emancipation Day.

Arizona dragged its feet for years on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, until it became the only state that did not have some sort of holiday inspired by the slain civil rights leader.

That long delay cost Arizona a Super Bowl and millions of dollars in tourism revenue from canceled conventions and other events. It also inspired a boycott by singer Stevie Wonder and a protest song by Public Enemy called "By the Time I Get to Arizona."

Gov. Bruce Babbitt, a Democrat, issued an executive order in 1986 declaring Martin Luther King Jr. Day a state holiday. Babbitt's Republican successor, Evan Mecham, rescinded the order a year later, saying Babbitt exceeded his authority.

Mecham's action led to years of divisive political maneuvering, including a ballot measure that ended in defeat for King holiday supporters, before Arizona voters ultimately approved the holiday in 1992.

Warren H. Stewart Sr., pastor of the Institutional Baptist Church in Phoenix, helped lead a grassroots campaign to establish Arizona's King holiday. But he said he did not rejoice when Biden signed the Juneteenth law. He fears it will distract from legislation on vital issues such as voting rights and police reform.

"I see it as a distraction," Stewart said, "almost as a handout of some candy, but the meat of justice is still going to be denied."

## **EXPLAINER: What is the Catholic Communion controversy?**

By PETER SMITH Associated Press

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A committee of U.S. Catholic bishops is getting to work on a policy document that has stirred controversy among their colleagues before a word of it has even been written.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops overwhelmingly approved the drafting of a document "on the meaning of the Eucharist in the life of the Church" that some bishops hope will be a rebuke for politicians who support abortion rights but continue to receive Communion.

The 168-55 vote to proceed, vehemently opposed by a minority of bishops amid impassioned debate during virtual meetings, came despite appeals from the Vatican for a more cautious and collegial approach.

Here's a look at what has happened and what lies ahead:

## IS THIS AIMED AT PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN?

The chairman of the USCCB's doctrine committee, Bishop Kevin Rhoades, says no decisions have been made on the final contents of the proposed document but that it will not mention Biden or other individuals by name. And it will offer guidelines, not establish a mandatory national policy.

However, multiple bishops on both sides acknowledge the political significance of the document and say it is unavoidably about the president. Supporters say a strong rebuke of Biden is needed because of his recent actions protecting and expanding abortion access, while opponents warn that in doing so they risk being perceived as a partisan force.

"It's quite clear that for a lot of the bishops, a lot of the impact is political," said William Cavanaugh, professor of Catholic studies at DePaul University in Chicago. "You have some of them saying this is not about Joe Biden, but in the comments the bishops made in that Zoom session, a lot of them mentioned Biden and gave the game away."

Biden is the nation's second Catholic president and the first to assume office since abortion became a major political issue. He supports the legality of abortion, while Catholic bishops have long made its abolition a foremost policy goal.

The issue is particularly salient with Biden because he has long been very public in his devotion, fluently speaking the language of faith and regularly attending Mass even on busy days like his own inauguration and the recent G-7 summit in Britain.

## WHAT DO BIDEN AND OTHER CATHOLIC DEMOCRATS SAY?

"That's a private matter, and I don't think that's going to happen," the president said when asked at the White House on Friday.

Sixty Catholic Democrats in Congress signed a letter to the bishops saying: "We solemnly urge you to not move forward and deny this most holy of all sacraments, the source and the summit of the whole work of the gospel over one issue."

They said they're inspired by Catholic social teaching to serve the neediest and to promote alternatives to abortion. They added that the "weaponizing" of Communion for those who support abortion rights is inconsistent, since bishops haven't targeted Catholic politicians who back other policies that contradict church teachings, such as the death penalty or hard-line immigration and asylum stances.

## WHAT IS THE BISHOPS' POSITION ON THAT?

In a document titled *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, last updated in 2019, the U.S. bishops lay out their official teachings on the political responsibilities of Catholics. It cites a wide range of policy concerns — but also prioritizes abortion.

"The threat of abortion remains our preeminent priority because it directly attacks life itself, because it takes place within the sanctuary of the family, and because of the number of lives destroyed," it reads. "At the same time, we cannot dismiss or ignore other serious threats to human life and dignity such as racism, the environmental crisis, poverty and the death penalty."

The bishops also deplore the "inhumane treatment" and family separations of immigrants, as well as "gun violence, xenophobia, capital punishment and other issues that affect human life and dignity."

But it's much less common for bishops to discuss denying Communion on issues other than abortion.

## CAN THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCE BAR BIDEN FROM COMMUNION?

No. Only the local bishop where he's going to church can do that. Cardinal Wilton Gregory, the archbishop

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of Washington, has made clear that Biden is welcome to receive Communion at churches in the archdiocese.  
WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The USCCB's Committee on Doctrine will spend the next months preparing a draft document.

At the bishops' next national meeting in November, expected to be conducted in person in Baltimore, bishops will have a chance to offer amendments. For it to be adopted, the final draft would require approval by two-thirds of bishops, and then by the Vatican itself.

During the debate at this week's meeting, several bishops suggested meeting regionally in the next few months to thrash out their differences face-to-face.

Rhoades indicated that his committee could start work soon on noncontroversial sections and await input from the regional meetings on the more contentious parts.

## 11 U.S. mayors commit to develop reparations pilot projects

By ADAM BEAM Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Eleven U.S. mayors — from Los Angeles to tiny Tullahassee, Oklahoma — have pledged to pay reparations for slavery to a small group of Black residents in their cities, saying their aim is to set an example for the federal government on how a nationwide program could work.

The mayors had no details on how much it would cost, who would pay for it or how people would be chosen. All of those details would be worked out with the help of local commissions comprised of representatives from Black-led organizations set up to advise the mayor of each city. But the mayors say they are committed to paying reparations instead of just talking about them.

"Black Americans don't need another study that sits on a shelf," said St. Louis Mayor Tishaura Jones, the city's first Black female mayor and a member of the group. "We need decisive action to address the racial wealth gap holding communities back across our country."

The effort comes as Juneteenth, which marks the end of slavery in the United States, has become a federal holiday. President Joe Biden signed a bill Thursday that was passed by Congress to set aside Juneteenth, or June 19, as a holiday.

Slavery officially ended in the United States in 1865 with the adoption of the 13th amendment to U.S. Constitution. But its effects have lingered far beyond that, contributing to disparities in wealth and health between white and Black populations.

Since 1989, lawmakers in Congress introduced a bill that would form a commission to study and develop reparations proposals in the United States. But it has never passed. Last year, California became the first state to set up its own reparations commission. That group held its first meeting earlier this month.

Friday's announcement marks the largest city-led effort at paying reparations to date, but it isn't the first. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted in March to appoint a 15-member African American Reparations Advisory Committee. That same month, the City Council of Evanston, Illinois, voted to pay \$400,000 to eligible Black households, part of a pledge to spend \$10 million over the next 10 years. Qualifying households would get \$25,000 to use for things like home repair or putting a down payment on property.

Last year, the City Council in Asheville, North Carolina, voted to approve reparations in the form of investments in areas of disparity for Black residents.

This group of mayors, dubbed Mayors Organized for Reparations and Equity (MORE), is led by Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and Denver Mayor Michael Hancock. Their stated goal is for these reparations programs to "serve as high-profile demonstrations for how the country can more quickly move from conversation to action on reparations for Black Americans," according to the group's website.

"Let me be clear: Cities will never have the funds to pay for reparations on our own," Garcetti said during a news conference on Friday to announce the group. "When we have the laboratories of cities show that there is much more to embrace than to fear, we know that we can inspire national action as well."

It's similar to the aim of another group of mayors who have experimented with guaranteed income programs, where a small group of low-income people receive cash payments each month with no restrictions on how they can spend it. The first such program was set up in Stockton, California, by former mayor

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Michael Tubbs, who is listed as an "emeritus member" of the reparations group.

The other mayors are Jorge Elorza of Providence, Rhode Island; Steve Adler of Austin, Texas; Steve Schewel of Durham, North Carolina; Esther Manheimer of Asheville, North Carolina; Quinton Lucas of Kansas City; Darrell Steinberg of Sacramento, California; Melvin Carter of St. Paul, Minnesota; and Keisha Currin of Tullahassee, Oklahoma.

Tullahassee — a small town of fewer than 200 people in northeast Oklahoma — is the oldest of the surviving all-Black towns in the states that were founded after the U.S. abolished slavery. Many of the first Black people to live there had been enslaved by Native American tribes that had allied with the Confederacy during the Civil War.

"Slavery has played a huge part in my family and in my community," Currin said. "This program is going to show our community that we care."

## UN assembly condemns Myanmar coup, calls for arms embargo

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — In a rare move, the U.N. General Assembly on Friday condemned Myanmar's military coup and called for an arms embargo against the country in a resolution that demonstrated widespread global opposition to the junta and demanded the restoration of the country's democratic transition.

Supporters had hoped the 193-member U.N. General Assembly would approve the resolution unanimously by consensus, but Belarus called for a vote. The measure was approved with 119 countries voting "yes," Belarus voting "no" and 36 countries abstaining including Myanmar's neighbors China and India, along with Russia.

U.N. special envoy Christine Schraner Burgener warned the General Assembly after the vote that "the risk of a large-scale civil war (is) real."

"Time is of the essence," she said. "The opportunity to reverse the military takeover is narrowing and regional threat increasing."

The resolution was the result of lengthy negotiations by a so-called Core Group including the European Union and many Western nations and the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations known as ASEAN, which includes Myanmar.

A U.N. diplomat said there was an agreement with ASEAN to seek consensus. But in the vote, its members were divided. Myanmar, whose U.N. ambassador supports the ousted democratic government, voted "yes" along with Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam and the Philippines while Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Brunei abstained.

Even though the resolution didn't get the overwhelming support its backers hoped for, the action by the General Assembly, while not legally binding, reflects international condemnation of the Feb. 1 coup that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's party from power and put her under arrest along with many government leaders and politicians, as well as strong opposition to the military crackdown on protesters demanding an end to the army's takeover.

The resolution's approval follows calls for more aggressive U.N. action by many countries and Myanmar's U.N. Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun, who has been charged with treason by the military junta. He urged the international community "to take the strongest possible action to immediately end the military coup."

The more powerful U.N. Security Council, whose resolutions are legally binding, has adopted several statements on Myanmar, including condemning the use of violence against peaceful protesters, calling on the military to restore the democratic transition and "exercise utmost restraint" and "on all sides to refrain from violence." But it has never been able to condemn the coup or authorize an arms embargo or other sanctions because of an almost-certain veto by China, and possibly Russia.

The coup reversed years of slow progress toward democracy in Myanmar, which for five decades languished under strict military rule that led to international isolation and sanctions. As the generals loosened their grip, culminating in Aung San Suu Kyi's rise to leadership in 2015 elections, the international community responded by lifting most sanctions and pouring investment into the country. The coup took place



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following November elections, which Suu Kyi's party won overwhelmingly and the military contends were marred by fraud.

The resolution calls on Myanmar's military junta to restore the country's democratic transition, condemns its "excessive and lethal violence" since the coup, and calls on all countries "to prevent the flow of arms into Myanmar."

The resolution also calls on the armed forces to immediately and unconditionally release President Win Myint, State Counsellor Suu Kyi and other government officials and politicians detained after the coup, "and all those who have been arbitrarily detained, charged or arrested.

"We must continue to call for maximum restraint and condemn all forms of violence," Schraner Burgener stressed. "Inclusive political dialogue is urgently needed."

EU Ambassador Olof Skoog said the resolution "sends a strong and powerful message," calling it "the broadest and most universal condemnation of the situation in Myanmar to date."

"It delegitimizes the military junta, condemns its abuse and violence against its own people and demonstrates its isolation in the eyes of the world," he said. "The U.N. community of nations has expressed resounding support to the people of Myanmar -- that their human rights and freedoms must be protected, and that their democratically elected leaders must be released from detention."

Richard Gowan, U.N. director of the International Crisis Group, said he is "only aware of three previous General Assembly resolutions condemning coups in this way since the end of the Cold War" -- Haiti in 1991, Burundi in 1993 and Honduras in 2009.

The assembly has called for arms embargoes and sanctions, including on Israel and South Africa during the Cold War, Gowan said, but "this is a rare call to stop arms flows, and Western diplomats deserve credit for getting a fairly clear and firm call to halt arms supplies to Myanmar, especially as ASEAN members had doubts about such language."

Assessing the impact of the resolution, Gowan told The Associated Press, "The junta will shrug this resolution off, but it will make it harder for them to try to normalize their relations with the wider world, and present the coup as a fait accompli."

"The General Assembly has effectively warned the generals that if they keep hold of power, they are resigning themselves to pariah status indefinitely ... (and) has sent a clear message that U.N. members are not willing to sweep the coup under the rug," Gowan said.

Schraner Burgener, the U.N. envoy, told the assembly: "Inclusive political dialogue is urgently needed."

"We must continue to call for maximum restraint and condemn all forms of violence," she said.

The resolution calls on Myanmar to swiftly implement a five-point action plan adopted at an ASEAN summit on April 24. It plan calls for stopping violence, establishing a constructive dialogue of the parties, appointment of an ASEAN special envoy as mediator, ensuring delivery of humanitarian aid and the mediator's visit to Myanmar.

The resolution also addresses another major issue facing Myanmar's military — its relations with ethnic minorities, especially Rohingya Muslims in northern Rakhine state. Over 700,000 Rohingya fled a military crackdown in in 2017 and are now in camps in Bangladesh.

The General Assembly expressed concern over the human rights of the Rohingya and other minorities, singling out the denial of citizenship to almost all Rohingyas "and reiterating the responsibility of the Myanmar armed forces to respect the human rights of all persons in Myanmar."

It recalled the mandate of the U.N.'s Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, which is collecting evidence of the most serious international crimes. In a report in 2019, it said Myanmar's government should be held responsible in international legal forums for alleged genocide against the Rohingya.

The resolution called on Myanmar's armed forces to immediately facilitate a visit by Schraner Burgener.

## Apathy greets Iran presidential vote dominated by hard-liner

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iranians voted Friday in a presidential election dominated by Supreme

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Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's hard-line protege after the disqualification of his strongest competition, fueling apathy that left some polling places largely deserted despite pleas to support the Islamic Republic at the ballot box.

Opinion polling by state-linked organizations, along with analysts, indicated that judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi — who already is under U.S. sanctions — was the front-runner in a field of only four candidates. Former Central Bank chief Abdolnasser Hemmati is running as the moderate candidate but hasn't inspired the same support as outgoing President Hassan Rouhani, who is term-limited from seeking the office again.

As night fell, turnout appeared far lower than in Iran's last presidential election in 2017. At one polling place inside a mosque in central Tehran, a Shiite cleric played soccer with a young boy as most of its workers napped in a courtyard. At another, officials watched videos on their mobile phones as state television blared beside them, offering only tight shots of locations around the country — as opposed to the long, snaking lines of past elections.

Balloting came to a close at 2.a.m. Saturday, after the government extended voting to accommodate what it called "crowding" at several polling places nationwide. Paper ballots, stuffed into large plastic boxes, were to be counted by hand through the night, and authorities said they expected to have initial results and turnout figures Saturday morning at the earliest.

"My vote will not change anything in this election, the number of people who are voting for Raisi is huge and Hemmati does not have the necessary skills for this," said Hedyeh, a 25-year-old woman who gave only her first name while hurrying to a taxi in Haft-e Tir Square after avoiding the polls. "I have no candidate here."

Iranian state television sought to downplay the turnout, pointing to the Gulf Arab sheikhdoms surrounding it ruled by hereditary leaders and the lower participation in Western democracies. After a day of amplifying officials' attempts to get out the vote, state TV broadcast scenes of jam-packed voting booths in several provinces overnight, seeking to portray a last-minute rush to the polls.

But since the 1979 revolution overthrew the shah, Iran's theocracy has cited voter turnout as a sign of its legitimacy, beginning with its first referendum that won 98.2% support that simply asked whether or not people wanted an Islamic Republic.

The disqualifications affected reformists and those backing Rouhani, whose administration both reached the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers and saw it disintegrate three years later with then-President Donald Trump's unilateral withdrawal of America from the accord. Former hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, also blocked from running, said on social media he'd boycott the vote.

Voter apathy also has been fed by the devastated state of the economy and subdued campaigning amid months of surging coronavirus cases. Poll workers wore gloves and masks, and some wiped down ballot boxes with disinfectants.

If elected, Raisi would be the first serving Iranian president sanctioned by the U.S. government even before entering office over his involvement in the mass execution of political prisoners in 1988, as well as his time as the head of Iran's internationally criticized judiciary — one of the world's top executioners.

It also would put hard-liners firmly in control across the government as negotiations in Vienna continue to try to save a tattered deal meant to limit Iran's nuclear program at a time when Tehran is enriching uranium at its highest levels ever, though it still remains short of weapons-grade levels. Tensions remain high with both the U.S. and Israel, which is believed to have carried out a series of attacks targeting Iranian nuclear sites as well as assassinating the scientist who created its military atomic program decades earlier.

Whoever wins will likely serve two four-year terms and thus could be at the helm at what could be one of the most crucial moments for the country in decades — the death of the 82-year-old Khamenei. Speculation already has begun that Raisi might be a contender for the position, along with Khamenei's son, Mojtaba.

Khamenei cast the first vote from Tehran, urging the public to "go ahead, choose and vote."

Raisi, wearing a black turban that identifies him in Shiite tradition as a direct descendant of Islam's Prophet Muhammad, voted from a mosque in southern Tehran. The cleric acknowledged in comments afterward that some may be "so upset that they don't want to vote."

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"I beg everyone, the lovely youths, and all Iranian men and women speaking in any accent or language from any region and with any political views, to go and vote and cast their ballots," Raisi said.

But few appeared to heed the call. There are more than 59 million eligible voters in Iran, a nation of over 80 million people. However, the state-linked Iranian Student Polling Agency has estimated a turnout will be just 44%, which would be the lowest since the revolution. Officials gave no turnout figures Friday, though results could come Saturday.

Fears about a low turnout have some warning Iran may be turning away from being an Islamic Republic — a government with elected civilian leadership overseen by a supreme leader from its Shiite clergy — to a country more tightly governed by its supreme leader, who already has final say on all matters of state and oversees its defense and atomic program.

"This is not acceptable," said former President Mohammad Khatami, a reformist who sought to change the theocracy from the inside during eight years in office. "How would this conform to being a republic or Islamic?"

For his part, Khamenei warned of "foreign plots" seeking to depress turnout in a speech Wednesday. A flyer handed out on the streets of Tehran by hard-liners echoed that and bore the image of Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani, who was killed in a U.S. drone strike in 2020. A polling station was set up by Soleimani's grave on Friday.

Some voters appeared to echo that call.

"We cannot leave our destiny in the hands of foreigners and let them decide for us and create conditions that will be absolutely harmful for us," said Tehran voter Shahla Pazouki.

Also hurting a moderate like Hemmati is the public anger aimed at Rouhani over the collapse of the deal, despite ongoing talks in Vienna to revive it. Iran's already-ailing economy has suffered since, with double-digit inflation and mass unemployment.

"It is useless," said Ali Hosseini, a 36-year-old unemployed resident in southern Tehran, about voting. "Anyone who wins the election after some time says he cannot solve problem of the economy because of intervention by influential people. He then forgets his promises and we poor people again remain disappointed."

## **Biden objects to raising gas tax to pay for infrastructure**

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House made clear Friday that President Joe Biden was opposed to letting the federal gasoline tax rise at the rate of inflation to help pay for an infrastructure package that a bipartisan group of 21 senators is trying to craft.

The gas tax increase was part of an early package that called for \$579 billion in new spending on roads, bridges, rail and public transit. It's unclear if it will make the final cut and the White House seems intent on making sure it doesn't.

"The President has been clear throughout these negotiations: He is adamantly opposed to raising taxes on people making less than \$400,000 a year," White House spokesman Andrew Bates said. "After the extraordinarily hard times that ordinary Americans endured in 2020 — job losses, shrinking incomes, squeezed budgets — he is simply not going to allow Congress to raise taxes on those who suffered the most."

The federal gas tax stands at 18.4 cents a gallon and has not increased since 1993. It helps pay for highways and mass transit programs around the country. Congress has traditionally relied on the user-pay principle to pay for road and bridge work, but is increasingly relying on general funds to accomplish that task. Lawmakers from both parties are wary of attack ads accusing them of supporting a hike in gas prices.

Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden, the Democratic chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, said that indexing the gas tax to inflation was a nonstarter for him.

"It's another hit on working people," Wyden said.

Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, said a gas tax hike is a "Republican thing."

"Democrats want to fund this by taxing people (earning) \$400,000," Brown said.

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The White House is expecting to hear from the senators crafting the infrastructure package on Monday. It is scaled back from Biden's proposal, but Democrats are preparing to move other parts of Biden's agenda in separate legislation that they could pass using a tool that requires only a simple majority for approval.

The bipartisan plan offers about \$579 billion in new spending, including \$110 billion on roads and highways, \$66 billion on passenger and freight rail and \$48 billion on public transit. An additional \$47 billion would go toward efforts to fight climate change and there is money for electric vehicle charging stations.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., described the infrastructure bill being negotiated a good start, but most Democrats don't believe it does enough on climate or on the amount of revenue raises, and doesn't address priorities like paid family leave. So they will proceed on two tracks that include a reconciliation package going beyond what's in the infrastructure bill.

## **Biden promotes milestone of 300M vaccine shots in 150 days**

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden took a cautious victory lap Friday in his quest to bring the COVID-19 pandemic under control, announcing that 300 million vaccine shots have been administered in the 150 days since he took office.

Biden credited scientists, companies, the American people and his whole-of-government effort. The president noted that the widespread vaccination campaign had set the stage for most Americans to have a relatively normal summer as businesses reopen and employers hire.

"We're heading into a very different summer compared to last year," the president said. "A bright summer. Prayerfully, a summer of joy."

But as Biden marks one milestone, he is in danger of failing to meet another: his target to have 70% of American adults at least partially vaccinated by July Fourth, in a little over two weeks.

Overall, about 168 million American adults, or 65.1% of the U.S. population 18 years and older, have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine as of Friday, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The pace of new vaccinations in the U.S. has dropped significantly from a high of nearly 2 million per day about two months ago, jeopardizing Biden's ability to hit the 70% mark.

The White House said its whole-of-government approach to the vaccination effort has put the virus in retreat, which in turn has brought COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths to their lowest levels in more than a year. But Biden noted in his remarks that some communities in states with lower vaccination rates are seeing cases and hospitalizations increase.

The administration is in the middle of a monthlong blitz to combat vaccine hesitancy and the lack of urgency some people feel to get the shots, particularly in the South and Midwest.

CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said Friday that she expects the delta variant of the coronavirus will become the dominant strain in the U.S. That strain has become dominant in Britain after it was first detected in India.

During an appearance on ABC's "Good Morning America," she told Americans who get their shots that "you'll be protected against this delta variant."

As part of the administration's vaccination push, Vice President Kamala Harris traveled to Atlanta on Friday to tour a pop-up COVID-19 vaccination site at Ebenezer Baptist Church, where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a pastor until his assassination in 1968. The current senior pastor is U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock.

Harris also spoke at a COVID-19 vaccination mobilization event at Clark Atlanta University, a historically Black school. She told students they "have the power to end this pandemic" by giving people information about the multitude of resources, such as free car rides and child care, that are available to help them get vaccinated.

In Fulton County, Georgia, where Atlanta is located, 49% of residents have received at least one shot. Statewide, it is 42%, Harris said.

"Getting vaccinated is about building the power of community," she said. "Getting vaccinated is about

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building the power of our country.”

The Biden administration insists that even if the 70% vaccination goal is unmet, it will have little effect on the overall U.S. recovery, which is already ahead of where Biden said it would be months ago.

Biden wants to celebrate Independence Day as a “summer of freedom” from the virus.

Earlier this week, the White House announced plans to host first responders, essential workers and service members and their families on the South Lawn for a cookout and to watch the fireworks over the National Mall.

More than 1,000 guests are expected for what will be one of the largest events of Biden’s presidency.

## US Catholic bishops OK steps toward possible rebuke of Biden

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

U.S. Catholic bishops overwhelmingly approved the drafting of a “teaching document” that many of them hope will rebuke Catholic politicians, including President Joe Biden, for receiving Communion despite their support for abortion rights.

The decision, vehemently opposed by a minority of bishops, came despite appeals from the Vatican for a more cautious and collegial approach to the divisive issue. And it raises questions of how closely the bishops will be able to cooperate with the Biden administration on issues such as immigration and racial injustice.

The result of the vote — 168 in favor and 55 against — was announced Friday near the end of a three-day meeting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops that was held virtually. The bishops had cast their votes privately on Thursday after several hours of impassioned debate.

Supporters of the measure said a strong rebuke of Biden is needed because of his recent actions protecting and expanding abortion access, while opponents warned that such action would portray the bishops as a partisan force during a time of bitter political divisions across the country.

As a result of the vote, the USCCB’s doctrine committee will draft a statement on the meaning of Communion in the life of the church that will be submitted for consideration at a future meeting, probably an in-person gathering in November. To be formally adopted, the document would need support of two-thirds of the bishops.

One section of the document is intended to include a specific admonition to Catholic politicians and other public figures who disobey church teaching on abortion and other core doctrinal issues.

Bishop Donald Hying of Madison, Wisconsin, said during Thursday’s debate that he speaks with many people who are confused by a Catholic president who advances “the most radical pro-abortion agenda in history,” and action from the bishops’ conference is needed.

“They’re looking for direction,” Hying said.

Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego countered that the USCCB would suffer “destructive consequences” from a document targeting Catholic politicians.

“It would be impossible to prevent the weaponization of the Eucharist,” McElroy said. He warned that the initiative would weaken the bishops’ ability to speak on issues such as poverty, racism and the environment.

Biden, who attends Mass regularly, says he personally opposes abortion but doesn’t think he should impose that position on Americans who feel otherwise. He’s taken several executive actions during his presidency that were hailed by abortion-rights advocates.

During a White House event on the COVID-19 pandemic Friday, Biden was asked about the possibility that the bishops would approve a document suggesting that his abortion stance should disqualify him from receiving Communion.

“That’s a private matter, and I don’t think that’s going to happen,” the president said without elaborating.

The chairman of the USCCB doctrine committee, Bishop Kevin Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, said no decisions have been made on the final contents of the proposed document. He said bishops who are not on the committee will have chances to offer input, and the final draft will be subject to amendments before it is put up to a vote.

Rhoades also said the document would not mention Biden or other individuals by name and would offer

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guidelines rather than imposing a mandatory national policy.

That would leave decisions about Communion for specific churchgoers up to individual bishops and archbishops. Cardinal Wilton Gregory, the archbishop of Washington, has made clear that Biden is welcome to receive Communion at churches in the archdiocese.

Gregory was one of nearly 70 bishops who signed a letter to USCCB president and Los Angeles Archbishop José Gomez urging him to delay the Communion discussion until the bishops convene in person, but that request was not granted.

"The choice before us at this moment," Gregory said during Thursday's debate, "is either we pursue a path of strengthening unity among ourselves or settle for creating a document that will not bring unity but may very well further damage it."

The USCCB has identified the fight against abortion as its "preeminent" priority. But the bishops' collective stance is at odds with the views of many Catholics in the U.S.

In recent polls by the Pew Research Center, about 56% of U.S. Catholics surveyed said abortion should be legal in most or all cases, and 67% said Biden should be allowed to receive Communion during Mass.

On the latter issue, Pew found a sharp partisan divide: 55% of Catholics who identify with the Republican Party said Biden's abortion stance should disqualify him from Communion, compared with 11% of Catholics who lean Democratic.

Sixty Catholic Democratic members of the House of Representatives issued a statement Friday urging the USCCB to drop any effort to exclude politicians from Communion over the abortion issue, and calling it contradictory.

"No elected officials have been threatened with being denied the Eucharist as they support and have supported (other) policies contrary to the church teachings," the statement said, "including supporting the death penalty, separating migrant children from their parents, denying asylum to those seeking safety in the United States."

David Campbell, a political science professor at the University of Notre Dame, said the bishops' vote "reflects the fact that the same fault lines dividing all American voters also divide American Catholics — and Catholic leaders."

"The more attention the bishops focus on the Communion question, the more the church will be perceived as being in the political fray, which risks driving some Catholics away," Campbell said via email.

## **U.S. general: 'wildfire of terrorism' on march in Africa**

By MOSA'AB ELSHAMY Associated Press

TAN-TAN, Morocco (AP) — A senior U.S. general warned Friday that the "wildfire of terrorism" is sweeping across a band of Africa and needs the world's attention. He spoke at the close of large-scale U.S.-led war games with American, African and European troops.

The African Lion war games, which lasted nearly two weeks, stretched across Morocco, a key U.S. ally, with smaller parts held in Tunisia and Senegal. The annual drills were skipped last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gen. Stephen J. Townsend, head of the U.S. Africa Command, praised the work accomplished in joint operations, and painted a dark picture of threats besetting parts of Africa.

"I am concerned about the security situation across a band of Africa," from the Sahel region in the west to the Horn of Africa, Townsend told reporters. He noted deadly attacks by al-Qaida- and Islamic State-linked jihadis and al-Shabab. "All of them are on the march," he said.

African neighbors are helping governments deal with the threat, but, he added, "all of that does not seem to be sufficient enough to stop what I call ... (the) wildfire of terrorism that's sweeping that region."

African Lion saw more than 7,000 troops from seven countries and NATO carry out air, land and sea exercises together.

"It has helped our interoperability, our joint capabilities, and provided readiness and a good opportunity to build cohesion across the forces," said Maj. Gen. Andrew Rohling, commander of the U.S. Army's Southern European Task Force Africa. He spoke Friday in the desert town of Tan-Tan.

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There was a hitch at the start, with Spain withdrawing from the war games citing budgetary reasons. Press reports attributed the move to Spain's poor relations with Morocco, a former key partner.

The two countries have been at loggerheads since Spain took in the leader of the Polisario Front independence movement — Morocco's No.1 enemy — for COVID-19 treatment in a Spanish hospital earlier this year. The Polisario is fighting for independence for the Western Sahara, a vast region that Morocco claims as its own.

During the exercise, Morocco held some airborne operations near the Western Sahara and not far from Polisario refugee camps in Tindouf, in neighboring Algeria.

"Those activities have been perfectly conducted and agreed upon between the two militaries," Moroccan Brigadier Gen. Mohammed Jamil told The Associated Press.

Townsend, asked whether any action spilled into the disputed Western Sahara, was categorical: "I can confirm it did not."

The participating countries in African Lion were the U.S., Morocco, Tunisia, Senegal, Italy, The Netherlands and Britain. Observers also attended from countries including Egypt, Qatar, Niger and Mali.

## Fierce Capitol attacks on police in newly released videos

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

Videos released under court order provide a chilling new look at the chaos at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, including body camera footage that shows a man charging at a police officer with a flagpole and tackling him to the ground.

Federal judges ordered the release of the videos after media organizations, including The Associated Press, went to court to request that the Department of Justice provide access. The videos are being presented as evidence in prosecutors' cases against three men charged with assaulting police.

The new videos show a Marine Corps veteran and former New York City police officer wielding a flagpole as he attacks police, as well as rioters crushing another officer into a door as he screams in pain. Still another video shows a New Jersey man punching an officer in the head.

The release comes at a time when Republican lawmakers in Washington increasingly try to downplay the siege, portraying the breach of the Capitol as a mostly peaceful protest despite the shocking violence that unfolded.

Supporters of former President Donald Trump fought past police lines to storm the building and interrupt the certification of President Joe Biden's election win over Trump.

The Justice Department has brought hundreds of criminal cases against the rioters. This week, a man linked to the antigovernment Three Percenters extremist movement was indicted on a new charge that he brought a semi-automatic handgun with him to the Capitol.

Body camera video released in the case against former New York City policeman Thomas Webster shows the man holding a flagpole and shouting profanities at officers standing behind a metal barricade. Webster pushes the barricade and swings toward an officer with the flagpole. There's a violent scuffle, the officer manages to take the flagpole away from the man, and Webster appears to tackle the officer to the ground.

Other images in court documents show Webster pinning the officer to the ground and grabbing at his face.

Webster's lawyer wrote in court documents seeking his release from jail while he awaits trial that his client got upset when he saw police using pepper spray on the crowd. The lawyer, James Monroe, wrote that "as a former U.S. Marine and a member of law enforcement, defendant's moral instinct was to protect the innocent."

Monroe said the officer provoked Webster by reaching across the barrier and punching him. The lawyer says Webster never actually struck the officer with the flagpole.

Other footage released in the case against Patrick McCaughey III, a Connecticut man charged with assault, show police wearing helmets and face shields gathered in a Capitol doorway as the crowd pushes aggressively forward and shouts at them.

At one point, Daniel Hodges of Washington's Metropolitan Police Department gets pinned against a door and a rioter rips off his mask. The mob shouts "heave ho" as it pushes forward. Hodges, whose mouth

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appears bloody, cries out as he's crushed between a riot shield and the door. McCaughey at one point points to Hodges and says "he's hurt," seemingly trying to alert the other officers. Hodges has recovered from his injuries.

An email seeking comment was sent to an attorney for McCaughey.

Democrats used the video of Hodges, which had been previously obtained by some media outlets, in their impeachment case against Trump accusing him of inciting the insurrection. The House impeached him — the second of his presidency — a week after the riot for telling his supporters that morning to "fight like hell" to overturn his defeat. The Senate acquitted him weeks later.

Footage released in a third case shows a man identified as Scott Fairlamb and others yelling at police as the officers walk through the crowd outside the Capitol. Fairlamb then shoves an officer and punches at his head, hitting his face shield. An email seeking comment was sent to Fairlamb's attorney.

Court documents filed this week also show another man, Guy Reffitt of Texas, has been indicted on new charges that he brought a rifle and handgun to Washington and carried the handgun onto Capitol grounds. He was arrested in January and previously pleaded not guilty to charges including obstruction of an official proceeding.

Reffitt's wife told authorities he's a member of a Three Percenters group, according to court documents. Prosecutors say Reffitt led a group of rioters up the Capitol steps and was stopped only after officers used pepper balls, impact projectiles and pepper spray.

An email seeking comment was sent to Reffitt's attorney on Friday.

More than 480 people are facing federal charges in the riot. Four have pleaded guilty so far, including a member of the Oath Keepers extremist group who has agreed to cooperate with investigators.

A 49-year-old Indiana grandmother is expected next week to become the first Jan. 6 person to be sentenced. Anna Morgan Lloyd is pleading guilty to a misdemeanor charge for entering the Capitol. Prosecutors are asking for a sentence of probation with community service and \$500 in restitution.

After the riot, Morgan Lloyd described it on Facebook as the "most exciting day of my life," according to prosecutors. She wrote in a letter to the judge filed in court that she didn't see any violence at the Capitol and was "shocked" when she returned to her hotel and saw the news coverage.

"At first it didn't dawn on me, but later I realized that if every person like me, who wasn't violent, was removed from that crowd, the ones who were violent may have lost the nerve to do what they did. For that I am sorry and take responsibility," she wrote.

The powerful video footage was made public as Senate Republicans have blocked a bipartisan inquiry into the insurrection and as an increasing number of House Republicans have defended the rioters and played down the violence of the day.

At a House Oversight and Reform hearing Tuesday, several Republicans questioned Democrats' efforts to examine the attack and said they should instead be focused on issues like border security or COVID-19 restrictions.

Wisconsin Rep. Glenn Grothman grilled FBI Director Christopher Wray on whether some of those who were arrested for illegally entering the Capitol were in fact innocent. Arizona Rep. Paul Gosar repeated his arguments that a Trump supporter who was shot and killed by police while breaking into the House chamber, Ashli Babbitt, was "executed."

At a hearing last month, GOP Rep. Andrew Clyde of Georgia said one video feed of the rioters looked like they were on a "normal tourist visit."

Also Tuesday, 21 House Republicans voted against giving congressional medals of honor to Capitol Police and Metropolitan Police to thank them for their service that day. Dozens of those officers suffered injuries, including chemical burns, brain injuries and broken bones as the rioters overran them and broke into the building.

## **Palestinians call off 1M dose vaccine exchange with Israel**

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press



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JERUSALEM (AP) — The Palestinian Authority called off an agreement whereby Israel would transfer 1 million doses of coronavirus vaccines to it in exchange for a similar number later this year, hours after the deal was announced on Friday.

The Palestinians said the doses, which Israel began shipping to the occupied West Bank, are too close to expiring and do not meet their standards. In announcing the agreement, Israel had said the vaccines “will expire soon” without specifying the date.

Palestinian officials had come under heavy criticism on social media after the agreement was announced, with many accusing them of accepting subpar vaccines and suggesting they might not be effective.

There was no immediate comment from Israel, which had largely shut down for the weekly Sabbath.

Israel said Friday it would transfer around 1 million doses of soon-to-expire coronavirus vaccines to the Palestinian Authority in exchange for a similar number of doses the Palestinians expect to receive later this year.

Israel, which has fully reopened after vaccinating some 85% of its adult population, has faced criticism for not sharing its vaccines with the 4.5 million Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza.

The disparity has played out across the globe as the bulk of vaccines went to wealthy countries. As those countries have made progress containing their own outbreaks, they have recently begun pledging supplies for poorer countries that were left behind for months.

The new Israeli government, which was sworn in on Sunday, said it would transfer Pfizer vaccines that are close to expiring, and that the Palestinian Authority would reimburse it with a similar number of vaccines when it receives them from the pharmaceutical company in September or October. Up to 1.4 million doses could be exchanged, the Israeli government said in a statement.

“We will continue to find effective ways to cooperate for the benefit of people in the region,” Foreign Minister Yair Lapid tweeted after the deal was announced.

COGAT, the Israeli military body that coordinates civilian affairs in the occupied territories, said it had coordinated the delivery of the first 100,000 doses to the West Bank on Friday.

The Palestinians portrayed the agreement differently, saying Pfizer had suggested the transfer as a way of speeding up its delivery of 4 million doses that the PA had already paid for in an agreement reached directly with the drug company.

“This is not an agreement with Israel, but with the Pfizer company,” Palestinian Health Minister Mai Alkaila said earlier Friday, before the deal was called off.

At a press conference Friday evening, she said health officials who inspected the vaccines found they “did not meet standards and so we decided to return them.”

Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh ordered the cancellation of the agreement and the return of the vaccines to Israel, his spokesman said. Ibrahim Milhim said the Palestinians would not accept “about-to-expire” vaccines from Israel, citing the official Israeli statement.

Vaccines from Pfizer, authorized in the U.S. in December, typically have a six-month shelf life. It wasn’t immediately clear when the 1 million batch that Israel was to give the Palestinians was produced.

An Israeli security official said the batch of vaccines that were transferred on Friday are to expire in two weeks. The official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media, said further shipments were planned in intervals also several weeks ahead of expiration.

Israel has carried out one of the most successful vaccination programs in the world, allowing it to fully reopen businesses and schools. This week, authorities lifted the requirement to wear masks in public, one of the last remaining restrictions.

Rights groups have said that Israel, as an occupying power, is obliged to provide vaccines to the Palestinians. Israel denies having such an obligation, pointing to interim peace agreements reached with the Palestinians in the 1990s.

Those agreements say the PA, which has limited autonomy in parts of the occupied West Bank, is responsible for health care but that the two sides should cooperate to combat pandemics. Israel has offered vaccines to the more than 100,000 Palestinians from the occupied West Bank who work inside Israel, as

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well as Palestinians in east Jerusalem.

Gaza is ruled by the Islamic militant group Hamas, which is considered a terrorist organization by Israel and Western countries. Israeli officials have suggested linking any supply of vaccines to Gaza to the return of two Israeli captives and the remains of two soldiers held by Hamas.

The PA has said it is acquiring its own supplies through agreements with private companies and a World Health Organization program designed to aid needy countries.

To date, around 380,000 Palestinians in the West Bank and around 50,000 in Gaza have been vaccinated. More than 300,000 infections have been recorded in the two territories, including 3,545 deaths.

Israel captured the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians want a state in all three territories. There have been no substantive peace talks in more than a decade.

## In Iran's subdued election, many voters appear to stay home

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — As Iranian state TV showed people streaming to cast their ballots Friday and news anchors praised them for coming out to vote, very different scenes played out on Tehran's streets, where many polling places appeared relatively empty.

Amid rising anger and apathy over a presidential vote tipped in favor of Ebrahim Raisi, the hard-line judiciary chief cultivated by Iran's supreme leader, the election atmosphere was distinctly subdued.

In past elections, long lines snaked out of polling stations. Cars and minibuses zigzagged through the capital's chaotic streets blaring campaign slogans. Banners too big to miss championed the various candidates and blanketed buildings.

But this year, the streets were calm, traffic was light and the typical zeal was absent even from state television, which offered only tight shots of people putting paper ballots into boxes. Few, if any, other voters could be seen in the background.

"It is useless," said Ali Hosseini, a 36-year-old unemployed resident in southern Tehran, about the exercise of voting. "Anyone who wins the election after some time says he cannot solve problem of the economy because of intervention by influential people. He then forgets his promises and we poor people again are disappointed."

Throng of reporters packed Tehran's turquoise-domed Hosseini Ershad institute, photographing officials and ordinary Iranians casting ballots. The images of journalists pushing and jostling in the polling place were carried by local media and international broadcasters.

But that scene was at odds with what people saw at 16 different polling stations across Tehran, where lines were short and no more than eight voters at a time could be seen casting ballots. Some polls remained virtually deserted throughout the day — a stark contrast to ice cream shops and restaurants nearby. Of two dozen voters interviewed at various stations, more than half said they'd voted for Raisi. Listless poll workers listened to state radio, looked at their phones or chatted calmly.

While the government's turnout figures weren't expected until Saturday, the state-linked Iranian Student Polling Agency earlier this week estimated a turnout of just above 40%, which would be the lowest since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Signs of anxiety over turnout began to emerge at the highest levels of Iran's leadership days before polls opened. Fearing a boycott that might undermine the credibility of the theocratic system, officials across the political spectrum — from the powerful hard-line Revolutionary Guard to relatively moderate outgoing President Hassan Rouhani — urged people to vote. In an unprecedented televised speech on the final day of campaigning, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned sternly of "foreign plots" to keep voters home and described participation as a way to show defiance toward the West amid heightened tensions.

And yet, despite the official warnings and admonishment from the news media, many Iranians struggled to see the point in voting. The country's clerical vetting body allowed only Raisi and a few other low-profile candidates, mostly hard-liners, on the ballot. The main moderate contender, former Central Bank chief Abdolnasser Hemmati, lacks the support base required to rally the masses. All their campaigns dealt with

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similar generalities: helping the unemployed, improving the economy, boosting Iran's self-sufficiency.

"None of the candidates are trustworthy," said Nasrin, a 31-year-old accountant in central Tehran who declined to give her last name for fear of reprisals.

In the last election in 2017, she voted for Rouhani, whose administration struck Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, granting Iran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program. But three years later, then-U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew America from the accord and returned crushing sanctions, triggering the collapse of the Iranian riyal and destroying Rouhani's forecasts of an economic boom.

"I heard similar promises for a better life and more roles for women in past elections, but no change happened on the ground," Nasrin said.

Another passerby in a middle-class Tehran district, 23-year-old Rojin Ahmadi, offered a similarly grim view of the candidates.

"None of them dared to offer a plan to show they would bring the country into normalcy," she said, adding that she wasn't voting.

Public frustration with the status quo has swelled under Iran's mounting crises: global isolation, unprecedented U.S. sanctions and the coronavirus pandemic, which has killed over 82,600 Iranians — the highest death toll in the Middle East. But faith in the power of voting to change anything also had suffered badly.

The elimination of Rouhani allies and prominent reformists startled even high-ranking officials. Analysts describe this election as the least competitive in the Islamic Republic's history. Demoralized critics have mounted boycott calls on social media. Former hard-line populist President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, barred from running a second time, seized on popular anger by repeating his decision to stay home for the vote. Rouhani, who is term limited, expressed regret over the disqualifications of reformists as he cast his ballot, hinting that a low turnout was a foregone conclusion.

"I wish we didn't have so many problems and saw more turnout today," he lamented.

As the conflict over whether to vote played out, Raisi supporters did not need much convincing. The cleric appeals to some impoverished Iranians for his anti-corruption campaign and outspoken criticism of the West. The U.S. Treasury Department sanctioned him in 2019 over his involvement in the mass execution of political prisoners in 1988, at the end of the Iran-Iraq war, and his time as chief of Iran's internationally criticized judiciary.

"He's clergy," said Niloufar Mohammadi, a 19-year-old law student, explaining why she voted for Raisi. "Influential people listen to him."

## Lawmakers mark Juneteenth by reviving 'abolition amendment'

By TERRY TANG Associated Press

As the nation this week made Juneteenth a federal holiday, honoring the end of the enslavement of Black people, lawmakers are reviving calls to end a loophole in the Constitution that allowed another form of slavery — forced labor for those convicted of some crimes — to thrive.

Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley and Georgia Rep. Nikema Williams reintroduced legislation Thursday to revise the 13th Amendment, which bans enslavement or involuntary servitude except as a form of criminal punishment. That exception, which has been recognized since 1865, has led to the common practice of forced prison labor.

Social justice advocates say it created generations of Black families touched by mass incarceration and poverty and that the ramifications are still being felt today. Juneteenth seemed like the appropriate time to address this "huge piece of systemic racism in the middle of our Constitution," Merkley told The Associated Press.

"At the moment that we are celebrating, if you will, the 13th Amendment and the end of slavery and its eventual announcement ... we should at the same time recognize that the 13th Amendment was flawed," Merkley said. "It enabled states to arrest people for any reason, convict them and put them back into slavery."

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The amendment's loophole for criminal punishment encouraged former Confederate states, after the Civil War, to devise ways to maintain the dynamics of slavery. They used restrictive measures known as the "black codes," laws targeting Black people for benign interactions from talking too loudly to not yielding on the sidewalk. Those targeted would end up in custody for these minor actions, and would effectively be enslaved again.

The so-called "abolition amendment" was introduced as a joint resolution in December. Mostly supported by Democrats in both the House and Senate, it failed to gain traction before the session's end. The hope this time around, Merkley said, is to ignite a national movement.

The issue is important to Williams, a Black woman who grew up in the South. She hopes this legislation won't be viewed through the prism of money and what the loss of prison labor would mean. Instead, she says, the history of the prison system and its relationship to people of color must be viewed in a "people-centered way."

"Our people have already been in chains and enslaved because of money," Williams said. "We have to make sure that we are truly moving forward and not using money as a crutch of why we're continuing to perpetuate sins of our nation's founding and our nation's history."

One group that has long been part of the movement is Worth Rises, a criminal justice advocacy group helping with the legislation's rollout. The amendment's clause has significant repercussions today, says Bianca Tylek, Worth Rises' executive director. Incarcerated workers make at most pennies on the dollar for their contributions, she says, and they lack recourse if they get hurt working or have to work when sick.

"We're talking about people who can be beaten for not working. People can be denied calls and visits, contact with their family," Tylek said. "People can be put into solitary confinement. People can take hits on their long-term record."

Jorge Renaud, national criminal justice director for LatinoJustice and a parolee, said those punishments happened to him when he couldn't get through some jobs. He spent much of his 27 years in Texas state prisons doing hard labor like picking cotton, chopping down trees and grading roads. Texas does not pay jailed workers.

For Renaud, 64, what was worse than no pay was not having much sense of self-worth.

"It's not just the choice to work. It's the choice to do anything," he said. "We live in a country that prides itself on individuality. ... It's impressed upon you over and over again that you are worthless and you belong to the state."

Advocates of the bill note that it targets forced labor and not prison work programs, which are voluntary.

"What we're saying," Tylek said, "is the value of that work must be demonstrated and people must not be forced to work against their will."

In Renaud's experience, prison labor was also something often done without racial equity. White incarcerated workers often were assigned less labor-intensive tasks like running the prison library or refurbishing computers. But their Black and Latino counterparts got kitchen and laundry duty. He noticed a similar trend when he gave some legislators a tour of a prison unit three years ago.

"The jobs that might prepare you for something out in the free world or are technology based ... are still reserved for whites," Renaud said.

More than 20 states still include similar clauses involving human bondage or prison labor in their own governing documents, which date to the 19th century abolition of slavery. Nebraska and Utah, which are represented by GOP senators, were two of the first to amend their constitutions for the very same issue last year through voter-approved initiatives. Only Colorado came earlier, removing such language through a ballot measure in 2018.

Merkley is optimistic that his Republican colleagues will ultimately support the legislation.

"Nothing about this should be partisan," Merkley said. "I think every American should be about ending slavery in our Constitution."

Williams, too, does not want this to be painted as a partisan issue.

"I am willing to work with you as long as you are willing to work around making sure that everyone in

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this country — regardless of their background, their ZIP code, or their bank account — has access to the full promise of America," she said. "That includes making sure we rid involuntary servitude in this country in our Constitution."

The 13th Amendment grew from President Abraham Lincoln's determination that the Emancipation Proclamation did not do enough to abolish slavery, according to historians. While the Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves in the South in 1863, it wasn't enforced in many places until after the end of the Civil War two years later. Confederate soldiers surrendered in April 1865, but word didn't reach the last enslaved black people until June 19, when Union soldiers brought the news of freedom to Galveston, Texas. That day was dubbed Juneteenth.

Meanwhile, Lincoln proposed a constitutional amendment to dismantle the institution of slavery once and for all. The Senate passed the 13th Amendment in 1864, and the House followed in early 1865, barely two months before Lincoln's assassination. The amendment was then ratified by the states.

Constitutional amendments require approval by two-thirds of the House and Senate, as well as ratification by three-quarters of state legislatures. They are also rare.

Tylek, of Worth Rises, hopes other lawmakers will see that an exception to slavery bans is unacceptable. "It's a huge stain on our culture, on our Constitution, on our nation to say 'No slavery except,'" Tylek said. "We have to be able to say no slavery — no exceptions."

## Bourbon tourism shaking off pandemic slump in Kentucky

By BRUCE SCHREINER Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — With tourists flocking to distilleries, concerns about a pandemic hangover for Kentucky's world-famous bourbon industry are quickly evaporating.

A \$19 million tourist center that Heaven Hill Distillery opened just days ago in the heart of the state's bourbon country is already overflowing — with reservations filling up quickly to learn about whiskey-making and sample its spirits, including its flagship Evan Williams whiskey.

It's a similar story for the numerous other distilleries in the region that last spring were temporarily closed to visitors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. More than a year later, the businesses are facing such overwhelming demand for tours that one industry official has started encouraging people to call ahead or check tour availability online before pulling off the highway.

Starting last summer, some distilleries began allowing limited numbers of visitors in accordance with virus restrictions. With capacity limits now lifted, the attractions are gearing up for a full resurgence of guests, many from outside Kentucky.

"We saw it coming, but I don't think we saw it coming this quick," said Kentucky Distillers' Association President Eric Gregory.

"We were a hot destination before COVID cooled us off considerably," he added. "But now we're getting back to the point where people want to get out, they want to have fun."

Gregory predicted that bourbon tourism will quickly rebound to pre-pandemic levels.

"I think next year will be more of a normal year and if this trend continues, I think it will be another record-setting year," he said.

Bourbon is an \$8.6 billion industry in Kentucky, where 95% of the world's supply is crafted, according to the association. About 9.3 million barrels of bourbon were aging in the state last year, or more than two barrels for every person living in Kentucky. And bourbon tourism has become a big business, driven in part by a surge in enthusiasm overseas.

Spirits companies invested huge sums into new or expanded visitors' centers to play up the industry's heritage and allow guests to soak in the sights and smells of bourbon making. Kentucky Bourbon Trail visitors spend, on average, between \$400 to \$1,200 per trip, Gregory said. More than 70% of visitors come from outside Kentucky.

To help visitors plan trips, the organization is promoting a new Bourbon Trail Passport and Field Guide, a 150-page guide to participating distilleries, with cocktail recipes and suggested itineraries.

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In Bardstown, where Heaven Hill opened its tourist center, the return of travelers will spin off considerably more spending at restaurants, stores and motels, said Dixie Hibbs, a former mayor.

The picturesque town, about 40 miles (64 kilometers) southeast of Louisville, is so entwined with the industry that the smell of locally crafted bourbon wafts into downtown.

"Most people will tell you that's the smell of money," Hibbs said.

After years of constant growth, bourbon tourism plunged during the pandemic. Visitors took about 587,000 tours last year at distilleries on the Kentucky Bourbon Trail and the Kentucky Bourbon Trail Craft Tour, down 66% from 2019 when stops topped 1.7 million, according to KDA. The craft tour features smaller distilleries springing up across the Bluegrass state, while the Kentucky Bourbon Trail showcases the sector's biggest producers.

While most distilleries have reopened for tours, some still aren't allowing visitors into "front line" areas where bourbon is produced, Gregory said. For guests allowed into production areas, chances are they'll be asked to wear a mask for that phase of the tour, he said.

Some distilleries remain closed to tours. That includes industry giant Jim Beam, which is overhauling its visitor experience with plans to reopen in the fall at its flagship distilling operation in Clermont, said company spokesperson Emily Bryson York.

At Maker's Mark, both tour sizes and the number of tours will increase starting in mid-July at its distillery in Loretto, said Rob Samuels, the brand's managing director.

For visitors unable to join a tour, Maker's Mark and other distilleries offer tastings of their products. They can order cocktails or perhaps a meal if the distillery has a restaurant. And they can walk the distillery grounds and shop at the gift shop.

If a larger distillery is booked, visitors often can check out a smaller distillery nearby, Gregory said. Kentucky now boasts distilleries in 32 of its 120 counties, with more than a dozen others recently announced or under construction, he said.

Like his predecessors, Gov. Andy Beshear has become a fixture at events toasting the bourbon industry's growth. At Monday's opening of the Heaven Hill Bourbon Experience, Beshear said the visitor center gives people "one more great reason to visit Kentucky and experience the Kentucky Bourbon Trail."

The new tourist center is three times larger than Heaven Hill's previous Bardstown visitors' center and is part of a \$125 million investment by Heaven Hill that includes new barrel warehousing, bottling line and equipment upgrades.

Heaven Hill Brands President Max L. Shapira summed up the industry's relief in seeing tourists return.

"We are extremely pleased to be welcoming fans and visitors back to bourbon country to see, taste and learn about America's Native Spirit in a new way," he said.

## Study: Texas bases lead Army posts in risk of sexual assault

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Female soldiers at Army bases in Texas, Colorado, Kansas and Kentucky face a greater risk of sexual assault and harassment than those at other posts, accounting for more than a third of all active-duty Army women sexually assaulted in 2018, according to a new Rand Corp. study.

The study, released Friday, looked at Army incidents, and found that female soldiers at Fort Hood and Fort Bliss, both in Texas, faced the highest risk, particularly those in combat commands or jobs such as field artillery and engineering. And units with more frequent deployments to war also saw higher risk. Other bases with high risk were Fort Campbell in Kentucky, Fort Carson in Colorado and Fort Riley in Kansas, said the study which reviewed assault data from previous years.

Rand's study provides greater detail on the rates of sexual assault and misconduct across the Army, a chronic problem that military leaders have been struggling to combat. And it comes a year after the killing of Spc. Vanessa Guillén, who was missing at Fort Hood for about two months before her remains were found late last June.

Guillen was killed by a soldier, who her family says sexually harassed her, and who killed himself as police

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sought to arrest him. Her death put a spotlight on violence and leadership problems within the Army. The Rand report also confirmed one of the Army's conclusions about the impact of command climate, finding a lower risk of sexual misconduct in units with more positive supervisor scores.

The Fort Hood violence prompted an independent review which found that military leaders were not adequately dealing with high rates of sexual assault and harassment at the post. Christopher Swecker, the chairman of the review panel, told Congress that the base leaders were focused on military readiness and completely neglected the sexual assault prevention program. As a result, he said, lower-level unit commanders didn't encourage service members to report assaults, and in many cases were shaming victims.

According to the Rand study, the risk of assault for women at Fort Hood was nearly a third higher than the average risk faced by all women in the Army. Overall, Rand said that the risk across the Army varied widely depending on the female soldiers' base, unit, career field, age, and even whether they were at posts with a higher number of civilians.

For example, female soldiers in medical or personnel jobs have the lowest risk, while those in field artillery face the highest risk. Field artillery jobs were among some of the last Army combat specialties opened to women — coming in 2015. Other jobs that lagged behind were infantry, armor and special operations.

James A. Helis, director of the Army Resilience Directorate, said the study "sheds light on the environmental and occupational factors that contribute to the risk of sexual assault and sexual harassment for our soldiers and, in turn, will help inform future prevention and response efforts."

The report used earlier Rand studies as well as data from Defense Department anonymous surveys in 2016 and 2018 that seek information about sexual assaults and harassment that may or may not have been formally reported. And it compared that to other military personnel and demographic data.

Soldiers assigned to the Washington, D.C. region, meanwhile, have some of the lowest risk totals, with the Pentagon showing the lowest of all installations listed. Among the bases with the lowest reported risk were Fort Belvoir, in northern Virginia, and Fort George G. Meade and the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, in Maryland.

According to the study, an estimated 8.4% — or about 1 in 12 — of the roughly 5,883 Army women who served at Fort Hood were sexually assaulted, while at the Pentagon it was 1.8%, or about one in 50. The study noted, however, that the difference is not surprising considering that it's likely that women at the Pentagon are, on average, older, more senior-ranking and more highly educated. They also are more likely to be working with older and more senior-ranking men.

The report said that the data can be used to help the Army tailor prevention and other programs to better counter sexual assault in the ranks.

"These findings provide the Army with increased visibility on where exactly risk is consistently high for sexual assault and sexual harassment," said Jenna Newman, social science advisor at the resilience directorate and the Army's project lead for the study. "It suggests there are location-specific concerns that require targeted interventions into climate and culture and will require additional research to understand."

In the wake of the Guillen killing and a spike in suicides last year, Army leaders launched a program in October that focuses on the wellbeing of soldiers and their families, specifically making people the Army's top priority, overtaking combat readiness and weapons modernization.

And the Sergeant Major of the Army, Michael Grinston, the top enlisted soldier, began a campaign called "This is My Squad" to build unit cohesion and encourage soldiers to look after each other. The broader effort also is aimed at improving the command climate in units, since poor leadership was identified as a significant problem at Fort Hood.

## **Beyond "In the Heights," colorism persists, rarely addressed**

By ASTRID GALVAN Associated Press

Every year, Hollywood inevitably comes under criticism for its lack of racial diversity. But another lesser-known yet still pervasive problem also resurfaces: the lack of diversity in skin tone.

It happened again with "In the Heights," a big-budget film based on the musical created by Lin-Manuel

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Miranda, which was called out this week for its dearth of dark-skinned, Black Latinos in leading roles.

Colorism — or discrimination against darker-skinned people within their same ethnic group — lurks deep among pretty much all communities with varying levels of melanin. But it doesn't get talked about, and that could be a setback for the racial justice efforts that intensified after the police killing of George Floyd last year.

Avoiding the conversation will hinder the battle for racial justice because the two are "fully and inextricably linked," said Ellis P. Monk, Jr., a sociology professor at Harvard University who has been researching colorism for years.

Monk says the issue is prevalent in all communities of color and has been taboo in part because it's uncomfortable to talk about internal strife while also fighting against broader discrimination based on race and ethnicity.

"In a way, colorism and skin tone stratification is an even more difficult problem to fix because you could make the argument that everyone is involved in the system of colorism," Monk said. "If we think about race and racial inequality without taking these skin tone differences seriously, then we're actually missing how this system of racial inequality works."

Miranda, best known as the creator of the Broadway musical "Hamilton" and a longtime champion of including Latinos in the arts, recognized his own short-sightedness in addressing colorism and issued an apology.

"I can hear the hurt and frustration, of feeling still unseen in the feedback," Miranda wrote. "I hear that without sufficient dark-skinned Afro-Latino representation, the work feels extractive of the community we wanted so much to represent with pride and joy."

The legendary Rita Moreno likewise turned introspective on colorism after she faced backlash in her defense of Miranda when she implied that Latinos should be grateful they're being represented in any fashion. She has since apologized.

There is little data that tracks discrimination based on skin tone, and therefore it is hard to quantify just how pervasive colorism is. But the studies that do exist show that people with darker skin have higher incarceration rates, lower access to health care and education and live in poorer neighborhoods, several experts say.

Nayeli Chavez, a clinical psychologist and faculty at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, has spent a decade looking into racial differences between ethnic groups.

"We have been socialized from childhood to look down on darker skin, on indigenous features," Chavez said.

As a psychologist who has dedicated her career to helping people heal from racial trauma, Chavez sees how avoiding the topic of colorism is detrimental and says there is a false assumption in Latin America that because those places were colonized and its people are of mixed races, there is no racism.

The key to changing behavior is by teaching history accurately and admitting that those biases exist.

"Racial justice begins with our own community. It literally begins in our own families," Chavez said. "This is an area that there's so little about. We are barely like touching the tip of the iceberg."

Nancy López, a professor of sociology at the University of New Mexico, said one way Latinos and other communities of color can begin to address colorism is by asking themselves a simple question: what is your "street race?"

Street race refers to the race someone assumes you are when you're walking down the street and they know nothing else about you. Take former President Barack Obama, who is half-white. Someone who saw him in the street would likely see him as Black — his street race.

López, who also directs and co-founded the Institute for the Study of "Race" and Social Justice at UNM, said the concept of street race affects family dynamics, too. Two siblings from the same parents may have different skin tones and therefore different experiences in how they're perceived and treated, López said.

"Reflecting on your street race is one way of practicing solidarity with those siblings, cousins, partners, relatives who may be racialized very differently than you, may be experiencing racializing in a very different way," she said.



While some may find calling attention to colorism divisive, López says it's the opposite. If communities don't talk about it, they're not in total solidarity, she said.

## Eriksen released from hospital after 'successful' operation

By MATTIAS KARÉN Associated Press

COPENHAGEN (AP) — Christian Eriksen was discharged from the hospital on Friday and immediately went to visit his Denmark teammates nearly a week after suffering cardiac arrest during a European Championship match.

The Danish soccer federation wrote on Twitter that Eriksen was released from the Rigshospitalet in central Copenhagen after a successful operation. The federation previously said Eriksen would be fitted with an ICD, an implantable device that can function as both a pacemaker and defibrillator.

"The operation went well, and I am doing well under the circumstances," Eriksen was quoted as saying in the tweet.

The 29-year-old Eriksen has been in the hospital since collapsing on the field during his team's opening Euro 2020 match against Finland on Saturday. His heart stopped and he had to be resuscitated with a defibrillator.

A tribute was held for him during Denmark's second game against Belgium on Thursday, when play stopped after 10 minutes for a minute's applause in the stadium.

The Danish federation said Eriksen went to see the team Friday at its training base in Helsingor, outside Copenhagen, and would then go home to spend time with his family.

"It was really great to see the guys again after the fantastic game they played last night," Eriksen said in the tweet. "No need to say that I will be cheering on them on Monday against Russia."

Denmark lost its first two games but still has a chance to advance to the round of 16 with a win over Russia in its final Group B game.

## Brazil still debating dubious virus drug amid 500,000 deaths

By DAVID BILLER and DÉBORA ALVARES Associated Press

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — As Brazil hurtles toward an official COVID-19 death toll of 500,000 — second-highest in the world — science is on trial inside the country and the truth is up for grabs.

With the milestone likely to be reached this weekend, Brazil's Senate is publicly investigating how the toll got so high, focusing on why President Jair Bolsonaro's far-right government ignored opportunities to buy vaccines for months while it relentlessly pushed hydroxychloroquine, the malaria drug that rigorous studies have shown to be ineffective in treating COVID-19.

The nationally televised hearings have contained enough scientific claims, counterclaims and outright falsehoods to keep fact-checkers busy.

The skepticism has extended to the death toll itself, with Bolsonaro arguing the official tally from his own Health Ministry is greatly exaggerated and some epidemiologists saying the real figure is significantly higher — perhaps hundreds of thousands higher.

Dr. Abdel Latif, who oversees an intensive care unit an hour from Sao Paulo, said the fear and desperation caused by the coronavirus have been compounded by misinformation and opinions from self-styled specialists and a lack of proper guidance from the government.

"We need real humane public health policy, far from the political fight and based on science and evidence," he said.

Brazil's reported death toll is second only to that of the U.S., where the number of lives lost has topped 600,000. Brazil's population of 213 million is two-thirds that of the U.S.

Over the past week, official data showed some 2,000 COVID-19 deaths per day in Brazil, representing one-fifth the global total and a jump public health experts warn may reflect the start of the country's third wave.

Bolsonaro has waged a 15-month campaign to downplay the virus's seriousness and keep the economy

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humming. He dismissed the scourge early on as "a little flu" and has scorned masks. He was not chastened by his own bout with COVID-19. And he kept touting hydroxychloroquine long after virtually all others, including President Donald Trump, ceased doing so.

As recently as last Saturday, Bolsonaro received cheers upon telling a crowd of supporters that he took it when infected.

"The next day," he declared, "I was cured."

He pushed hydroxychloroquine so consistently that the first of his four health ministers during the pandemic was fired and the second resigned because they refused to endorse broad prescription of the medicine, they told the Senate investigating committee.

The World Health Organization stopped testing the drug in June 2020, saying the data showed it didn't reduce deaths among hospitalized patients. The same month, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration revoked emergency authorization for the drug amid mounting evidence it isn't effective and could cause serious side effects.

Nevertheless, the notion that medicines like hydroxychloroquine work against COVID-19 is one of the main things the fact-checking agency AOS Fatos has been forced to debunk continually for the past year, according to Tai Nalon, its executive director.

"This didn't change, mostly because there is a lack of accountability of doctors and other medical authorities who propagate this sort of misinformation, and the government supports it," Nalon said. "Basically it takes only the president to make any fact-checking efforts not useless, but less effective."

In fact, the Senate hearings that began in April have turned into a forum for dueling testimony from doctors who are either pro- or anti-hydroxychloroquine, creating what some experts fear is a misimpression that the drug's usefulness is still an open question in the international scientific community.

A Health Ministry official who is a pediatrician told the Senate that there is a much anecdotal evidence of its effectiveness and that the ministry provided guidelines for its use without explicitly recommending it. Fact-checkers cried foul, saying the ministry's own records show it distributed millions of the pills nationwide for COVID-19 treatment.

A cancer specialist and immunologist who has been one of the drug's biggest champions — and is said to be an informal adviser to the president — also testified, decrying demonization of a drug she said has saved lives. But fact-checkers proved her wrong when she claimed Mexico is still prescribing it for COVID-19.

Still, the drug is celebrated across social media, including Facebook and WhatsApp. And other misinformation is circulating as well.

Bolsonaro told a throng of supporters on June 7 that the real number of COVID-19 deaths in 2020 was only about half the official death toll, citing a report from the national accounting tribunal — which promptly denied producing any such document.

The president backtracked but has publicly repeated his claim of mass fraud in the death toll at least twice since.

Epidemiologists at the University of Sao Paulo say the true number of dead is closer to 600,000, maybe 800,000. The senators investigating the government's handling of the crisis ultimately hope to quantify how many deaths could have been avoided.

Pedro Hallal, an epidemiologist who runs the nation's largest COVID-19 testing program, has calculated that at least 95,000 lives would have been spared had the government not spurned vaccine purchase offers from Pfizer and a Sao Paulo institute that is bottling a Chinese-developed shot.

When the U.S. recorded a half-million COVID-19 deaths, President Joe Biden held a sunset moment of silence and a candle-lighting ceremony at the White House and ordered flags lowered for five days. Bolsonaro's government plans no such observance.

The Health Ministry is instead trumpeting the 84 million doses administered so far. The number is mostly first shots; just 11% of Brazil's population is fully vaccinated.

The Senate committee will name at least 10 people as formal targets of its investigation by next week, members told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity. That could lead to a recommendation of charges by prosecutors. The list includes the pediatrician and cancer specialist who testified, the current

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health minister and his predecessor.

For his part, Bolsonaro has said the investigation amounts to persecution.

Last week, microbiologist Natalia Pasternak, who presides over the Question of Science Institute, a nonprofit that promotes the use of scientific evidence in public policies, went before the committee and decried the government's "denialism." She lamented that the myth of hydroxychloroquine won't seem to die.

"In the sad case of Brazil, it's a lie orchestrated by the federal government and the Health Ministry," she said. "And that lie kills."

## **NOT REAL NEWS: A look at what didn't happen this week**

By BEATRICE DUPUY and ALI SWENSON Associated Press

A roundup of some of the most popular but completely untrue stories and visuals of the week. None of these are legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked them out. Here are the facts:

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Brain waves not a factor in naming COVID-19 variants

CLAIM: The new COVID-19 variants were named after brain wave frequencies.

THE FACTS: Both virus variants and brain wave frequencies are named using letters from the Greek alphabet. But the names have no connection. As news about the delta COVID-19 variant made headlines, posts online began falsely claiming that the new variants were being named after brain waves or frequencies. Some posts falsely claimed this connection had to do with a secret conspiracy to control humans through technology. For example, posts suggested that one COVID-19 variant was named delta because it largely impacts children, and they claimed that delta is a brain wave specific to children. But delta waves are actually more closely associated with deep sleep. "Sleep is critical for development so in a contorted way you could say kids have more delta waves," said David McCormick, professor of biology and director of the Institute of Neuroscience at the University of Oregon. The brain has billions of neurons that are all oscillating or generating brief signals, which are also known as brain waves. The first brain wave that was discovered was the alpha rhythm, which is the rhythm prominent in the visual cortex when you close your eyes, McCormick said. The delta COVID-19 variant was first discovered in India and is known for being more transmissible than other variants. But the variant did not get its name as part of a plot to control brains. The delta variant was named after the World Health Organization announced in May it would change its system for labeling COVID-19 variants. The Greek alphabet is often used for naming purposes in math and science, not just for brain waves. Before the change, COVID-19 variants were referred to by the location where they were found along with complex alphanumeric identifiers that have to do with how a given variant has descended from those that came before. For example, a variant found in South Africa was known as the South Africa variant, or B.1.351. In order to get away from naming variants after their locations, which WHO said was "stigmatizing and discriminatory," the system was changed, and the Greek alphabet was selected as the source for labeling. The variants would now be publicly known as alpha (B.1.7), beta (B.1.351), gamma (P.1) and delta (B.1.617.2).

— Associated Press writer Beatrice Dupuy in New York contributed this report.

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Study touting hydroxychloroquine flawed, experts say

CLAIM: The malaria drug hydroxychloroquine, when used with the antibiotic azithromycin, can improve survival by nearly 200% when given to COVID-19 patients on ventilators.

THE FACTS: Experts say the small study that this claim is based on proves nothing, and that enough evidence now exists from well-run studies to indicate that hydroxychloroquine is not effective for treating COVID-19. The study in question is being misrepresented online to falsely suggest that top health officials were wrong when they found that hydroxychloroquine, a drug used to treat malaria, had no benefit as a COVID-19 treatment. The observational study, which has not been vetted by independent scientists, gained attention on social media after it was posted on May 31 to Medrxiv, a website that displays medical papers that have not been published. Posts online, many from supporters of former President Donald

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Trump, claimed the study shows that health officials and media were wrong to discount the benefits of hydroxychloroquine against COVID-19, which Trump had championed. Several health professionals told The Associated Press that using the new study to tout the benefits of hydroxychloroquine is misleading. "This is a very small study from a single hospital that was observational only," said Dr. Jaimie Meyer, infectious disease physician at Yale School of Medicine. "The answer to COVID is vaccination, not hydroxychloroquine." Randomized double-blind studies are the gold standard in medical research. In such studies, patients are not told whether they are receiving the drug being tested or a placebo. They allow for even distribution across groups and take into account potential differences among subjects that researchers may not have anticipated. In an observational study, like the one being touted in the false posts, researchers simply observe patients without randomizing who gets what treatment. These studies are susceptible to bias and cannot prove cause and effect, Meyer said. The study cited in the false posts examined 255 COVID-19 patients on ventilators starting on May 1, 2020. It was conducted by the Smith Center for Infectious Diseases & Urban Health in East Orange, New Jersey, which is run by Dr. Stephen M. Smith, an early proponent of hydroxychloroquine to treat COVID-19. The study offers no information on how it was funded and the center did not respond to an AP request for comment. The study itself notes that it should not be used to guide clinical practice. Hydroxychloroquine has since been tested on thousands of COVID-19 patients. Data from randomized studies has shown the drug is not effective for treating the disease — alone or with other drugs like azithromycin. These included major studies published in The New England Journal of Medicine and The Journal of the American Medical Association.

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Boy in courtroom images was charged with manslaughter, not hacking bank

CLAIM: Photos show a boy who, at 11 years old, hacked the computer system of a Swiss bank and transferred \$75 billion to his father's account.

THE FACTS: The caption on the photos is incorrect. An AP photo dated May 20, 2009, matches one of the images in the post. Its caption explained the handcuffed suspect, who was 14 at the time, was appearing in court in Caldwell, Idaho, on a charge of first degree murder for killing his father. He was charged as an adult. Photos shared more than a thousand times on Facebook on Tuesday showed the boy in a courtroom in a yellow jumpsuit and handcuffs. "At 11, he hacked the computer system of a Swiss bank and transferred \$ 75 billion to his father's account," said a caption with the post. Commenters on the post reacted to the false claim, calling him a "genius" who should be recruited by NASA. However, a reverse-image search reveals the boy was in court for allegedly killing his father, not stealing from a bank. According to the AP and the Idaho Press-Tribune, the boy pleaded guilty in 2010 to a reduced charge of voluntary manslaughter after testifying that his father had sexually abused him. Five years into a seven-year sentence, a judge determined him fit to be released to probation, allowing him back into society in August 2014.

— Associated Press writer Ali Swenson in Semora, North Carolina, contributed this report.

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FBI headquarters in Washington is open as usual

CLAIM: The FBI headquarters building in Washington is completely closed, empty and walled off.

THE FACTS: A video spreading the false claim shows the back of the building rather than the main entrance, which was open and fully operational this week, according to a statement from the FBI. The 30-second video, posted Monday on the encrypted messaging app Telegram, shows a view of the FBI headquarters, also known as the J. Edgar Hoover Building, from E Street NW in Washington. A narrator identifies the date as June 14, then claims the building is "completely closed." "No one's in there," the narrator says. "In fact, it's even walled off. You can't even get inside." The bogus claim spread to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Reddit and other platforms, with users speculating that the federal government is shutting down buildings in preparation for some kind of large-scale event or attack. There's no evidence this is the case. "The FBI Headquarters building at 935 Pennsylvania Avenue NW is open and fully operational, as are all of our field offices," the FBI said in an emailed statement. An AP reporter who works near the building confirmed that people have been entering and leaving the building all week, including on Monday,

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when the video was filmed. The main entrance to the building is located along Pennsylvania Avenue, not E Street NW, where the video was filmed.

— Ali Swenson

Interview with boy who claims he shot burglar is satire

CLAIM: Video shows a television interview with Lucas Armitage, an 8-year-old boy who used his dad's gun to shoot a burglar several times and then laughed so loudly it woke his dad.

THE FACTS: A video purporting to show a daytime talk show interview with a child who laughed after shooting a burglar to death was being shared as real on social media on Monday, despite the fact that it originated as satire. The video, produced by The Onion, a satirical website, appeared to show two eager television hosts interviewing an 8-year-old boy and his father, with a logo reading "Today Now" in the corner. Text on the screen read, "MORNING INSPIRATION: Hero Eight-Year-Old Uses Dad's Gun to Stop Burglar." The two hosts and the boy's father egged him on as he described using his father's gun to shoot a burglar several times, including shooting off "each one of his fingers" until he stopped screaming. The hosts asked the father if the burglar's screaming woke him. "Actually, it was Lucas laughing that woke me up," the father said. The Onion created the video for its parody morning news show called "Today Now."

## Sealed with a kiss: Macron revives France's cheeky embrace

PARIS (AP) — The double-cheeked embrace that was a customary greeting in France before the coronavirus pandemic saw it largely abandoned as a potential kiss of death is back with a presidential seal of approval.

French President Emmanuel Macron made the return of "la bise" all but official Friday by giving warm cheek-to-cheek embraces to two World War II veterans at an award ceremony.

The French leader wore a face mask. The veterans — Leon Gautier, 98, and Rene Crignola, 99 — did not. But both seemed comfortable, and reciprocated, as Macron reached in and put his cheeks to theirs.

Macron is vaccinated against the coronavirus and also suffered a moderate bout of COVID-19 in December.

The gesture put Macron's seal of approval on what is still a slow, hesitant and not always welcome return of embraces. They became frowned upon as COVID-19 infections ravaged France, which counts 110,000 dead from the disease.

With 60% of France's adults now having had at least one jab, embracing family and friends again has been one of the joys of vaccination for those who are quickly falling back into the habit.

But others are clinging to the hope that its disappearance during the height of the pandemic might still become permanent, particularly in workplaces.

Even before the pandemic, "la bise" was a source of division. Having to do rounds of kisses with colleagues was regarded as an awkward and tedious chore by some, a pleasant, relationship-affirming exercise by others.

Macron's embraces for the veterans as he awarded them the Legion of Honor, the country's highest award, marked another step toward France feeling like its former self again.

Face masks also came off this week — no longer required attire outdoors in most circumstances. And a nighttime curfew is ending on Sunday.

## NYC mayoral primary will be big test for ranked vote system

By KAREN MATTHEWS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Voters will likely pick the next mayor of New York City next week in a Democratic primary that will also be a major test of ranked choice voting, a system that lets voters rank several candidates in order of preference instead of choosing just one.

Two years after city voters approved a measure to use the ranked choice system for primaries and special elections, Democrats will be asked to rank their top five out of 13 mayoral candidates on Tuesday's ballot.

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The primary winner will almost certainly win the November general election in overwhelmingly Democratic New York City.

If the process goes smoothly it may encourage other cities and states around the U.S. to consider ranked choice voting, which has been used for years in cities including San Francisco and Minneapolis and has been adopted by the states of Maine and Alaska.

"I hate to quote Frank Sinatra, but if you can make it in New York you can make it anywhere," said Susan Lerner, the executive director of Common Cause New York, which spearheaded the 2019 campaign for ranked choice.

Rob Richie, the executive director of FairVote, a national organization that promotes ranked choice voting, said he believes the implementation of the system in New York can accelerate acceptance.

"I think that New York, by being seen as going well, will be very reassuring to people," Richie said. "If it's seen as rocky, it'll just mean people will still ask questions."

Under New York City's system, ranked choice procedures only kick in if no candidate gets more than 50% of the vote. With such a large field of legitimate contenders, that's likely to happen this year in the Democratic primary.

Most recent polls have suggested that Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams is the favorite, getting ranked first by a little less than a quarter of likely voters. Other top contenders include civil rights lawyer Maya Wiley, former city sanitation commissioner Kathryn Garcia and former presidential candidate Andrew Yang, who have been polling between 6 and 12 points behind.

If none of them gets half of the first-place votes, several rounds of ranked choice tabulation begin. The candidate in last place is eliminated. All ballots cast for that eliminated candidate are then reallocated to the No. 2 choices of those voters. The votes are then re-tallied and the candidate in last place is eliminated again. The process repeats until there are two candidates left. The one with more votes wins.

Calculating the winner might take two weeks or more, but Lerner said that's due to state laws regarding the counting of mail-in ballots — not the ranked choice system.

The ranked choice rounds are done by computer and will be "almost instantaneous" once all the eligible mail-in ballots have been determined, she said.

Early voting started June 12 in the primary to replace the term-limited Mayor Bill de Blasio.

One concern about the new system is that it might confuse an unfamiliar public.

Several people who voted early at the Masonic Temple in the Fort Greene section of Brooklyn on Wednesday said they had no trouble understanding the ranked choice system, though some liked it better than others.

Dee Parker, who is 70, said she researched the candidates and ranked five choices in most of the races. "It was too much time spent," Parker complained. "I didn't find it difficult, just time consuming."

Josh Hartmann, 50, said he was "a big fan" of the new system even though figuring out his rankings was more work than previous elections have demanded. "I think it gives more diversity in the candidates," he said.

Agustin Ricard, 63, a Dominican immigrant voting in his first mayoral primary, said he understood the ranking system but chose not to use it. "I voted for just one candidate for mayor," he said in Spanish.

New York City is also using the system in primaries for other municipal offices including city comptroller, borough president and City Council. There is also a Democratic primary for Manhattan district attorney, but that race will not be decided by ranked choice voting since it is a state office, not a city office.

Ranked choice advocates say the system enhances democracy by giving voters more choices. With ranked choice, a voter doesn't have to worry that a vote for their favorite candidate will be "wasted" if that candidate trails several rivals: Their No. 2 or No. 3 choice could win the race.

New York City won't be the only jurisdiction employing ranked choice voting for the first time this year. Salt Lake City and 20 other cities in Utah will use the system for the first time in municipal elections this fall.

New York City voters approved ranked choice voting by a wide margin in the 2019 referendum, but a group of City Council members and community organizations filed a lawsuit last December seeking to block its implementation, arguing that the system was being rolled out too hastily and would violate the

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federal Voting Rights Act.

The ranked choice foes have said the new system would have an adverse impact on voters of color.

Hazel N. Dukes, president of the New York State conference of the NAACP, compared ranked choice voting to voter suppression in a column in the Amsterdam News.

"Studies have shown that a disproportionate number of Black Democrats, particularly older voters, vote for only one candidate, so a Black candidate that finishes ahead with first place votes can ultimately lose if white voters fully avail themselves of the RCV option," Dukes wrote.

City Council member Kalman Yeger charged bluntly at a December public hearing, "Ranked-choice voting is racist. It is designed to be racist. It's intent is to be racist and its result in New York City will be racist. It is designed to prevent minorities from electing their own."

A judge dismissed the lawsuit last month, but Yeger and other ranked choice opponents on the City Council have introduced legislation seeking to overturn it.

Lerner said evidence including exit polling of voters in City Council special elections earlier this year does not support the contention that ranked choice voting favors one ethnic group over another.

"We're working closely with the NAACP and other groups to be sure that every voter in every community to the best of everyone's ability has heard about ranked choice voting before they get to their polling place," she added.

## **AstraZeneca, EU both claim a win in vaccine delivery tussle**

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — A Belgian court ruled Friday that coronavirus vaccine-maker AstraZeneca had committed a "serious breach" of its contract with the European Union amid a major legal battle over delivery obligations that has tarnished the company's image.

The court ordered AstraZeneca to deliver a total of 80.2 million doses to the EU from the time the contract was agreed up until Sept. 27. The ruling said the company did not appear to have made a "best reasonable effort" to meet the delivery schedule because it had not used its U.K. production sites.

But the Anglo-Swedish company claimed victory, saying that this was far fewer than the 120 million doses that the EU's executive branch, the European Commission, was seeking in total by the end of June. It also welcomed the court's acknowledgement that it was under unprecedented pressure.

AstraZeneca was seen as a key pillar of the EU's vaccine rollout. Its contract with the Commission foresaw an initial 300 million doses being distributed, with an option for another 100 million, but the speed of deliveries was far slower than the company originally thought.

"We are pleased with the Court's order," Executive Vice-President Jeffrey Pott said in a statement. "AstraZeneca has fully complied with its agreement with the European Commission and we will continue to focus on the urgent task of supplying an effective vaccine."

The Commission, for its part, also claimed a victory in that the judge had ordered the company to respect a delivery schedule of 15 million doses by July 26, 20 million doses by August 23 and 15 million doses by Sept. 27. It ordered a fine of 10 euros (\$12) per dose not delivered.

"This decision confirms the position of the Commission: AstraZeneca did not live up to the commitments it made in the contract. It is good to see that an independent judge confirms this," Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said.

"This shows that our European vaccination campaign not only delivers for our citizens day by day. It also demonstrates that it was founded on a sound legal basis," she said in a statement.

AstraZeneca's image has been hurt by the slow pace of its vaccine production, but despite EU dissatisfaction with the speed of deliveries the Commission still recommends the company's shots as effective protection against the coronavirus.

Ultimately, AstraZeneca is likely to meet the court's order with ease. It had already supplied 30 million doses until the end of March. From March to June, it supplied a further 40 million doses. That leaves it with just over 10 million of the 80.2 million doses to provide by Sept. 27.

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Two further hearings have been scheduled for September in case the Commission is still not satisfied. From the beginning, the Commission has claimed that it launched the emergency legal procedure, which started at the Brussels Court of First Instance last month, simply to secure the vaccine doses that EU member countries were promised.

It accused AstraZeneca of acting in bad faith by providing shots to other countries, notably Britain, and argued that the company should have used its production sites in the U.K. to help fill the EU's order.

But AstraZeneca argued that the challenges of producing and delivering the vaccine could not have been foreseen during a once-in-a-century pandemic, and that its U.K. sites were primarily meant to be used to service its contract with the British government.

In its 67-page ruling though, the court suggested that the company might not have used all the means at its disposal, including the Oxford Biomedica and Halix sites in the U.K., to meet its EU supply schedule. This could be perceived as not making a "best reasonable effort" to fulfil its contract.

In its statement, AstraZeneca said that it "now looks forward to renewed collaboration with the European Commission to help combat the pandemic in Europe."

While its deliveries will continue this year, the Commission has already decided not to renew its contract with the company.

## Convention circuit of delusion gives forum for election lies

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW RICHMOND, Wis. (AP) — For a few hours last weekend, thousands of Donald Trump's supporters came together in a field under the blazing Wisconsin sun to live in an alternate reality where the former president was still in office — or would soon return.

Clad in red MAGA hats and holding "Trump 2021" signs, they cheered in approval as Mike Lindell, the MyPillow creator-turned-conspiracy peddler, introduced "our real president." Then Trump appeared via Jumbotron to repeat the lie that has become his central talking point since losing to Joe Biden by more than 7 million votes: "The election was rigged."

Lindell later promised the audience that Trump would soon be reinstated into the presidency, a prospect for which there is no legal or constitutional method.

In the nearly five months since Trump's presidency ended, similar scenes have unfolded in hotel ballrooms and other venues across the country. Attorney Lin Wood has told crowds that Trump is still president, while former national security adviser Michael Flynn went even further at a Dallas event by calling for a Myanmar-style military coup in the U.S. At the same conference, former Trump lawyer Sidney Powell suggested Trump could simply be reinstated and a new Inauguration Day set.

Taken together, the gatherings have gelled into a convention circuit of delusion centered on the false premise that the election was stolen. Lindell and others use the events to deepen their bond with legions of followers who eschew the mainstream press and live within a conservative echo chamber of talk radio and social media. In these forums, "evidence" of fraud is never fact-checked, leaving many followers genuinely convinced that Biden shouldn't be president.

"We know that Biden's a fraudulent president, and we want to be part of the movement to get him out," said Donna Plechacek, 61, who traveled from Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, with her sister for the event. "I know that they cheated the election. I have no doubt about that. The proof is there."

State election officials, international observers, Trump's own attorney general and dozens of judges — including many Trump appointed — have found no verifiable evidence of mass election fraud. Indeed, Trump's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency called the election "the most secure in American history" and concluded there was "no evidence that any voting system deleted or lost votes, changed votes, or was in any way compromised."

But Plechacek is not alone. A recent Quinnipiac University poll found that two-thirds of Republicans, 66%, think Biden's victory was not legitimate, while CNN found in April that 70% of Republicans do not think Biden won enough votes to be president. Half, 50%, said there is solid evidence to support that claim.



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They are people like Deb Tulenchik and Galen Carlson from Pequot Lakes, Minnesota, who recalled the shock they felt after the election as Trump's early election night lead faded as additional ballots were counted.

Thanks to the country's polarization, many Trump supporters didn't know anyone who voted for Biden and only saw Trump-Pence signs lining the roadways as they drove around their neighborhoods. Carlson, 61, said he went to bed believing Trump won. He didn't heed warnings that mail-in votes take longer to count, so early returns would likely skew toward Trump, who urged his supporters to vote in person and not by mail.

"I was asleep early cause it looked like it was going to be a done deal. And then when we woke up I couldn't believe it," he said.

"Disbelief," echoed Tulenchik, 63.

Trump spent months girding himself against possible defeat, insisting he could only lose if there was massive fraud. It's a lie he's sure to repeat as he steps up his public schedule in the coming weeks.

But the narrative was already resonating under the beating sun at the Wisconsin MAGA rally, where attendees came decked out in Trump gear, including plenty of shirts declaring, "Trump Won!"

While Lindell repeatedly described the event as a free speech festival — paid for by him — it had all the trappings of a Trump rally, including several of his frequent warm-up acts and a large American flag hoisted up by cranes.

It was a carnival atmosphere: a face-painting tent for kids; stands selling corn dogs, fresh-cut fries and ice cream; a flyover of old military planes. The 2020 campaign lived on, with vendors selling old campaign merchandise — along with Lindell's pillows. One older man with a cane walked around shirtless, wearing a sparkly cowboy hat and Crocs and using a Trump flag as a cape. One young woman carried a helmet with horns — reminiscent of the headgear worn by an Arizona man who calls himself the QAnon Shaman and who took part in the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6.

Indeed, several people said they were at the U.S. Capitol that day, though they were vague on their roles.

While some were Trump rally devotees, traveling the country to see the former president in person, many said they were attending their first political event. Some said they paid little attention to politics until the election, or began to get involved because they opposed pandemic restrictions.

Again and again, attendees insisted Trump won the election. And several said they sincerely believed that he will be reinstated in the coming months — a belief that has been pushed by Lindell and repeated privately by Trump, even though there is no legal framework under which that could be accomplished.

"Not all Democrats are evil. They will see the truth. Whether they like it or not, they will see the truth," said Beth Kroeger, 61, who lives in Sussex, Wisconsin, and said she expects Trump back in the Oval Office this time next year, "No doubt about it."

Some suggested the military would be involved; others are convinced he remains in control today.

Most assailed the mainstream media and said they instead got their news from people like Lindell and former Trump strategist Steve Bannon, as well as the conservative channel Newsmax, talk radio and social media platforms.

Few have gone to greater lengths than Lindell to convince the American public the election was stolen. By his own account, he has spent millions of dollars staging election-related events, hiring private investigators and creating movies that purport to document the alleged fraud — not to mention the \$1.3 billion defamation lawsuit that has been filed against him by Dominion Voting Systems. (He has counter-sued.)

He now claims he has evidence that China and other countries hacked voting machines to switch votes from Trump, a Republican, to Biden, a Democrat, in "a cyberattack of historical proportions." But the evidence he cites in his most recent film, which features a blurred-out, anonymous cyber expert, has been repeatedly debunked for not demonstrating what he claims.

Still, attendees repeatedly referenced his videos as clear proof of fraud.

"There's just so much evidence that Mike Lindell has," said Lynda Thibado, 65, who traveled with her husband, Don Briggs, from Menomonie, Wisconsin, by camper and stayed overnight at an adjacent camp-

ground.

"I mean, such proof positive," Briggs agreed.

The couple said they hoped the election would be overturned, but they were less confident that would happen.

"I don't know if they can legally do anything now," said Briggs. Still, he said, "I don't think Biden will be the president come 2024, one way or the other."

## Republicans point to inflation in bid to retake Congress

By WILL WEISSERT and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Gas prices have whizzed past \$3 per gallon in much of the nation. The cost of used cars and new furniture, airline tickets, department store blouses, ground beef and a Chipotle burrito are on the rise, too.

Many economists say the price increases are fueled by the aftereffects of a global pandemic and probably won't last. But Republicans are hoping to storm into next year's midterm elections arguing that steep government spending under President Joe Biden and a Democratic-controlled Congress has triggered inflation that will ultimately hurt everyday Americans.

The economic reality is more complicated. Still, with Republicans only needing to pick up a handful of seats to regain the House and Senate, the party increasingly sees the prospect of sustained higher prices as a way to connect policies made in Washington with the experiences of voters whose pocketbooks may be feeling the strain.

Rep. Jim Banks, R-Ind., said his constituents have "seen the higher prices on gas in particular, but also groceries and the cost to keep their businesses running." Such voters, he said, "know, intuitively, that this is due to Democrats' economic agenda and big spending plans."

Consumer prices rose 5% over the previous 12 months, the largest one-year increase since 2008. Excluding more volatile items such as food and energy, prices were up 3.8% over the past year -- the biggest 12-month jump since 1992.

Those leaps were driven by comparisons to the pandemic-hampered 2020 economy, but nonetheless show prices climbing sharply, with the cost of used cars rising 7.3% in May and food costs increasing nearly half a percentage point over the same period. Gas prices have risen from a nationwide average of \$2.48 to \$3.13 per gallon under Biden, the first time since 2014 that it has topped the \$3 threshold.

Former Federal Reserve economist Claudia Sahm said this year's inflation rates are likely to remain far higher than usual, but that's chiefly due to the the pandemic pushing inflation uncommonly low last year. There's also a boom in consumer spending due to pent-up demand as the virus recedes and the lingering effects of disruptions to global supply chain, she said.

An example Sahm pointed to is a virus-triggered shortage of semiconductors which has slowed production of new cars and helped used vehicle prices spike, at least temporarily.

"It is not a structural change in the economy, it is a few months," Sahm said.

Others are playing down the risk of price gains being sustained, because many were caused by supply bottlenecks set to ease as the post-pandemic economic recovery takes hold.

"We're still skeptical that this signals the start of a sustained pickup in inflation, either in the U.S. or elsewhere," said Ben May director of global macro research for Oxford Economics.

Factories ramping up production are already easing some some pricing pressure. Lumber prices that skyrocketed recently are falling again. That eventually could affect everything from home-building in white-hot real estate markets around the country to the cost of a desk at Office Depot.

Republicans have nonetheless intensified warnings that inflation is surging and they blame the \$1.9 trillion stimulus that congressional Democrats pushed through Congress. Charges that profligate federal spending is overheating the economy are growing louder from the right as lawmakers hammer out a sweeping infrastructure package.

Inflation jitters could end up resonating more with voters than many cultural issues Republicans raised

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in the opening months of Biden's term. The president's approval ratings have remained strong despite complaints by many Republicans about "cancel culture."

Florida Sen. Rick Scott, who is leading the GOP effort to retake the Senate, has chided Biden to "realize that reckless spending has consequences, inflation is real and America's debt crisis is growing."

Banks, the Indiana congressman who is chairman of the Republican Study Committee, is proposing long shot changes to House rules to mandate that committees report how proposed legislation will affect inflation. "We need to tie inflation to the Biden economic agenda and explain to voters how inflation is Democrats' hidden tax on the Middle Class," Banks wrote in a recent memo to the study group's members.

"It's here, it's real," Louisiana Rep. Steve Scalise, the second-ranking Republican House leader, said of inflation. "And it's getting worse."

White House officials see what's happening as a global, rather than U.S.-centric, phenomenon because ports in Hamburg, Germany, and several Chinese cities face similar challenges. This suggests that the size of the coronavirus relief federal stimulus plan mattered less for inflation than the complexity of restarting a pandemic-shocked world economy. Higher shipping costs alone could make a typical pair of jeans 29 cents more expensive or increase a refrigerator's cost \$50, the Oxford Economics analysis says.

The Biden administration has created a task force to address supply chains to show that they are targeting some forces behind inflation. Part of the perceived inflationary pressure is rising wages, though, and the White House sees higher incomes as a positive. It also views some inflation as a byproduct of vaccinations increasing demand for workers, goods and services.

"We're going to keep an eye on it, but we think it should resolve in the next few months," Sameera Fazili, deputy director of the White House National Economic Council, told reporters recently.

The economy grew from January through March at a blistering 6.4% annual pace, and that could fuel further higher wages and possibly higher prices. The alternative, however, is that rising prices are simply a blip and dissipate quickly.

Betting that inflation will sway large chunks of the electorate hasn't panned out before.

GOP concerns about inflation abounded, but amounted to little, after the 2008 financial crisis. Republicans made dramatic gains in the House during the 2010 midterms, but that election focused more on federal spending and health care than inflation.

Sahm said voters are especially attune to rising gas prices but generally "there are other things consumers care far more about."

Raising worries about inflation, meanwhile, also may simply come with the territory for one party when the other is in power.

Under President George W. Bush in August 2008, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., issued a statement noting that inflation had reached a 17-year high and "threatens to devour the paychecks of hard-working Americans." Now congressional Democrats are pushing for more spending to keep the post-pandemic economy strong.

John Horn, a professor of practice in economics at Washington University in St. Louis, said inflation has occasionally helped influence midterm elections, including when Democrats made congressional gains in 1982 and 2010's tea party-fueled Republican wave. But it hasn't played a decisive role in politics since the gas-line-triggering energy crisis of the late 1970s.

"We haven't dealt with this for 40 years," Horn said. "Most of the people in that 35 to 65 age range — which is the working class and asking, 'What's my wage and can I afford stuff?' — don't remember inflation."

## Black Americans laud Juneteenth holiday, say more work ahead

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Black Americans rejoiced after President Joe Biden made Juneteenth a federal holiday, but some said that, while they appreciated the recognition at a time of racial reckoning in America, more is needed to change policies that disadvantage too many of their brethren.

"It's great, but it's not enough," said Gwen Grant, president and CEO of the Urban League of Kansas City. Grant said she was delighted by the quick vote this week by Congress to make Juneteenth a national

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holiday because "it's been a long time coming."

But she added that "we need Congress to protect voting rights, and that needs to happen right now so we don't regress any further. That is the most important thing Congress can be addressing at this time."

At a jubilant White House bill-signing ceremony on Thursday, Biden agreed that more than a commemoration of the events of June 19, 1865, is needed. That's when Union soldiers brought the news of freedom to enslaved Black people in Galveston, Texas — some 2 1/2 years after President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation had freed slaves in Southern states.

"This day doesn't just celebrate the past. It calls for action today," Biden said before he established Juneteenth National Independence Day. His audience included scores of members of Congress and Opal Lee, a 94-year-old Texas woman who campaigned for the holiday.

Biden singled out voting rights as an area for action.

Republican-led states have enacted or are considering legislation that activists argue would curtail the right to vote, particularly for people of color. Legislation to address voting rights issues, and institute policing reforms demanded after the killing of George Floyd and other unarmed Black men, remains stalled in the Congress that acted swiftly on the Juneteenth bill.

Other people want the federal government to make reparations or financial payments to the descendants of slaves in an attempt to compensate for those wrongs. Meanwhile, efforts are afoot across the country to limit what school districts teach about the history of slavery in America.

Community organizer Kimberly Holmes-Ross, who helped make her hometown of Evanston, Illinois, the first U.S. city to pay reparations, said she was happy about the new federal holiday because it will lead more people to learn about Juneteenth.

But she would have liked Congress to act on anti-lynching legislation or voter protections first.

"I am not super stoked only because all of the other things that are still going on," said Holmes-Ross, 57. "You haven't addressed what we really need to talk about."

Peniel Joseph, an expert on race at the University of Texas at Austin, said the U.S. has never had a holiday or a national commemoration of the end of slavery. Many Black Americans had long celebrated Juneteenth.

"Juneteenth is important symbolically, and we need the substance to follow, but Black people historically have always tried to do multiple things at the same time," Joseph said.

Most federal workers will observe the holiday Friday. Several states and the District of Columbia announced that government offices would be closed Friday.

Juneteenth is the 12th federal holiday, including Inauguration Day once every four years. It's also the first federal holiday since the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday was added in 1983.

Before June 19 became a federal holiday, it was observed in the vast majority of states and the District of Columbia. Texas was first to make Juneteenth a holiday in 1980.

Most white Americans had not heard of Juneteenth before the summer of 2020 and the protests that stirred the nation's conscience over race after Floyd's killing by a Minneapolis police officer, said Matthew Delmont, who teaches history at Dartmouth College.

He said the new federal holiday "hopefully provides a moment on the calendar every year when all Americans can spend time thinking seriously about the history of our country."

The Senate passed the bill earlier this week by unanimous agreement. But in the House, 14 Republicans voted against it, including Rep. Chip Roy of Texas. Roy said Juneteenth deserves to be commemorated, but he objected to the use of "independence" in the holiday's name.

"This name needlessly divides our nation on a matter that should instead bring us together by creating a separate Independence Day based on the color of one's skin," he said in a statement.

Added Rep. Paul Gosar, R-Ariz., who also voted against the bill: "We have one Independence Day, and it applies equally to all people of all races."

The sentiment was different in Texas, the first state to make Juneteenth a holiday.

"I'm happy as pink," said Doug Matthews, 70, and a former city manager of Galveston who has helped coordinate the community's Juneteenth celebrations since Texas made it a holiday.

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He credited the work of state and local leaders with paving the way for this week's step by Congress. "I'm also proud that everything started in Galveston," Matthews said.

Pete Henley, 71, was setting up tables Thursday for a Juneteenth celebration at the Old Central Cultural Center, a Galveston building that once was a segregated Black school. He said the Juneteenth holiday will help promote understanding and unity.

"All holidays have significance, no matter what the occasion or what it's about, but by it being a federal holiday, it speaks volumes to what the country thinks about that specific day," said Henley, who studied at the school before it was integrated and is president of the cultural center.

He said his family traces its roots back to enslaved men and women in the Texas city who were among the last to receive word of the Emancipation Proclamation.

"As a country, we really need to be striving toward togetherness more than anything," Henley said. "If we just learn to love each other, it would be so great."

Holmes-Ross recalled first learning about Juneteenth in church in Evanston, a Lake Michigan suburb just outside Chicago. Over the years, she said she made sure her three children commemorated the day with community events including food, dancing and spoken word performances.

She said it was about more than a day off for her family and expressed hope that it would be for others, too.

"We were intentional about seeking out Black leaders and things we could celebrate as African Americans," Holmes-Ross said. "Hopefully, people do something productive with it. It is a day of service."

## Italy to require 5-day quarantines for travelers from UK

ROME (AP) — Starting Monday, Italy is requiring people who arrive from Britain to do five days of quarantine as well as take a COVID-19 swab test.

Italian Health Minister Roberto Speranza on Friday said he signed that order as concern builds about a soaring increase of coronavirus cases in Britain involving the delta variant. That variant is responsible for over 90% of the new infections in the U.K. So far, it has been detected in relatively few infections in Italy.

The new requirement could have consequences for the Euro 2020 soccer competition, since England's national team is likely to play in Rome if it advances from the group stage.

Under the ordinance, Italy will allow people to enter from the United States, Canada and Japan if they meet the prerequisites for the European Union Green Certificate. Those requirements include full vaccination, documented recovery from COVID-19 or a negative swab test performed within 48 hours of arrival in Italy.

U.S. travelers who flew into Italy on COVID-tested flights, which require a negative swab test within 48 hours before boarding, could already enter Italy as tourists. Alitalia and at least two U.S. airlines have been operating those flights, which also require a swab test for passengers when they disembark in Italy.

Tourism, especially by U.S. visitors, is an important part of Italy's economy, and the sector is eagerly awaiting Americans' return.

## EU envoy: Ethiopian leadership vowed to 'wipe out' Tigrayans

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Ethiopia's leaders in closed-door talks with a European Union special envoy earlier this year said "they are going to wipe out the Tigrayans for 100 years," the envoy said this week, warning that such an aim "looks for us like ethnic cleansing."

The remarks by Pekka Haavisto, Finland's foreign minister, describing his talks with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and other ministers in February are some of the most critical yet of the Ethiopian government's conduct of the conflict in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region. They came in a question-and-answer session Tuesday with a European Parliament committee.

Ethiopia's foreign ministry dismissed Haavisto's comments as "ludicrous" and a "hallucination of sorts or a lapse in memory of some kind."

Haavisto's special adviser, Otto Turtonen, told The Associated Press that the envoy "has no further com-

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ment on this matter.”

For months, Haavisto has served as the EU’s special envoy on Ethiopia. In February he said he had “two intensive days in substantive meetings” with Abiy — the Nobel Peace Prize winner in 2019 — and other “key ministers” about the growing humanitarian crisis in Tigray, where thousands of civilians have been killed and famine has begun in a region of some 6 million people. Ethiopian and allied forces from neighboring Eritrea have been accused of atrocities while pursuing fighters supporting Tigray’s former leaders.

It is not clear from Haavisto’s remarks this week which Ethiopian officials made the comments about wiping out ethnic Tigrayans.

“When I met the Ethiopian leadership in February they really used this kind of language, that they are going to destroy the Tigrayans, they are going to wipe out the Tigrayans for 100 years and so forth,” the envoy said.

“If you wipe out your national minority, well, what is it?” Haavisto added. “You cannot destroy all the people, you cannot destroy all the population in Tigray. And I think that’s very obvious, that we have to react, because it looks for us like ethnic cleansing. It is a very, very serious act if this is true.”

In comments shortly after those February meetings, Haavisto had warned that the crisis in Tigray appeared to be spiraling out of control.

The United Nations human rights office has said all sides in the conflict have been accused of abuses, but witnesses have largely blamed Ethiopian and Eritrean forces for forced starvation, mass expulsions, gang rapes and more.

Haavisto’s remarks emerged as Ethiopia prepares to vote in a national election on Monday, the first major test at the polls for Abiy as he seeks to centralize power under his Prosperity Party.

Abiy was awarded the Nobel a year after he took office and introduced dramatic political reforms while sidelining Tigray leaders who had dominated Ethiopia’s government for years in a coalition with other ethnic-based parties. Months of growing tensions between Abiy’s government and Tigray’s ruling party followed, and the prime minister in November accused Tigray forces of attacking a military base.

The EU and the United States have been outspoken about Tigray, with the U.S. last month announcing it has started restricting visas for government and military officials of Ethiopia and Eritrea who are seen as undermining efforts to resolve the fighting.

The U.S. earlier this year asserted that ethnic cleansing is occurring in western Tigray. The term refers to forcing a population from a region through expulsions and other violence, often including killings and rapes.

“It is critical that leaders within the EU are raising the alarm bell,” Human Rights Watch researcher Loretta Bader told the AP. “There is now ample evidence of widespread atrocities having been committed against civilians in Tigray. ... But so far the international response is nowhere near matching the magnitude of the crisis.”

She called on the EU to take “further concrete steps, bilaterally and in international fora, to prevent further atrocities and human suffering.”

## Top medical adviser says ‘no fans’ safest for Tokyo Olympics

By STEPHEN WADE and MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — The safest way to hold the Tokyo Olympics is without any fans, the top medical adviser to the Japanese government said in a report on Friday.

Dr. Shigeru Omi’s recommendation seems to put him at odds with organizers and the International Olympic Committee with the Olympics opening in just five weeks on July 23.

Fans from abroad were banned several months ago, and organizers are to announce early next week if some local fans should be allowed.

“We believe the risks of infections inside venues would be lowest by holding the event with no fans,” said the report, which was compiled by a group of 26 experts led by Omi, a former World Health Organization official. It was submitted to the government and Olympic officials

Widely circulated reports say the government wants to allow up to 10,000 people at some sports and

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cultural events. This policy is expected to be applied to the Olympics with smaller ceilings at smaller venues, and differences for indoor and outdoor venues.

"We believe it would be most desirable not to have fans inside venues," Omi told a news conference on Friday after submitting the written report. "Regardless of holding the Olympics or not, Japan has continuing risks of a resurgence of the infections that puts pressure on the medical systems."

Omi said that putting fans in the venues increased the risk — and not only there but afterward as people exit. He said the Olympics easily get more attention from the public than other sporting events and are likely to trigger more movements and more partying.

Seiko Hashimoto, the president of the local organizing committee, said that the final decision on fans was likely to be made Monday in a meeting with organizers, the IOC, the Tokyo metropolitan government, the Japanese government, and the International Paralympic Committee.

Hashimoto said if Tokyo decides to allow fans, the rules will have to be much stricter than for half-filled stadiums in Japan for baseball or soccer. She also said organizers would have to be ready to suddenly ban local fans if conditions change.

"Dr. Omi has indicated that ideally the best way is to hold the games without spectators — that was his recommendation," Hashimoto said. "But if we are to hold the games with spectators, Dr. Omi also had his recommendations."

Hashimoto said she had consulted with baseball and soccer officials in Japan, where games with fans have been largely problem free.

"But Dr. Omi has also mentioned that the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics are very special," Hashimoto said. "Therefore Dr. Omi has mentioned that we need to be even more stringent than the other sports events. So we need to look at stricter rules. There is this risk of people who come to the games, and after watching they stop by bars and restaurants before going home. So it is recommended that we urge people to go straight home after watching the games."

Ticket sales were to account for \$800 million in income for the organizing committee. Much of it will be lost and government entities will have to make up the shortfall.

Organizers say about 3.6 million-3.7 million tickets are still held by residents of Japan. About 800,000 tickets were returned locally.

The total number of tickets originally announced for the Olympics was about 7.8 million.

The official cost of the Tokyo Olympics is \$15.4 billion, although government audits suggest it is much higher. All but \$6.7 billion is public money.

The IOC is pushing ahead with Tokyo, partly because it depends on broadcast rights sales for almost 75% of its income. Sponsors supply about 18%,

Emergency measures in Tokyo and other prefectures are being lifted on Sunday, although "quasi-emergency" restrictions will remain in place that may limit bar and restaurant hours.

Japan has attributed just over 14,000 deaths to COVID-19 and has controlled the virus better than many countries, but not as well as many in Asia. Only 15% of Japanese have at least one COVID-19 vaccination, and much of the public has been opposed to holding the Olympics.

Poll answers have shifted depending on how the question is phrased, and the country's second-most widely circulated newspaper, the Asahi Shimbun, has said the games should be called off.

## AP-NORC poll: Many Americans resuming pre-virus activities

By ADRIAN SAINZ and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — Many Americans are relaxing precautions taken during the COVID-19 pandemic and resuming everyday activities, even as some worry that coronavirus-related restrictions were hastily lifted, a new poll shows.

The poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that majorities of Americans who were regularly doing so before the pandemic say they are returning to bars or restaurants, traveling and attending events such as movies or sports.

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Just 21% are very or extremely worried about a COVID-19 infection in their inner circle — the lowest level since the pandemic began — and only 25% are highly concerned that the lifted restrictions will lead to additional people being infected in their community.

Andrea Moran, a 36-year-old freelance writer and mother of two boys, said she feels both relief and joy at the chance to resume “doing the little things,” such as having drinks on a restaurant patio with her husband.

“Honestly, I almost cried,” Moran said. “It’s such a feeling of having been through the wringer, and we’re finally starting to come out of it.”

Still, 34% of Americans think restrictions in their area have been lifted too quickly, while somewhat fewer — 27% — say they were not lifted quickly enough. About 4 in 10 rate the pace of reopening about right.

The way Americans approached their daily lives suddenly changed after COVID-19 spread through the U.S. in early 2020. Following the advice of health officials and governments, people isolated in their homes — either alone or with families — to avoid exposure to the virus, which has sickened more than 33 million people and killed 600,000 people in the U.S.

During the height of the pandemic, restaurants, movie theaters and stores either closed or continued operating with limited occupancy; church services, schools and government meetings went virtual; and many employers made working from home an option or a requirement. Mask wearing in public became the norm in most places, with some states and cities making it mandatory.

The emergence of the vaccine has helped slow down rates of infection and death, allowing state and local economies to reopen and leading Americans to return to activities they once enjoyed.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advised last month that vaccinated Americans don’t have to wear a mask in most scenarios, indoors or out. The latest CDC data shows 53% of all Americans — 65% of those 18 and older — have received at least one dose of the vaccine.

According to the AP-NORC poll, American adults who have not yet rolled up their sleeves for the shot remain hesitant to do so. Just 7% of those who have not been vaccinated say they definitely will get a COVID-19 vaccine, and 15% say they probably will.

Forty-six percent of Americans who have not been vaccinated say they will definitely not get a vaccine, and 29% say they probably will not. Young adults, Americans without a college degree, white evangelicals, rural Americans and Republicans are most hesitant to get vaccinated.

The poll finds many Americans are still wearing masks and taking precautions to avoid contact with other people, but the percentage of those doing so is down significantly from just a few months ago.

In late February, 65% said they were always wearing a mask around people outside their households. Now, just 37% say so, though 19% say they often wear one.

Forty percent of Americans say they are extremely or very likely to wear a mask when participating in indoor activities outside their homes, while just 28% say the same about outdoor activities.

Aaron Siever, 36, of New Market, Virginia, said he and his wife have consistently worn masks and taken other precautions, including getting vaccinated. But Siever said virus-related restrictions were not lifted quickly enough, lamenting that some precautions were politicized and caused an “inherent panic.”

“I think with masks being worn and people getting vaccinated, I think we could have opened a little earlier,” said Siever, who maintains the grounds of Civil War battlefields in Virginia. “We started focusing on the politics of reopening, rather than the health.”

Now that most states have lifted restrictions, the poll finds about two-thirds of Americans who used to travel at least monthly say they will do so in the next few weeks. About three-quarters of frequent restaurant or bar-goers before the pandemic say they will now return. A year ago, only about half said they would travel or go to restaurants if they could.

Likewise, more are returning to activities such as visiting friends and family, seeing movies or concerts, attending sporting events and shopping in-person for nonessential items.

In Cookeville, Tennessee, Moran said her family still regularly wears masks in public, especially when they are indoors or around a lot of people. Both she and her husband have been vaccinated. Moran said she has eaten at outdoor restaurants, but she is avoiding indoor dining.



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"Even if the air conditioning circulation is good, I just don't feel comfortable right now going inside, where there's a lot of people in fairly close proximity who I don't know," Moran said.

Moran said her family avoided nonessential travel during the height of the pandemic, canceling a trip to see her brother in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. But last weekend, the family traveled for the first time in more than a year — a roughly 3 1/2-hour road trip to Asheville, North Carolina, to visit a childhood friend.

"I felt a little bit nervous just because being around people is such a surreal thing after so long," Moran said. "I was really excited and I was thrilled for my kids that they were able to get out and get back to some semblance of normality."

## Senator: Military justice changes must go beyond sex cases

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand is on the brink of success in her yearslong campaign to get sexual assault cases removed from the military chain of command. But getting over the finish line may depend on whether she can overcome wariness about broader changes she's seeking to the military justice system.

There is now widespread support for using independent military lawyers to handle sexual misconduct cases, but Gillibrand is promoting legislation that goes beyond that, extending that change to all major crimes. Top Pentagon officials and key lawmakers are open to the sexual assault shift, but they say applying it more broadly requires far more study and debate.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Gillibrand said the wider change is necessary to combat racial injustice within the military, where studies have found that Black people are more likely to be investigated and arrested for misconduct. She intends to press that point in the coming days.

Asked if she might compromise on her bill, Gillibrand said that time has passed. "We've been doing that for eight years. We've been getting something through every year, and some things just don't work. You need this broad-based reform," the New York Democrat said. "This is a bill whose time has come."

For years, however, lawmakers have framed their push for change in the military justice system around problems with sexual misconduct cases. Victims — largely women — have long said they are reluctant to file sexual assault or harassment complaints because they fear they won't be believed or will face retaliation. They've complained that allegations are sometimes dismissed by a good ol' boys network among unit commanders or that attackers get away with minimal punishments.

Those complaints have resonated, and support has grown on Capitol Hill and in the Pentagon, where senior defense leaders acknowledge that, despite years of effort, they've made little progress combating sexual misconduct in the ranks. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for the first time said they were open to taking sexual assault and harassment charges out of the chain of command.

But both also said that extending the change to all major crimes would require more time and review.

Similarly, Sen. Jack Reed, chair of the Armed Services Committee, supports the change for sexual misconduct and said this week that he believes it will get committee approval. But he said he wants more thorough discussion within the committee for changes that affect the entire Uniform Code of Military Justice.

"The worst thing we can do to victims of sexual assault is to move a bill through that can't be implemented effectively or on time, creates too large a workload for too few qualified military judge advocates, imperils prosecutions, leads to convictions being overturned on appeal, or results in neglected cases because the necessary attention cannot be devoted to them," he said.

Reed, a Rhode Island Democrat, said Pentagon estimates indicate the broader bill would require more senior qualified lawyers than the department has, and will take 180 days to implement. He also has repeatedly objected to Gillibrand's efforts to get unanimous approval to move her bill separately to the full Senate for a vote, saying it should be included in the overall defense bill.

Asked about cost, Gillibrand said it will be "very little" because the prosecutors already are in place and they already take the cases to court.

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The Pentagon, however, believes it won't be that simple, and that if lawyers are pulled out of the chain of command to handle major crimes, others will be needed to deal with other cases and duties, such as desertion, military discipline or legal policy reviews.

Jeh Johnson, former Pentagon general counsel, wrote in the Lawfare blog on Wednesday that Gillibrand's bill "appears to require a whole new bureaucracy. ... No one should be under the illusion that the broad mission contemplated by the bill can be carried by a small band of elite JAGs in a suite someplace in northern Virginia."

Johnson said a change for sexual assault crimes is long overdue, but added, "Congress should take care to fashion a solution commensurate with the problem at hand, and not go too far."

Gillibrand, who has 65 other Senate supporters for her bill, acknowledged that overcoming committee leaders' opposition will be a challenge.

"Having the chairman and ranking member opposed to this reform is highly problematic if this bill goes to the committee," said Gillibrand, adding, "It would be easier if the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff or the secretary of defense supported our proposal."

An independent review commission set up by Austin has recommended a similar change for sexual misconduct but did not consider other crimes in its study. Its plan would have judge advocates report to a civilian-led Office of the Chief Special Victim Prosecutor, and they would decide whether to charge someone and if the charge goes to court martial. The panel is expected to give Austin a report on prevention and victim support programs shortly, and he will then send his own recommendations to the president.

The Pentagon, said Gillibrand, will use the panel's initial report "to confuse members of Congress, and they will try to muddy the waters and say, we've already looked at this and they only recommended that sexual assault come out of the chain of command."

She said she hopes lawmakers will be convinced by data that shows racial bias in prosecution decisions made by the military. And she argued that limiting the change to sexual assault would be discriminatory — setting up what some call a "pink" court to deal with crimes usually involving female victims.

"I'm deeply concerned that if they limit it to just sexual assault, it will really harm female service members. It will further marginalize them, further undermine them, and they'll be seen as getting special treatment," she said.

Eugene R. Fidell, a military law expert at New York University Law School, agreed, saying a separate system that largely benefits women will hurt unit cohesion. And he noted opponents' concerns that taking all major crimes out of the chain of command could result in fewer prosecutions. He said that's possible, but added that independent attorneys should make those decisions, and the result would be a higher conviction rate.

Gillibrand is pledging to keep going to the Senate floor, seeking to have her bill considered separately. "I will continue to do so until I convince Jack Reed that he should not stand in front of this bill," she said.

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, June 19, the 170th day of 2021. There are 195 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 19, 1865, Union troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, with news that the Civil War was over, and that all remaining slaves in Texas were free — an event celebrated to this day as "Juneteenth."

On this date:

In 1775, George Washington was commissioned by the Continental Congress as commander in chief of the Continental Army.

In 1911, Pennsylvania became the first state to establish a motion picture censorship board.

In 1917, during World War I, King George V ordered the British royal family to dispense with German titles and surnames; the family took the name "Windsor."

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In 1944, during World War II, the two-day Battle of the Philippine Sea began, resulting in a decisive victory for the Americans over the Japanese.

In 1945, millions of New Yorkers turned out to cheer Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was honored with a parade.

In 1953, Julius Rosenberg, 35, and his wife, Ethel, 37, convicted of conspiring to pass U.S. atomic secrets to the Soviet Union, were executed at Sing Sing Prison in Ossining, New York.

In 1964, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was approved by the U.S. Senate, 73-27, after surviving a lengthy filibuster.

In 1975, former Chicago organized crime boss Sam Giancana was shot to death in the basement of his home in Oak Park, Illinois; the killing has never been solved.

In 1987, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Louisiana law requiring any public school teaching the theory of evolution to teach creation science as well.

In 2009, Texas billionaire R. Allen Stanford was indicted and jailed on charges his international banking empire was really just a Ponzi scheme built on lies, bluster and bribery. (Stanford was sentenced to 110 years in prison after being convicted of bilking investors in a \$7.2 billion scheme that involved the sale of fraudulent certificates of deposits.)

In 2013, actor James Gandolfini, 51, died while vacationing in Rome.

In 2014, Rep. Kevin McCarthy of California won election as House majority leader as Republicans shuffled their leadership in the wake of Rep. Eric Cantor's primary defeat in Virginia.

Ten years ago: Libya's government said NATO warplanes had struck a residential neighborhood in the capital and killed nine civilians, including two children; NATO confirmed hours later that one of its airstrikes had gone astray. Rory McIlroy ran away with the U.S. Open title, winning by eight shots and breaking the tournament scoring record by a whopping four strokes. (McIlroy shot 2-under 69 to close the four days at Congressional in Bethesda, Maryland, at 16-under 268.)

Five years ago: LeBron James and his relentless Cavaliers pulled off an improbable NBA Finals comeback to give the city of Cleveland its first title since 1964 as they became the first team to rally from a 3-1 finals deficit by beating the defending champion Golden State Warriors 93-89. Anton Yelchin, a rising actor best known for playing Chekov in the new "Star Trek" films, was killed by his own car as it rolled down his driveway in Los Angeles; he was 27.

One year ago: Americans marked Juneteenth, a holiday commemorating the emancipation of enslaved African Americans, with new urgency and protests demanding racial justice. Demonstrators across the country defaced and toppled statues and busts of former U.S. presidents, a Spanish missionary and Confederate figures. The mayor of Louisville, Kentucky, said Brett Hankison, one of the three police officers involved in the fatal shooting of Breonna Taylor, would be fired. A day before President Donald Trump's indoor rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the state reported its second-biggest daily increase in its coronavirus case load. The top U.S. Navy officer concluded that the two senior commanders on the USS Theodore Roosevelt didn't "do enough, soon enough" to stem the coronavirus outbreak on the aircraft carrier; the finding upheld the firing of the ship's captain, Brett Crozier, over his plea for faster action to protect the crew. British actor Ian Holm, whose career included roles in "Chariots of Fire" and "The Lord of the Rings," died at 88.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Gena (JEH'-nuh) Rowlands is 91. Hall of Fame race car driver Shirley Muldowney is 81. Singer Elaine "Spanky" McFarlane (Spanky and Our Gang) is 79. Nobel peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi (soo chee) is 76. Author Sir Salman Rushdie is 74. Actor Phylicia Rashad is 73. Rock singer Ann Wilson (Heart) is 71. Musician Larry Dunn is 68. Actor Kathleen Turner is 67. Country singer Doug Stone is 65. Singer Mark DeBarge is 62. Singer-dancer-choreographer Paula Abdul is 59. Actor Andy Lauer is 58. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is 57. Rock singer-musician Brian Vander Ark (Verve Pipe) is 57. Actor Samuel West is 55. Actor Mia Sara is 54. TV personality Lara Spencer is 52. Rock musician Brian "Head" Welch is 51. Actor Jean Dujardin is 49. Actor Robin Tunney is 49. Actor Bumper Robinson is 47. Actor Poppy Montgomery is 46. Alt-country singer-musician Scott Avett (AY'-veht) (The Avett Brothers) is 45. Actor

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Ryan Hurst is 45. Actor Zoe Saldana is 43. Former NBA star Dirk Nowitzki is 43. Actor Neil Brown Jr. is 41. Actor Lauren Lee Smith is 41. Rapper Macklemore (Macklemore and Ryan Lewis) is 39. Actor Paul Dano is 37. New York Mets pitcher Jacob DeGrom is 33. Actor Giacomo Gianniotti is 32. Actor Chuku Modu (TV: "The Good Doctor") is 31. Actor Atticus Shaffer is 23.