

# Groton Daily Independent

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

## Smittys Jr Legion B Nearly Erases 6-Run Deficit In Loss To Groton Jr Legion

Groton Jr Legion built a six-run lead in the fourth inning and then held off Smittys Jr Legion B's charge for a 6-4 victory on Friday. Smittys Jr Legion B scored three runs in the failed comeback on a in the fifth, a single by Dusty H in the sixth, and a fielder's choice by Garret G in the sixth.

In the first inning, Groton Jr Legion got their offense started. Braden A grounded out, scoring one run.

Kaleb H was credited with the victory for Groton Jr Legion. Kaleb went five and a third innings, allowing three runs on two hits and striking out eight. Braden and Jordan B entered the game out of the bullpen and helped to close out the game in relief.

#19 took the loss for Smittys Jr Legion B. undefined lasted six innings, allowing four hits and six runs while striking out four.

Kaleb went 2-for-3 at the plate to lead Groton Jr Legion in hits.

## Groton Jr Legion Can't Catch Up To Smittys Jr Legion B

Groton Jr Legion watched the game slip away early and couldn't recover in an 11-1 loss to Smittys Jr Legion B on Friday. Smittys Jr Legion B scored on a groundout by #12 and a single by Gavyn J in the first inning.

The Groton Jr Legion struggled to put runs on the board and had a tough time defensively containing Smittys Jr Legion B, giving up 11 runs.

Smittys Jr Legion B got on the board in the first inning. #12 grounded out, scoring one run.

Smittys Jr Legion B scored four runs in the third inning. #8, Gavyn, and #3 each drove in runs during the inning.

#21 led things off on the mound for Smittys Jr Legion B. The pitcher surrendered one run on three hits over four innings, striking out five and walking zero.

Kaleb A toed the rubber for Groton Jr Legion. Kaleb lasted two and a third innings, allowing three hits and 11 runs while striking out three. Cade L threw one and two-thirds innings out of the bullpen.

Logan R, Tate L, and Colby D each collected one hit to lead Groton Jr Legion.

Joey K led Smittys Jr Legion B with two hits in three at bats.

## Groton Jr. Teeners Eke Out Four Hits, Not Enough To Best Renner 14U Black

Groton Jr. Teeners out-hit Renner 14U Black four to three, but it wasn't enough in a 13-5 loss on Friday

The Groton Jr. Teeners struggled to put runs on the board and had a tough time defensively containing Renner 14U Black, giving up 13 runs.

Groton Jr. Teeners opened up scoring in the first inning. Korbin Kucker drew a walk, scoring one run.

Renner 14U Black pulled away for good with three runs in the second inning. In the second Jack Stukel drew a walk, scoring one run and Teylor Diegel induced Josh Woelfel to hit into a fielder's choice, but one run scored.

Renner 14U Black scored seven runs in the third inning. Andrew Bloom, Patrick Barnett, Stukel, and Jackson Bjorkman each had RBIs in the big inning.

Joseph Godshall was the winning pitcher for Renner 14U Black. The hurler surrendered five runs on four hits over four innings, striking out seven.

Diegel took the loss for Groton Jr. Teeners. Diegel allowed two hits and 12 runs over two innings, striking out one.

Braxton Imrie led Groton Jr. Teeners with two hits in two at bats.

Stukel went 2-for-2 at the plate to lead Renner 14U Black in hits.

## Women's Rights and Susan B. Anthony

### SOUTH DAKOTA



### HISTORY & HERITAGE

A woman's place was in the home.

Susan Brownell Anthony helped make it possible for a woman's place to be in the home, office, state-houses, military, outer space and other places she might want to be.

Anthony (1820–1906) was a pioneer in the women's suffrage movement in the United States. Her work helped pave the way for the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution. Also known as the Susan B. Anthony Amendment, the 19th Amendment granted women in the United States the right to vote when it was adopted on Aug. 26, 1920.

"It is not easy to realize that when Miss Anthony, a young woman of 33, started out as a pioneer reformer, with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, woman's place was so definitely in the home that Miss Anthony was still in public disfavor for having dared to voice her opinion at a local temperance meeting. Only men were supposed to talk in meetings," stated an article in the Feb. 14, 1937, Washington, D.C. Evening Star for the 117th anniversary of Anthony's birth.

"At that time the statute books of the United States carried many old laws which had come from old English law of the middle ages regarding women. If a married woman worked it was not legal for her to receive her own wages from her employer for that right belonged to her husband.

"If the husband chose to apprentice the children to work and live in strangers' homes without her consent, the law was on his side. He might even will them away after his death. The woman who dared to earn her living in any other work beside keeping boarders or teaching school found it difficult to maintain her reputation for respectability. Inasmuch as young women were not provided with the same educational advantages as their brothers, there was little prospect for their success in any career requiring training. As a teacher young Susan B. Anthony had worked for one-fourth of the salary given men occupying similar positions."

Other tributes to Anthony in the Evening Star stated that, "Unmarried women were 'spinsters,' usually dependent on family generosity ... Wives could not hold property in their own names and children, in case of divorce, belonged exclusively to the father."

"Today, due largely to Miss Anthony's efforts, such conditions seem unbelievable. Suffrage is universal. Women attend our greatest universities. There are more than 11,000,000 women employed in every conceivable occupation and hundreds of thousands of feminine lawyers, physicians and ministers. In the French cabinet, American Congress, English Parliament and council halls of Geneva women are steadily



**It focuses on the lack of rights for women at the beginning of the 19th century. According to Ken Burns in the preface to "Not for Ourselves Alone: The Story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony," women in America born in the first fifth of the 19th century had fewer rights than a male inmate of an insane asylum."**

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finding new opportunities for service," stated a 1936 article in the Evening Star.

Anthony grew up in New York. Her father, Daniel, was a Quaker who raised his children in the belief that women were equal to men and encouraged his children to be self-supporting. After her family was financially ruined during an economic downturn, Susan obtained a teaching position to assist her family financially.

The Anthony family was involved in the most important reform movements of the times – antislavery, temperance and women's rights.

The prejudice Anthony met everywhere against feminine participation in antislavery and temperance movements convinced Anthony that women could work effectively against slavery and liquor abuses only when they had obtained political and economic rights, stated a 1936 article in the Evening Star about Anthony.

"Like every advocate of change she met bitter opposition. 'Hen' and 'unsexed monster' were her usual titles. Tomatoes and rotten eggs often greeted her speeches," according to the Evening Star.

In a telegram from Minneapolis in October 1889, Anthony stated, "The state (South Dakota) is bound by its constitution to submit the question of universal suffrage a year from this time, and we are going to concentrate all our forces in that state from this time on. All the best speakers all the best workers in the woman's suffrage ranks in the United States are to be turned into the field in South Dakota."

This news resulted in the comment in the Wichita Eagle, "Heaven help Dakota and her people."

Despite this comment, people came to see and hear Anthony when she came to South Dakota.

"Everybody wants to see Miss Anthony, and every one does who gets to the meetings in time or can find standing room or gaze at her from the windows," a suffrage worker wrote to The Woman's Journal in June 1890.

Despite the efforts of Anthony and other suffrage leaders, the amendment that would have enabled South Dakota women to vote in all elections was defeated at the Nov. 4, 1890, election.

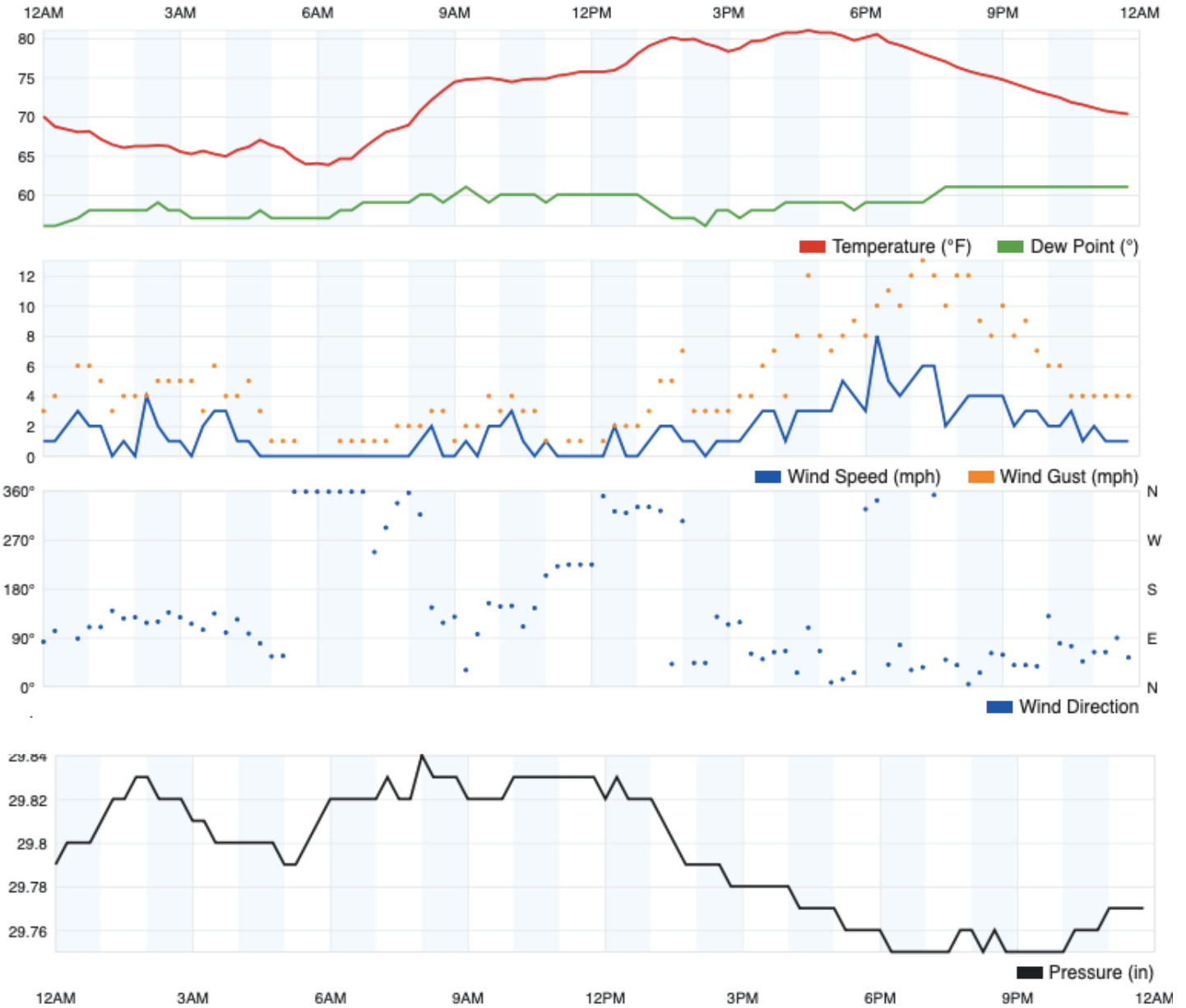
Anthony died at her home in Rochester, N.Y., on March 13, 1906. Fourteen years after her death the cause in which she had spent more than 50 years won its greatest victory when the 19th Amendment became the law of the land.

This moment in South Dakota history is provided by the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation, the nonprofit fundraising partner of the South Dakota State Historical Society at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. Find us on the web at [www.sdhsf.org](http://www.sdhsf.org). Contact us at [info@sdhsf.org](mailto:info@sdhsf.org) to submit a story idea.

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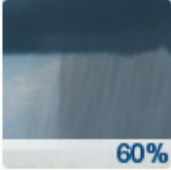




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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
				
60%	20%	50%	20%	30%
Showers Likely	Slight Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms	Slight Chance T-storms	Sunny then Chance T-storms
High: 73 °F	Low: 57 °F	High: 80 °F	Low: 58 °F	High: 81 °F

 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
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## Weekend Forecast


### Today

Partly sunny with a chance  
Of showers/storms, mainly  
East SD  
Highs 71-83°



### Sunday

Partly sunny with a chance  
Of showers/storms  
Highs 75-85°



A system aloft will continue to provide support for isolated/scattered showers and thunderstorms through Sunday over parts of central and northeast South Dakota. #sdwx #mnwx

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## Today in Weather History

June 26, 1998: Heavy rains of 2 to 5 inches fell across much of northern and eastern Brown, western and northern Day and all of Marshall County during the afternoon and evening hours. The additional heavy rain only exacerbated the flooding which had been occurring over much of this area for years. Kidder, in northern Marshall County, received up to 5 inches of rain on the 26th after receiving around 2 inches on the 25th. The heavy rain on the 26th flooded the whole town, filling nearly every basement. One resident had the basement walls cave in. Areas of Britton were also flooded with water in many basements. The heavy rains added to the already thousands of acres of crop and pastureland under water. One farmer in Day County, near Webster, had documented over one-half million dollars in damages to fences, buildings, land, and income from the prolonged flooding. On his farm, he had 15 buildings under water. This farmer said the highest he had measured the water from flooding was 9 feet, but for this year it had gone up to 21 feet. As a result of this and past heavy rains and also many years of above-average precipitation, about 22 percent of the total farm and pastureland acres in the three counties were flooded or too wet to farm. Some rainfall amounts included 2.30 inches at Sand Lake NWR, 2.7 inches at Langford, 2.95 inches at Groton, 3.5 inches northwest of Bristol, and 5.10 inches 9N 9W of Britton.

June 26, 2008: During the evening hours, a compact upper-level low-pressure system tracking through the Northern Plains interacted with a very moist and unstable air mass over western and central South Dakota resulting in a widespread severe weather outbreak. Three confirmed tornadoes occurred briefly in western Dewey County. Little or no damage was reported, and all three tornadoes were rated EF0. In addition to the tornadoes, multiple reports of large hail were received over Corson and Dewey Counties, including some to the size of baseballs near the communities of McLaughlin and Isabel. The large hail broke out many home and vehicle windows and damaged many roofs in Dewey, Corson, and Sully Counties. Significant wind damage occurred over sections of Sully County. There were multiple reports of wind gusts more than 70 mph, with the most concentrated swath of damaging winds extending from near Sutton Bay, eastward to the city of Onida, then southeast to the community of Harrold. The storm survey began near Sutton Bay on Lake Oahe, where a wind gust of 92 mph was recorded. The most significant property damage was found further east near the community of Agar where multiple grain bins were either damaged or destroyed. Nine miles west of Agar, a barn was destroyed, and a large pine tree was snapped in half. Winds in this area were estimated to range from 80 to 100 mph. Near the intersection of Highways 1804 and 175th Street, several Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) electrical transmission towers were collapsed entirely. The damage is consistent with wind speeds ranging from 130-140 mph. In the city of Onida, a bank roof was damaged, and the city was without power until the next day. Four miles north of Onida, a feed wagon was tossed nearly 40 feet. In Harrold, several railroad cars were tipped over. Also of great significance during the event was the peak wind speed of 124 mph recorded at the Onida airport. This wind speed is the strongest wind gust ever measured in the Aberdeen County Warning Area and the 4th highest wind speed ever reported in South Dakota.

1807: Lightning strikes a gunpowder factory in the small European country of Luxembourg, killing more than 300 people. The Luxembourg disaster may have been the most deadly lightning strike in history.

1986: Hurricane Bonnie made landfall on the upper Texas coast. A wind gust to 98 mph occurred at Sea Rim State Park. Ace, Texas recorded a total of 13 inches of rain.





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## ESCAPING DEATH

"The one inescapable fact of life is death. Yet, man usually refuses to face it," wrote a psychologist recently. Then he quoted La Rochefoucauld, who said, "One cannot focus on either the sun or death for any length of time."

But the Psalmist looked at death differently: "Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign Lord comes escape from death!"

Our God, through His Son Jesus Christ, not only saves and delivers us from sin and its consequences in this life but also after death. Salvation, for example, does not assure us of a life of prosperity and worldly success, a life free from sickness and suffering, a life that has no stress or conflict, a life that is all sunshine and no showers. But we do have the assurance of God's forgiveness and the freedom from the law and its curse, from judgment and fear and guilt and certainly death.

And we do have the assurance of Christ's presence in our lives that promises us that "He will never leave us nor forsake us," be with us when we are sick and suffer, will give us His peace "that passes all understanding" when we are stressed and threatened by the challenges of life.

But ultimately and finally "from the Lord comes (our) escape from death." Escape literally means exit. As Christians we can, with David, be assured that while there are many entrances to death – or many ways that we might die – our exit from death has been provided by God's grace through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

This exit from death, however, is also our entrance into heaven.

Prayer: Thank You, Heavenly Father, for saving us and giving us peace and hope and the assurance of eternal life. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign Lord comes escape from death. Psalm 68:20

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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

### **New museum exhibit puts Dakota language at head of class**

By BRIAN AROLA Mankato Free Press

MANKATO, Minn. (AP) — When the Children’s Museum of Southern Minnesota was still in its early stages, its director at the time sought out Glenn Wasicuna for his thoughts on how the Dakota people could be represented in it.

Wasicuna said he recalled being asked if there was an animal they should use to symbolize the Dakota people. He saw it as a teaching moment, and his response might not surprise those who know him from his work as a Dakota language instructor.

“If you want to include the Dakota people here, use the language,” he said.

His guidance led to “ded yahipi kin waste” being displayed at the museum’s entrance as a welcome to visitors.

Wasicuna recounted the memory during his latest visit to the museum — this time for the unveiling of a new exhibit further highlighting Dakota language and art, the Mankato Free Press reported.

Placed right inside the museum’s entrance, the exhibit features textile art by local Dakota artist Gwen Westerman. Each of her textiles represents one of the four seasons, with the words for each in both Dakota and English displayed underneath.

The Dakota words — “bdoketu” for summer, as an example — light up as visitors trace each character with a stick. When pushed, buttons play audio of Wasicuna pronouncing the Dakota words.

The exhibit is a way to teach children about Dakota language and culture, Wasicuna told a gathering of people there for the unveiling.

“It’s all in the spirit of understanding,” he said. “That’s what we want to put forth into the public, because if you understand and know, it’s going to create good relations.”

Wasicuna and Westerman, a couple from Good Thunder, consulted with the museum on the interactive kiosk, which directly faces another visual and audio display of Dakota children inside the entrance.

Funding for the project came from the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community and Minnesota Legacy Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

Andy Vig of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community described the project as a perfect fit for the Native American tribe’s cultural and educational grants. He noted how Wasicuna taught him the Dakota language for a time, and now more people will learn from him through the exhibit.

“Glenn can’t be everywhere, but now he provides this here,” he said.

The exhibit’s placement up front at the entrance is meaningful, Westerman said. It’ll be the first thing people see when they walk in and the last thing they see when they walk out.

“Their commitment to making sure that the Dakota language and culture is a part of the learning experience has been unwavering,” she said.

Planning for the exhibit dates back more than four years. Vice President of Museum Operations Deb Johnson noted it involved Wasicuna and her visiting with members of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community for feedback.

She acknowledged Bud Lawrence, a founder of the annual Mahkato Wacipi, as well as Lawrence’s daughter, Barb Kaus, among those who helped make the project happen. Lawrence died in 2017, while Kaus attended the unveiling.

While thanking everyone who consulted on, supported or constructed the exhibit, Johnson described it as a step toward expanding visitor knowledge about Dakota culture. But continued conversations will be needed about how to build on it, she added.

“It’s not ‘OK, we’ve accomplished something,’” she said. “We’ve taken another step.”

The possibilities seem endless on what comes next, Westerman said, thanks to the longstanding relations developed between museum leaders and Dakota consultants from the museum’s inception.

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"As they expand the outdoor areas or as the exhibits themselves change, they're always looking for opportunities to incorporate Dakota culture and language," she said. "It's ingrained and woven into the vision of this place."

## Dakota State University cyber camp attracts 5 relatives

By MARY GALES ASKREN Madison Daily Leader

MADISON, S.D. (AP) — Enthusiasm is contagious. Nowhere is that more evident this week than at Gen-Cyber Co-ed Camp at Dakota State University. Of the six Madison students in attendance, five are related to one another.

"I've gotten most of my family to come," said Enoch Martin, who is attending the camp for the third time.

The first year he attended, Martin was the only Madison student to do so. This year, he is joined by his brother Calvin and his cousins Grant Hasleton, Nathan Hasleton and Addy Meyer. Maggie Engebretson is also attending.

In a conversation which vacillated between enthusiastic wonder, serious reflection and amusing quips, Martin talked about his experience at the camp which is hosted at DSU annually. Part of a nationwide initiative funded by the National Security Agency and the National Science Foundation, the camps are intended to inspire "the next GENERation of CYBER stars," which gives the camps their name.

DSU piloted the program in 2014.

"It was literally a bar napkin idea," said Kyle Cronin, program director.

The university now hosts three GenCyber camps -- one for high school students in grades 10-12, one for teachers and one for middle school girls.

Students from 16 states are attending the co-ed camp this week. Of the 130 students in attendance, 82 are from South Dakota and approximately one-third are female. Word of mouth has proven to be the camp's best form of promotion, the Madison Daily Leader reported.

"We're playing with things, exposing kids to what they'd learn at the college level," Cronin said in describing the program.

Each day offers both training in the core areas of programming, networking and cybersecurity concepts and a variety of other electives campers can choose to explore. While some electives -- like a sequence in programming in a different language -- sound like traditional computer and cyber training, others sound more like Criminal Activities 101.

Students can learn to pick locks. They can learn how to hijack and decode radio waves used in a wireless society. They do this with wireless doorbells, which is relatively innocuous, but the same concept applies to unlocking car doors, according to Cronin.

"What we want is for the kids to understand how technology really works," he said. Cronin noted that students also learn about situational ethics, about using technology and skills for the right purposes.

In addition to a wide range of learning opportunities, campers get backpacks, water bottles and other swag, including a computer smaller than a hand, called a Raspberry Pi.

In speaking about the camp, Martin referred to this device when talking about the easy camaraderie which exists among the students who attend.

"It's so cool," he said. "Everyone here is into the same things. We're all here for the same thing -- which is probably these Raspberry Pis."

The small computer is used for a variety of sessions, including one called "Headless Pi," which uses only a wireless connection. In other sessions, it's connected to a keyboard and monitor.

"They're so incredibly small. They're so much fun -- and I get it for free," Martin enthused.

One of the sessions he took involved creating a text adventure, which is like a video game that uses text only or a book that allows the reader to create their own adventures. He's planning to use his Raspberry Pi to continue working on the text adventure he started.

Martin also showed off several projects he constructed in classes, including a love detector, which randomly generates a number from one to five when two individuals press buttons at the same time, and a

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sound sensor, which causes LED lights to flash when a microphone picks up sound.

On a more serious note, he talked about the impact the GenCyber camps have had on his future plans.

"It gave me an insight into what I wanted to do," Martin said. He plans to enroll in DSU's new Cyber Leadership and Intelligence program with the goal of going into cyber law.

Because the camps are designed to strengthen the pipeline of individuals who choose to pursue careers in cybersecurity or a related field, this is the kind of outcome desired.

However, Cronin said, it's equally beneficial for those who discover cybersecurity is not of interest to them.

Cronin doesn't know how many of the GenCyber campers have attended DSU since the first camp was offered, but he is certain some do, because he sees the swag years later.

"We give all the students backpacks," he said. "Every year it's a different backpack. When the freshmen are coming onto campus, we see these backpacks."

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

17-20-42-45-65, Mega Ball: 12, Megaplier: 4

(seventeen, twenty, forty-two, forty-five, sixty-five; Mega Ball: twelve; Megaplier: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$50 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$75 million

## Man pleads innocent to vehicular homicide in sibling's death

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City man has pleaded not guilty to vehicular homicide in the death of his brother.

Prosecutors say 34-year-old Larry Walking was drinking alcohol in a parked vehicle with his brother Paul and another passenger in Rapid City last month.

Police say Larry Walking put the vehicle in reverse after his brother got out and ran over him, then put the vehicle in drive and ran over him again.

Authorities say Larry Walking had a blood alcohol content of 0.27, more than three times the legal limit to drive.

Judge Jane Wipf Pfeifle on Thursday denied a defense request to reduce Walking's \$10,000 cash only bond, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Walking also pleaded not guilty to two drunken driving charges in the alternative, which means he could be convicted of one or neither of them, but not both.

## EXPLAINER: South Dakota has \$315M to aid struggling renters

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A federal freeze on most evictions that was enacted last year is scheduled to expire July 31, after the Biden administration extended the date by a month. The moratorium, put in place by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in September, has been the only tool keeping millions of tenants in their homes. Many of them lost jobs during the coronavirus pandemic and have fallen months behind on their rent.

Landlords successfully challenged the order in court, arguing that they also had bills to pay. They pointed out that tenants could access more than \$45 billion in federal money set aside to help pay rents and related expenses.

Advocates for tenants say the distribution of the money has been slow and that more time is needed to distribute it and repay landlords. Without an extension, they feared a spike in evictions and lawsuits

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seeking to boot out tenants who are behind on their rent.

As of June 7, roughly 3.2 million people in the U.S. said they would face eviction within the next two months, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey. The survey measures the social and economic effects of the coronavirus pandemic every two weeks through online responses from a representative sample of U.S. households.

Here's the situation in South Dakota:

**WHAT'S THE STATUS OF EVICTION MORATORIUMS IN THE STATE?**

South Dakota does not have its own eviction moratorium, leaving only the CDC moratorium.

**WHAT'S BEING DONE TO HELP PEOPLE FACING EVICTION?**

South Dakota has received \$360 million in federal funds to help tenants with outstanding rent, utility payments and other expenses. The money can go toward 15 months of rent and other expenses, including internet access. Renters who pay 30% of their income toward rent and earn 80% or less of their area's median income qualify.

So far, only a small fraction of the funds have been sent to renters. The South Dakota Housing Development Authority, which oversees the funds, estimates that it has distributed about \$10.7 million to 1,475 tenants.

Brent Thompson, the executive director of East River Legal Services, said there is a lack of awareness about the federal assistance available for renters facing evictions.

**HOW ARE THE COURTS HANDLING EVICTION ACTIONS?**

Thompson said during the CDC moratorium that courts have halted many eviction actions or landlords have decided not to file them.

Eviction filings have dipped during the pandemic. According to the state court system, evictions decreased by about 10% after the pandemic hit in March 2020. This year, evictions filings have been even lower, decreasing by about 22% from pre-pandemic levels.

**HOW AFFORDABLE ARE THE STATE'S MAJOR RENTAL MARKETS?**

South Dakota's rental housing market has tightened, partly due to the strong economy and a shortage of affordable housing. From 2015 through 2020, rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Sioux Falls, the state's largest city, increased by 17%, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The state's vacancy rate was about 7% before the pandemic, which roughly matched the national average.

Data on rental housing during the pandemic hasn't been released yet. But lawmakers have sounded the alarm about a run on affordable housing during the pandemic and formed a special committee to try to find solutions to the problem. Republican Rep. Roger Chase, who also works as a realtor, said this month that the housing market is as tight as he's seen in over 30 years.

**ARE EVICTIONS EXPECTED TO CREATE A SURGE IN HOMELESSNESS?**

It's hard to say how much homelessness will increase in South Dakota. Thompson, of East River Legal Services, expects evictions and eviction-related lawsuits to spike after the CDC's moratorium ends. One indication of the scope of the problem is census data estimating that there are 21,500 adults in the state who are not confident they will be able to pay next month's rent.

Thompson feared the moratorium's end would create a "crisis event" in evictions, and his legal clinic is bracing for a surge in people facing evictions or owing multiple months of rent.

"Housing was already a very serious problem and you are adding literally a natural disaster that is a worldwide pandemic," he said. "It's just the perfect storm."

## Health officials release proposed medical marijuana rules

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Department of Health's proposed rules for medical marijuana include a \$100 annual fee for card holders and a \$5,000 yearly fee for businesses that sell the cannabis.

The state health agency released 105 pages of draft rules this week that include license fees, the renewal process, packaging guidelines and security plans, among other things.

"The proposed administrative rules are one of many steps our department has taken to develop a safe

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and responsible medical cannabis program in South Dakota, as the voters intended," South Dakota Health Secretary Kim Malsam-Rysdon said.

The businesses that sell medical marijuana would have to renew their commercial licenses every year.

Each employee of a commercial cannabis business would also have to be certified by the state health department and could not have violent offenses on their background report within the last 10 years, the Argus Leader reported.

While the initial application fee and the cost of renewing a medical marijuana ID card is \$100, the draft rules include exemptions for low income individuals. The application and annual renewal fees are reduced to \$20 for individuals at 130% or less of the federal poverty level.

The proposed rules require approval from the Legislature's Rules Review Committee, which is expected to formally consider them in September.

Although a voter-passed law legalizing medical marijuana takes effect July 1, the state has until November to start issuing ID cards, meaning people wouldn't be able to legally buy medical cannabis until then.

## 'Deep fire' slowing rescue effort at collapsed Florida condo

By RUSS BYNUM and FREIDA FRISARO Associated Press

SURFSIDE, Fla. (AP) — Fire and smoke coming from deep inside the concrete and metal remains of a collapsed 12-story condominium tower near Miami hampered rescue efforts Saturday as emergency workers raced to recover any survivors beneath the mountain of rubble.

Rescuers used infrared technology, water and foam to battle the blaze, whose source was unclear, and Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava said the smoke has been the biggest challenge. In a news conference, she described the blaze as "very deep" and said rescuers faced "incredible difficulties" because of the flames.

A firehose blasted one of the lower floors on the north side of the tower as white smoke or steam streamed out, and a bitter, sulfur-like smell hung in the air.

"The stench is very thick," said Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, speaking alongside the mayor.

One hundred fifty-nine people were still unaccounted for two days after Thursday's collapse, which killed at least four.

Authorities announced they are beginning an audit of buildings nearing their 40-year review — like the fallen Champlain Towers South — to make sure they're safe. The mayor asked other cities in the county to join the building review and said there will be state and federal funding to help.

Federal Emergency Management Agency officials have joined local and state authorities at the site, DeSantis said. He added that a nearby "sister building" of the collapsed tower is also being looked at because it was built at the same time and with the same designer.

Surfside Mayor Charles Burkett said he was working on a plan to temporarily relocate residents of the Champlain Towers North, which was constructed the same year and sits about 100 yards away from the collapsed building, and that FEMA has agreed to pay for lodging.

Burkett added that he was also trying to arrange an emergency inspection and until that happens, he can't tell residents whether they're safe in their homes.

"I know that the identical building collapsed for an inexplicable reason," Burkett said. "Buildings in the United States do not just fall down. ... Something very, very wrong was going on at that building, and we need to find out."

The mayor said he didn't plan to order residents to evacuate, but if he lived there, "I'd be gone."

Surfside city staffers were also gathering details about a third building, Champlain Towers East, which was built in a different style and appears to have been constructed at a different time.

The news came after word of a 2018 engineering report that showed the building had "major structural damage" to a concrete slab below its pool deck that needed extensive repairs, part of a series of documents released by the city of Surfside.

The report from the firm of Morabito Consultants did not warn of imminent danger from the damage,

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and it is unclear if any of the damage observed was responsible for the collapse. But the report noted the need for extensive and costly repairs to fix systemic issues with the building.

It said the waterproofing under the pool deck had failed and had been improperly laid flat instead of sloped, preventing water from draining off.

The firm recommended that the damaged slabs be replaced in what would be a major repair.

The report also uncovered "abundant cracking and spalling" of concrete columns, beams and walls in the parking garage. Some of the damage was minor, while other columns had exposed and deteriorating rebar. It also noted that many of the building's previous attempts to fix the columns and other damage with epoxy were marred by poor workmanship and were failing.

Beneath the pool deck "where the slab had been epoxy-injected, new cracks were radiating from the originally repaired cracks," the report said.

Gregg Schlesinger, a former construction project engineer who is now a lawyer handling construction defect cases, said another area of concern in the report is cracks that were discovered in the tower's stucco facade. Schlesinger said that could indicate structural problems inside the exterior that could have been critical in the collapse.

"The building speaks to us. It is telling us we have a serious problem," Schlesinger said in a phone interview Saturday.

He added that there are frequently "telltale signs" on oceanfront buildings indicating problems structurally largely from saltwater and salty air intrusion.

"This is a wakeup call for folks on the beach. Investigate and repair. This should be done every five years," Schlesinger added. "The scary portion is the other buildings. You think this is unique? No."

A crane could be seen removing pieces of rubble from a more than 30-foot pile of debris at the collapse site. Scores of rescuers used big machines, small buckets, drones, microphones and their own hands to pick through the rubble.

Rachel Spiegel was anxious for any update on her missing mother, 66-year-old Judy Spiegel, who lived on the sixth floor.

"I'm just praying for a miracle," Spiegel said. "We're heartbroken that she was even in the building."

Jeanne Ugarte was coming to grips with what she feared was a tragic end for longtime friends Juan and Ana Mora and their son Juan Jr., who was visiting his parents in their condo at the tower.

"I know they're not going to find them (alive)," Ugarte said. "It's been too long."

While officials said no cause for the collapse early Thursday has been determined, DeSantis said a "definitive answer" was needed in a timely manner. Video showed the center of the building appearing to tumble down first, followed by a section nearer to the beach.

The 2018 report was part of preliminary work by the engineering company conducting the building's required inspections for a recertification due this year of the building's structural integrity at 40 years. The condominium tower was built in 1981.

## Report showed 'major' damage before Florida condo collapse

By CURT ANDERSON and BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — The oceanfront condominium building that collapsed near Miami had "major structural damage" to a concrete structural slab below its pool deck that needed to be extensively repaired, according to a 2018 engineering report on the building.

The report was among a series of documents released by the city of Surfside as rescuers continued to dig Saturday through rubble in an effort to find any of the 159 people who remain unaccounted for after the collapse. At least four people were killed.

While the engineering report from the firm of Morabito Consultants did not warn of imminent danger from the damage — and it is unclear if any of the damage observed was responsible for the collapse — it did note the need for extensive and costly repairs to fix the systemic issues with Champlain Towers South.

The report said the waterproofing under the pool deck had failed and had been improperly laid flat



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instead of sloped, preventing water from draining off.

"The failed waterproofing is causing major structural damage to the concrete structural slab below these areas. Failure to replaced the waterproofing in the near future will cause the extent of the concrete deterioration to expand exponentially," the report said.

The firm recommended that the damaged slabs be replaced in what would be a major repair.

The report also uncovered "abundant cracking and spalling" of concrete columns, beams and walls in the parking garage. Some of the damage was minor, while other columns had exposed and deteriorating rebar. It also noted that many of the building's previous attempts to fix the columns and other damage with epoxy were marred by poor workmanship and were failing.

Beneath the pool deck "where the slab had been epoxy-injected, new cracks were radiating from the originally repaired cracks," the report said.

These were all problems that should have been dealt with quickly, said Gregg Schlesinger, an attorney specializing in construction defects and a former construction project engineer.

"The building speaks to us. It is telling us we have a serious problem," Schlesinger said in a telephone interview Saturday about the new documents. "They (building managers) kicked the can down the road. The maintenance was improper. These were all red flags that needed to be addressed. They weren't."

Frank Morabito, the consulting firm's president, did not immediately respond Saturday to an email seeking comment.

Abi Aghayere, a Drexel University engineering researcher, said the extent of the damage shown in the engineering report was notable. In addition to possible problems under the pool, he said several areas above the entrance drive showing signs of deterioration were worrisome and should have been repaired immediately.

"Were the supporting members deteriorated to the extent that a critical structural element or their connections failed leading to progressive collapse?" he wrote in an email to the AP after reviewing the report. "Were there other areas in the structure that were badly deteriorated and unnoticed?"

The building was in the midst of its 40-year recertification process, which requires detailed structural and electrical inspections. In an interview Friday, Surfside Mayor Charles Burkett said he wasn't sure if the inspection had been completed, but he said it may contain vital clues.

"It should have been a very straightforward thing," Burkett said. "Buildings in America do not just fall down like this. There is a reason. We need to find out what that reason is."

The 12-story tower's collapse Thursday morning has also raised questions over whether other similar buildings are in danger.

"This is a wake-up call for folks on the beach," Schlesinger said. "The scary portion is the other buildings. You think this is unique? No."

Details of the building's 40-year recertification inspection will be made public once they are completed, Surfside Town Clerk Sandra McCready said in an email.

Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava said at a news conference Friday that she has seen no evidence of a sinkhole — much more common in other parts of Florida — or of something criminal, such as a bomb.

"I can tell you that at this time, they haven't found any evidence of foul play," she said.

Beyond that, much focus is on ocean water, which is rising in South Florida and elsewhere because of climate change. Last year, Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis signed into law a measure that would require developers to complete sea-level rise studies before beginning publicly funded projects.

One theory is that the saltwater ubiquitous in the area, which is subject to flooding during so-called King Tide events, intruded into concrete supports, corroding the steel-reinforcing rebar inside and weakening the concrete.

Meanwhile, the land on which Champlain Towers sat has been gradually sinking, according to a study published last year by an environmental professor at Florida International University.

But the professor, Shimon Wdowinski, cautioned against blaming the collapse on the caving ground.

"In most cases, these buildings just move," he said in a video interview released by the university. "There's

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no catastrophic collapse like in the case in Surfside, which was very unfortunate.”

Surfside officials say roof work was ongoing at the now-collapsed tower but have downplayed the possibility that work was a cause. Barry Cohen, a lawyer who escaped the crippled building with his wife, said the roof work could be part of a “perfect storm” of causes that combined to bring down the structure.

“They were doing a new roof. And I think, all day long, the building was pounding and pounding and pounding. They’ve been doing it for over a month,” Cohen said.

Another issue is whether nearby construction might have caused vibrations that weakened Champlain Towers. Cohen said he raised concerns previously that the work was possibly causing cracked pavers on the pool deck.

The collapse is already drawing lawsuits, including one filed hours after the collapse by attorney Brad Sohn against the condo’s homeowners association seeking damages for negligence and other reasons for all of the tower’s residents.

The association, the lawsuit contends, “could have prevented the collapse of Champlain Towers South through the exercise of ordinary care, safety measures and oversight.”

An attorney for the association, Ken Direktor, did not respond Friday to an email requesting comment.

## All Aboard! 1st post-pandemic cruise ship readies to sail

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and MARTA LAVANDIER The Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — The first cruise ship to leave a U.S. port since the coronavirus pandemic brought the industry to a 15-month standstill is preparing to set sail with nearly all vaccinated passengers on board.

Celebrity Edge will depart Fort Lauderdale, Florida, at 6 p.m. Saturday with the number of passengers limited to about 40 percent capacity, and with virtually all passengers vaccinated against COVID-19. Celebrity Cruises, one of Royal Caribbean Cruise’s brands, says 99% of the passengers are vaccinated, well over the 95% requirement imposed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“Words can’t describe how excited we are to be a part of this historic sailing today,” said Elizabeth Rosner, 28, who moved from Michigan to Orlando, Florida, in December 2019 with her fiancé just to be close to the cruise industry’s hub.

To comply with both the CDC’s requirement and a new Florida law banning businesses from requiring customers to show proof of vaccination, Celebrity Cruises is asking guests if they would like to share their vaccination status. Those who do not show or say they are vaccinated face additional restrictions.

Saturday’s sailing kicks off the cruise lines’ return to business with Carnival vessels already scheduled to depart from other ports next month.

“This is an emotional day for me. When I stepped on board the ship, I was proud. It’s a beautiful ship,” said Royal Caribbean Cruises’ CEO Richard Fain, after expressing condolences to the victims of the Surfside building collapse, less than 15 miles (about 24 kilometers) south of the port.

Celebrity Cruises had unveiled the \$1 billion boat in December 2018 — betting on luxury cruising, offering a giant spa and multifloor suites. The ship will be led by Capt. Kate McCue, the first American woman to captain a cruise ship, who has more than 1 million followers on TikTok.

“You can truly feel the palpable sense of excitement and energy amongst the group as we prepare for our welcoming of our first guests,” McCue said. “I’ve never honestly seen a group so excited to get back to work.”

Industry officials are hoping all goes smooth to move past a chapter last year of deadly outbreaks on cruise ships that prompted ships to be rejected at ports and passengers to be forced into quarantine. Some passengers died of COVID-19 at sea while others fell so ill they had to be carried out of the vessels on stretchers.

The CDC extended no-sail orders repeatedly last year as the pandemic raged, and came up with strict requirements for the industry that have already been contested in court by the state of Florida. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis says the industry generates billions for the state’s economy.

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On Saturday, officials at Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale said only that port lost more than \$30 million in revenue in fiscal year 2020 from the cruise shutdown.

During that hiatus, Carnival, Norwegian and Royal Caribbean, the three largest cruise companies, have had to raise more than \$40 billion in financing just to stay afloat. Collectively they lost \$20 billion last year and another \$4.5 billion in the first quarter of 2021, according to Securities and Exchange Commission filings.

The pandemic forced Kurt and Carol Budde to cancel their beach celebration wedding aboard the world's largest ship, Symphony of the Seas, in March 2020. COVID-19 halted cruising six days before they were scheduled to tie the knot in St. Maarten. Kurt Budde's part-time gig as a travel agent also dried up.

"It's a honeymoon make-up cruise," said Kurt Budde, sporting matching shirts with the phrase "On Cruise Control."

"We are living our best lives post COVID today," he said.

## **J&J agrees to pay \$230M to settle New York opioid claim**

NEW YORK (AP) — Johnson & Johnson has agreed to pay \$230 million to New York state to settle claims that the pharmaceutical giant helped fuel the opioid crisis, Attorney General Letitia James said on Saturday.

The drugmaker also agreed to permanently end the manufacturing and distribution of opioids across New York and the rest of the nation, James said in a statement announcing the settlement.

The company "helped fuel this fire, but today they're committing to leaving the opioid business — not only in New York, but across the entire country," she said.

The deal involving a lawsuit brought by James in 2019 removes Johnson & Johnson from a trial that is slated to begin next week on Long Island — part of a slew of litigation over an epidemic linked to nearly 500,000 deaths over the last two decades.

In its own statement on Saturday, Johnson & Johnson downplayed the attorney general's announcement. It said the settlement involved two prescription painkillers — developed by a subsidiary and accounting for less than 1% of the market — that are already no longer sold in the U.S.

The settlement was "not an admission of liability or wrongdoing by the company," Johnson & Johnson said. It added that its actions "relating to the marketing and promotion of important prescription pain medications were appropriate and responsible."

The settlement was the latest development in the complicated universe of opioid-related lawsuits across the U.S. that has drawn comparisons to the multistate litigation against tobacco companies in the 1990s. It reflects a path being taken by some big drug companies that see settling as in their best interests, in part because that route would likely not cost as much as losing in court repeatedly.

Johnson & Johnson — along with distributors AmerisourceBergen, Cardinal Health and McKesson — made public last year that they were offering a total of \$26 billion over 18 years to settle all the cases they face, with the money going to abate the crisis.

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## Authorities puzzle over motive for German knife attack

By CHRISTOPH NOELTING and GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

WUERZBURG, Germany (AP) — The suspect in a knife attack in southern Germany that left three women dead was ordered kept in custody Saturday on suspicion of murder, while authorities puzzled over a possible motive, examining his mental health and seeking to determine whether he was radicalized.

The attack started late Friday afternoon when the suspect walked into a store in Wuerzburg, went to the household goods department and asked a saleswoman where the knives were, regional police chief Gerhard Kallert said. He then grabbed a knife and fatally stabbed three women in the store, before continuing to attack people outside. Six people, most of them women, were seriously injured, and one of them remained in a life-threatening condition on Saturday.

Videos posted on social media showed people surrounding the attacker and trying to hold him at bay with chairs and sticks. The 24-year-old Somali was then stopped with a shot to the leg by police and arrested.

On Saturday, he was brought before a judge, who ordered him held in jail pending a possible indictment on suspicion of three counts of murder, six of attempted murder and dangerous bodily harm; and another of bodily harm.

The man arrived in Germany in May 2015 and was granted “subsidiary protection,” a status that falls short of full asylum. He had been in Wuerzburg since 2019, and was living in a homeless shelter.

Officials said he didn’t have a criminal record, but there were two incidents earlier this year that resulted in him being sent briefly to a psychiatric hospital. In January, he got into an argument with residents and staff at the shelter and brandished a kitchen knife, prosecutor Wolfgang Gruendler said.

He didn’t attack or hurt anyone, but an investigation was opened and he was temporarily admitted to a psychiatric hospital. That investigation is still ongoing and a psychiatric evaluation is still outstanding.

Earlier this month, there was an incident in which someone gave him a lift and he didn’t get out of the car. That again resulted in his admission to a psychiatric unit, but he was released after a day, prosecutors said. They said there had been no pattern of increasing problems.

Authorities also were looking at the possibility of the man having been radicalized as an Islamic extremist. Kallert said a store detective and police officers reported hearing the suspect say “Allahu akbar,” Arabic for “God is great.” Bavaria’s top security official, Joachim Herrmann, said that “further cautious indications” in that direction emerged from his questioning, without elaborating. Material with “hate messages” also was found but has yet to be evaluated, police said.

As to whether the man was mentally ill or radicalized, “we don’t know either one thing or the other for sure at the moment, but I just want to note that they don’t rule each other out,” Herrmann said. Authorities were examining a mobile phone and other evidence.

The case was handed over to prosecutors in Munich, the state capital, but not to federal prosecutors, who in Germany deal with terror cases.

A fellow resident of the shelter who said he was among 10-12 people who tried to stop the suspect stabbing anyone else until police arrived on Friday described the man as being “always alone, not talking

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to the other people." He added that "he was strange all the time."

"Thank God we people managed to scare him a little bit, distract him, he got tired, and thank God it didn't turn out even worse," the man, whose name was given only as Kadir A., told RTL television.

Herrmann described using a shot to the leg to stop an assailant as a "textbook" move. Bavaria's rules on use of police weapons state that firearms should only be used to make perpetrators unable to attack or flee, and that a shot which is near-certain to kill is only permitted if it's the only way to prevent danger to the life of others.

The rules call for officers to aim at the legs where possible.

## Disappearances rise on Mexico's 'highway of death' to border

By MARK STEVENSON Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — As many as 50 people are missing after setting out on three-hour car trips this year between Mexico's industrial hub of Monterrey and the border city of Nuevo Laredo on a well-traveled stretch of road local media have dubbed "the highway of death."

Relatives say family members simply vanished. The disappearances, and last week's shooting of 15 apparently innocent bystanders in Reynosa, suggest Mexico is returning to the dark days of the 2006-2012 drug war when cartel gunmen often targeted the general public as well as one another.

"It's no longer between the cartels; they are attacking the public," said activist Angelica Orozco.

As many as half a dozen of those who disappeared on the highway are believed to be U.S. citizens or residents, though the U.S. Embassy could not confirm their status. One, José de Jesús Gómez from Irving, Texas, reportedly disappeared on the highway on June 3.

Most of the victims are believed to have disappeared approaching or leaving the cartel-dominated city of Nuevo Laredo, across the border from Laredo, Texas. About a half-dozen men have reappeared alive, badly beaten, and all they will say is that armed men forced them to stop on the highway and took their vehicles.

What happened to the rest, including a woman and her two young children, remains a mystery. Most were residents of Nuevo Leon state, where Monterrey is located. Desperate for answers, relatives of the missing took to the streets in Monterrey on Thursday to protest, demanding answers.

Orozco, a member of the civic group United Forces for Our Disappeared, said the abductions seem to mark a return to the worst days of Mexico's drug war, like in 2011 when cartel gunmen in the neighboring state of Tamaulipas dragged innocent passengers off buses and forced them to fight each other to the death with sledgehammers.

Then, as now, politicians and prosecutors have given the families of the disappeared few answers.

"Now, more than 10 years after the disappearances in 2010 and 2011, they cannot continue to use the same pretexts," said Orozco. But "they're using the same lines. ... In the last decade they were supposed to have created institutions and procedures, but it's the same old story of authorities doing nothing."

United Forces for Our Disappeared sent out a press statement on May 19 warning people about the dangers on the Monterrey-Nuevo Laredo highway, even though by mid-May the group had received only about 10 reports of people disappearing there. More reports poured in in June, and now amount to about 50.

The government of Nuevo Leon state acknowledged 10 days later that it had received reports of 14 people who had disappeared on the highway so far in 2021, along with five more in neighboring Tamaulipas, where Nuevo Laredo is located.

But Nuevo Leon didn't warn people against traveling on the highway until almost a month later on June 23.

That was too late for Gómez, and for Javier Toto Cagal, a 36-year-old truck driver and father of five who disappeared along with three employees of the same trucking company on the 135-mile (220 km) stretch of highway on June 3. They were driving to Nuevo Laredo in a car.

"Up to now, we don't know anything about (what happened to) them," said Erma Fiscal Jara, Toto Cagal's wife. "It wasn't until June 5 that the company called me to say 'your husband has disappeared.' As far as the authorities, I ask and they say 'we don't know anything.'"

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Even after acknowledging the abductions, the Nuevo Leon state government suggested it was Tamaulipas' problem. The Nuevo Leon government also gave confusing information, first claiming to have rescued 17 people after abductions on the highway, then later acknowledging those victims had made it home on their own.

It wasn't until Friday that both state governments announced a joint program to increase policing and security on the highway, a step that, if it had been carried out a month earlier, might have saved dozens of lives.

"Only now is the National Guard going out to patrol the highway. Why did they wait so long?" asked Karla Moreno, whose husband, truck driver Artemio Moreno, disappeared on the road on April 13. She too is horrified that northern Mexico is reliving the experiences of a decade ago. "How can this be happening? We were supposed to have more (law enforcement) resources by now."

Nuevo Laredo has long been dominated by the Northeast Cartel, a remnant of the old Zetas cartel, whose members were infamous for their violence.

Mexico security analyst Alejandro Hope said the highway disappearances and the June 19 events in Reynosa — when gunmen from rival cartels drove through the streets, randomly killing 15 passersby — were reminiscent of the attacks on civilians during the 2006-2012 drug war.

In 2008, a drug cartel in the western city of Morelia tossed hand grenades into a crowd during an Independence Day celebration. In 2011, cartel gunmen in Tamaulipas abducted dozens of men from passenger buses and made them fight each other to the death, either as a recruitment tool or for entertainment.

"It is something that happens episodically; it never completely stopped," Hope said of the attacks on civilians. The only thing that has changed, Hope said, was the rhetoric.

Officials in the early 2000s were often quick to repeat an old belief that drug cartels only killed each other, not innocent civilians. This time around, both in the Reynosa killings and highway abductions, officials quickly acknowledged the victims appeared to be innocent civilians.

"That argument, that 'they only kill each other' isn't heard so much anymore," Hope said.

## States hesitant to adopt digital COVID vaccine verification

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

Customers wanting to wine, dine and unwind to live music at the City Winery's flagship restaurant in New York must show proof of a COVID-19 vaccination to get in. But that's not required at most other dining establishments in the city. And it's not necessary at other City Winery sites around the U.S.

If City Winery tried doing such a thing at its places in Atlanta and Nashville, "we would have no business, because so many people are basically against it," said CEO Michael Dorf.

Across the U.S., many hard-hit businesses eager to return to normal have been reluctant to demand proof of vaccination from customers. And the public and the politicians in many places have made it clear they don't care for the idea.

In fact, far more states have banned proof-of-vaccination policies than have created smartphone-based programs for people to digitally display their vaccination status.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention still recommends masks when dining or gathering indoors for those who aren't fully vaccinated. But few states require it, and most businesses rely on voluntary compliance — even in places with low vaccination rates where COVID-19 cases are climbing.

Digital vaccine verification programs could make it easier to enforce safeguards and tamp down new outbreaks.

"But that only works when you have mass adoption, and mass adoption requires trust and actual buy-in with what the state health department is doing, which is not necessarily present in all states," said Alan Butler, executive director of the Electronic Privacy Information Center, a Washington-based nonprofit organization.

Hawaii is the only state enforcing some version of a vaccine passport. It requires travelers to upload a photo or PDF of their Hawaii vaccination document or pass a pre-arrival COVID-19 test to avoid having

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to quarantine for 10 days.

Earlier this month, California became just the third state — behind New York and Louisiana — to offer residents a way to voluntarily display digital proof of their COVID-19 shots. None of those states requires the use of their digital verification systems to access either public or private-sector places.

By contrast, at least 18 states led by Republican governors or legislatures prohibit the creation of so-called vaccine passports or ban public entities from requiring proof of vaccination. Several of those — including Alabama, Florida, Iowa, Montana, North Dakota and Texas — also bar most businesses from denying service to those who aren't vaccinated.

"Texas is open 100%, and we want to make sure that you have the freedom to go where you want without limits," Gov. Greg Abbott said in signing a law against vaccine passports.

The prohibition doesn't apply to the demands employers make on their employees. Earlier this month, a federal judge in Texas threw out a lawsuit from 117 Houston hospital employees who challenged a workplace requirement that they get vaccinated. More than 150 were later fired or resigned for not getting their shots.

In Louisiana, under a Republican-passed bill facing a potential veto from Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards, public facilities would not be allowed to bar unvaccinated people until the COVID-19 vaccines have received full approval from the Food and Drug Administration. The vaccines for now are being dispensed under emergency FDA authorization.

In May, Louisiana launched a program allowing residents using the state's digital driver's license, LA Wallet, to add a record of their COVID-19 vaccination.

But its reach is still limited. About 105,000 people have activated the COVID-19 verification function. That's about 14% of those with a digital license and less than 4% of Louisiana's 3.1 million people with valid driver's licenses.

Democratic state Rep. Ted James, who wrote the bill creating the digital driver's license, said he has used the feature just once — to show an Uber driver in Nevada that he didn't need to wear a mask. But James said he has never been asked to show it in Louisiana and doubts he ever will.

"Earlier in the year, I felt that at some point we would be limited in travel, going to certain places, unless we had the vaccine," James said. Now, "I don't foresee us ever having some type of requirement."

As a step in reopening, New York in March launched its Excelsior Pass, the first state system to provide digital proof of COVID-19 vaccination or a recent negative test. As of early June, more than 2 million people had gotten the digital pass — about one-fifth of those who have been vaccinated.

At the City Winery, most customers bypass the Excelsior Pass and instead show their paper CDC vaccination cards to gain entry, according to Dorf, who said patrons at the 1,000-person capacity venue "appreciate going into a bubble of safety, knowing that everyone around them is vaccinated."

Though larger ticketed events, like concerts at Madison Square Garden, require proof of vaccination, most businesses don't ask.

"Think of a bar," said Andrew Rigie, executive director of the New York City Hospitality Alliance. "You have four friends that go in — maybe two of them have it, the other two don't. You're going to turn the other two away when small businesses are struggling so much?"

Though most states have shied away from creating digital vaccination verification systems, the technology may soon become widespread nonetheless.

Vaccine providers such as Walmart and major health care systems already have agreed to make digital COVID-19 vaccination records available to customers. Apple also plans to incorporate the vaccination verification function into a software update coming this fall.

Within months, hundreds of millions of people across the U.S. will be able to access digital copies of their COVID-19 vaccination records, said Brian Anderson, chief digital health physician at the nonprofit MITRE Corp., part of a coalition of health and technology organizations that developed such technology.

People will receive QR codes that can be stored on smartphones or printed on paper to be scanned by anyone seeking vaccine verification. Those who scan the codes won't retain any of the information — a

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protection intended to address privacy concerns.

The California Chamber of Commerce said it welcomes the state's new vaccine verification system as a way for employers to check on their employees. California regulations require most employees who aren't fully vaccinated to wear masks when dealing with others indoors.

Digital vaccine verification "allows an employer who really wants to make sure the workplace is vaccinated to require that without having the impossible problem of 'John says he's vaccinated but he lost his vaccine card. What do we do?' This solves that issue," said Rob Moutrie, a policy advocate at the California Chamber of Commerce.

## In Georgia, Herschel Walker puts GOP in a holding pattern

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The recently ousted former senator who wants her old job back. A football hero considering his first run for office. Little-known politicians eyeing promotions. And a former president overshadowing them all in a state he lost last November.

Republicans' U.S. Senate nomination in a premier battleground like Georgia is a plum political prize, but a year before GOP voters choose a nominee for the 2022 midterms, they have no clear options. That leaves some power players worried about the party's chances to defeat freshman Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock as they try to reclaim a Senate majority.

The glaring unknown as potential contenders consider their plans: whether political neophyte Herschel Walker will enter the race with the endorsement of his close friend, Donald Trump. Walker is a beloved Heisman Trophy winner and retired professional football star who played in the short-lived U.S. Football League when Trump was a team owner in the 1980s. Now, Trump is the former president who has divided Georgia Republicans with promises of vengeance against those he insists didn't do enough to help him overturn his defeat.

Together, they may be the most popular duo among Georgia Republicans.

Walker, who has joined in Trump's false assertions that the 2020 election was fraudulent, has stoked chatter about a Senate bid for months and discussed the race with national party leaders including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and Florida Sen. Rick Scott, head of the GOP's Senate campaign committee.

Trump has publicly encouraged Walker to enter the primary.

Walker, who recently attended Trump's private birthday celebration, has not indicated when he'll announce a decision. But the mere possibility of him running is enough to leave other would-be candidates in a holding pattern in a state where Democratic victories in 2020 highlighted Republicans' narrow margin of error.

The GOP bench most notably includes former Sen. Kelly Loeffler, who lost to Warnock in a January special election runoff, and U.S. Rep. Buddy Carter, a four-term congressman from near Savannah who has never run statewide.

Eric Tanenblatt, a top national Republican fundraiser and a principal at the law firm Dentons, called the GOP indecision "unfortunate" and warned that Warnock, the first Black senator from Georgia, will be a "formidable candidate" with a fundraising head start and no significant primary opposition as he seeks his first full Senate term.

"I guess my hope is that if Herschel does it, he decides to do it sooner than later," Tanenblatt said. "You have people waiting to jump on board, but it almost becomes a little too late."

Walker, 59, stirred fresh speculation about a Senate bid with a recent social media post showing the longtime Texas resident beside a car with a Georgia license plate. In the video, Walker declared himself "ready" to "run with the big dogs." But he has not set up any visible political operation in Georgia, and it's still not clear he's established residency in the state. He had no presence at the annual state Republican convention or district and county conventions earlier this spring, leaving some Republicans frustrated.

"You've got to get out there and meet people, and it takes time to do that" in an expansive, populous state, said Jack Kingston, a former south Georgia congressman and 2014 Senate candidate. "Republican primary voters get mad easily if you don't come to their events, even if you're Herschel Walker."



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That's a contrast to a handful of declared candidates, led by Gary Black, the longtime state agriculture commissioner, and would-be candidates like Loeffler and Carter.

Loeffler, who had been the Senate's wealthiest member, has traveled the state since her defeat to pitch her new political organization, Greater Georgia. She bills it as a conservative retort to Democrat Stacey Abrams' Fair Fight group.

The former senator also met recently with McConnell to talk about running again. A Republican close to Loeffler described the conversation as encouraging and suggested McConnell is intrigued by Loeffler's ability to self-fund. The Republican spoke on condition of anonymity to speak frankly about Loeffler's plans.

To be sure, national Republican leaders are not clamoring publicly for a Walker candidacy. The National Republican Senatorial Committee, which Florida's Scott leads, has no plans to take sides in any open primary, according to aides. McConnell, who has his own political operation and fundraising network, has made no such commitment.

Loeffler and Carter, meanwhile, are already deferring to the potential celebrity candidate: Carter has said publicly he wouldn't run if Walker does, and Loeffler's allies say it remains unlikely she'd be willing to tangle with him either.

Still, that doesn't mean Republicans are ready for a coronation.

"Herschel is the ultimate wild card -- high upside, but plenty of risk," said Chip Lake, a Republican strategist in Georgia and around the South.

Randy Evans, a Georgia Republican and U.S. ambassador to Luxembourg under Trump, argued that Walker, who is Black, could expand the GOP's appeal among Black votes in a general election, denting a Democratic advantage that helped elect Warnock. Other Republican players say that notion is exaggerated.

In the smoothest scenario, Walker would leverage his statewide fame and business success — he owns a Georgia-based poultry supplier, among other interests — to bridge the gap between the Trump's strident base and the more moderate middle that helped tilt Georgia to Democrats in 2020.

"If Herschel runs, Donald Trump will come to Georgia as many times as Herschel will have him," Evans predicted.

Tanenblatt countered: "That cuts both ways."

Indeed, Walker could sail through a primary as Trump's preferred choice but fall short in November in the Atlanta suburbs where the former president's imprimatur is a liability and where Republicans lost electoral votes and two U.S. Senate seats.

"There are traditional Republicans and donors who are still salty about losing those Senate seats, and they blame the president," said Tanenblatt.

Then there are the worst-case scenarios some Republicans muse about privately: Walker could simply wilt under the pressures of a nationalized campaign. He has written previously about his struggles with mental illness and likely would have to discuss that again, while also facing scrutiny on policy matters he's never had to address in detail. He could end up either a weak nominee or a primary flame-out who leaves the GOP scrambling for an alternative.

"This whole thing just captures the issue for Republicans right now in Georgia," said Lake. "We have a whole lot of Republicans who love Donald Trump and everyone who supports him. And we have a faction that just wants to move on. To win, we have to get those two groups to vote for the same person without realizing it. Can Herschel Walker or anybody else do that?"

## Victims in Miami condo collapse came from around the world

By REGINA GARCIA CANO, ROXANA HEGEMAN and JOCELYN GECKER Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — A Filipino-American who loved to play the piano and her Chilean husband lived on the 10th floor of the building. One flight down were Cuban immigrant grandparents who had dreamed of retiring at the beach. And just a week ago, a young Paraguayan arrived to work as a nanny.

The Champlain Towers South condominium was a true reflection of Miami's international mix — South American immigrants, Orthodox Jews, foreign retirees. The 12-story building's stunning collapse on Thursday

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quickly became a symbol of international tragedy, as families around the world hoped for news of loved ones in a terrified state of limbo.

Among them is Richard Luna, who is praying for a miracle but already speaking of his sister in the past tense. Lady Vanessa Luna Villalba, a nanny newly come from rural Paraguay, is among the 159 people still missing in the disintegration of the condominium into a smoldering heap of twisted metal and concrete in Surfside, Florida, just north of Miami.

"She had many hopes of progressing and helping our parents," said Richard Luna, who is anxiously watching news reports in Paraguay. "We are emotionally devastated."

A child of farmers, the 23-year-old Luna had studied nursing, but was looking after the three children of a Paraguayan family who helped her get a passport. The children are also missing along with their parents, Sophia López Moreira Bó and Luis Pettengil, the sister- and brother-in-law of the president of Paraguay. The first lady flew to Miami.

Officials on Friday still didn't know exactly how many residents or visitors were in the building at the time. A clearer picture emerged from diplomatic dispatches and overseas news reports: Israeli media said the country's consul general in Miami, Maor Elbaz, believed that 20 citizens of that country are missing. Another 22 people were unaccounted for from Argentina, Venezuela, Uruguay and Paraguay.

By Friday evening, authorities had helped family members from over a dozen countries get visas to travel to Florida, Sen. Marco Rubio said in a tweet.

The horror of seeing hard-to-watch video of the tower's collapse was compounded by the shock of its location: America.

"You don't think that can happen here in the United States," said Sergio Lozano Jr., whose grandparents Antonio and Gladys Lozano, both in their 80s, are among the missing.

The couple emigrated from Cuba years ago, and the elder Lozano, now retired, worked in banking. Until a day ago, they were living out their dream in unit 903 of the seaside tower.

"My grandfather always said when he retired, he wanted to retire on the beach," said Lozano Jr. "He wanted to be able to walk out on his balcony and look at the beach."

Their son, Lozano Jr.'s father, lived just two buildings away. On Thursday night, the family ate dinner together.

Lozano Jr. said his father woke up at 1:30 in the morning to a thundering noise that sounded like a tornado and went to his balcony to bring in the outdoor furniture. He looked out at the condo.

It was no longer there.

He called Lozano Jr. and woke him up with these words: "They are gone."

Juan Mora Sr. and his wife Ana were also immigrants from Cuba, and part of a tight-knit Cuban American community. Their son Juan Jr., was born in the U.S. and worked as an executive for Morton Salt in Chicago. Throughout the pandemic, he stayed away from his elderly parents, but was visiting when the building collapsed.

"He was doing his best to keep them safe," said longtime friend Danny Ugarte, who grew up with Juan Jr. He was the envy of his friends as a child, Ugarte said, because his mother worked for Delta Airlines and he got to travel the world.

Ugarte's mother, Jeanne, was close with Ana Mora, who did so much for her community, her children, and her church — many times all at once. They took their sons as children to Santo Domingo on missionary trips to help build churches and bridges.

"She was a very devout Catholic, a genuinely caring and loving person," said Ugarte, in an emotional telephone interview. "We would sleep on the ground on mats, and she was so dedicated."

The Ugartes are trying to stay positive, but Jeanne is resigned.

"I know they're not going to find them (alive)," she said. "It's been too long."

Among six missing Colombian natives is a family of three that came to the U.S. weeks ago to get the COVID-19 vaccine and have a vacation.

Luis Fernando Barth, 51, the director of a nonprofit organization; his wife Catalina Gómez, a 45-year-old

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lawyer; and their daughter Valeria Barth, 14, are from the western Colombia city of Medellín. They were renting apartment 204 and were not supposed to be there. They had traveled to another beach location and planned to return to the rental on Thursday.

"Unfortunately, they decided to advance the trip, and arrived at the apartment again on Wednesday," said the woman's brother-in-law, José Luis Arango, who last spoke to them Wednesday evening.

For the Velasquez family, this was supposed to be a time of togetherness after the coronavirus pandemic had kept them apart.

Theresa Velasquez traveled from California to visit her parents, Julio and Angela. All three of them were in the building when it collapsed, said her uncle, Fernando Velasquez.

Julio, 66, born in Colombia, was a devout Catholic retired from the insurance industry. He enjoyed soccer and traveling with his wife, Angela, who owned a clothing store. He was also writing a book about religion, said his brother, who spoke to him on the phone almost every day.

"He was a breath of fresh air. He was a peacemaker. He was a joy," said Fernando Velasquez, who lives in Elmhurst, N.Y. He called his sister-in-law, Angela, "a beautiful person,...always smiling, always ready to assist in any way, shape or form."

Fernando had returned from an evening mass when he heard of the collapse and picked up the phone. "I called, and of course you don't get any answers," he said. "That's how you know."

Fernando said he and his wife visited in April and slept in the condo, but he didn't notice anything wrong. "It could have been us," he said. "It could have been all of us."

Also among the missing South Americans was a prominent Argentinian plastic surgeon, his husband and their young daughter.

Dr. Andrés Galfrascoli, 45, has an office in Buenos Aires, but took his family to Miami because he couldn't work in Argentina's capital during the pandemic. His husband, Fabián Núñez, 55, is a producer and theater director.

"Andrés is one of the best surgeons in the country, very low profile, very honest," a friend, Flavia Martínez, told a local TV station. "I spoke to him the day before yesterday, he told me that he was fine, that he was resting."

The family had been in Miami since April and had enrolled their 6-year-old daughter, Sofía, in a local school. They were one of the first same-sex Argentine couples to have a baby by surrogacy, and had said they were eager for another child.

A Chilean man, Claudio Bonnefoy, and his Filipino-American wife, Maria Obias Bonnefoy, lived on the 10th floor of the building. The husband, 85, a lawyer, is the second cousin of former Chilean President and High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet.

His wife Maria, 69, was an artist who loved to play the piano and was very close to her sibling, Dulce Obias Manno. Manno said throughout the pandemic, her sister was extremely cautious, going out just to buy food — only to suffer this unexpected tragedy.

"My sister is everything for me," said Manno, 66, who traveled from Virginia in hopes of finding her sister alive. "She is my brain, my conscience, my model."

Surfside is also home to a large Jewish Orthodox community, and families crowd the sidewalks before sunset walking to services for the Sabbath. In the Orthodox community, thoughts turned not just to the grim likelihood of multiple deaths but how to handle inevitable burials.

According to Jewish custom, true virtue or "Chesed Shel Emes" means the entire body and all its parts, including limbs, blood and tissue, must be collected for burial. Bodies are also not allowed to be left overnight or exposed in the open.

Zaka World, a volunteer organization in Israel, specializes in the painstaking work of collecting the entire body. International director David Rose, said in mass casualty disasters like that in Miami, they use DNA samples for blood and tissue, carefully collecting it from the concrete and other surfaces. In some cases, however, certain parts may not be matched to the deceased.

"Everything gets collected and everything gets buried," Rose said. "It might not be with the person it belongs to, but that's the most important thing — that it gets buried."

Rabbi Sholom D. Lipskar, the founder of The Shul of Bal Harbour, the Orthodox Jewish synagogue near the building collapse, said his community is still praying for miracles as rescue teams continued to search for survivors. He could not say exactly how many members of Surfside's Jewish community were unaccounted for.

"It's a very large group of people, unfortunately," he said. "The circumstances are very, very grim."

## Trump targeting GOP impeachment voter at Ohio revenge rally

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former President Donald Trump will return to the rally stage this weekend, holding his first campaign-style event since leaving the White House as he makes good on his pledge to exact revenge on those who voted for his historic second impeachment.

Trump's event at Ohio's Lorain County Fairgrounds, not far from Cleveland, will be held Saturday to support Max Miller, a former White House aide who is challenging Republican Rep. Anthony Gonzalez for his congressional seat. Gonzalez was one of 10 GOP House members who voted to impeach Trump for his role in inciting the deadly Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol building.

Trump wants them to pay.

The rally, held five months after Trump left office under a cloud of violence, marks the beginning of a new, more public phase of his post-presidency. After spending much of his time behind closed doors building a political operation and fuming about the last election, Trump is planning a flurry of public appearances in the coming weeks. He'll hold another rally in Florida over the July Fourth weekend unattached to a midterm candidate and will travel to the southern border next week to protest President Joe Biden's immigration policies.

The rally also comes as Trump is facing immediate legal jeopardy. Manhattan prosecutors informed his company Thursday that it could soon face criminal charges stemming from a wide-ranging investigation into the former president's business dealings. The New York Times, citing sources familiar with the matter, reported that charges could be filed against the Trump Organization as early as next week. Trump has denounced the investigations as nothing more than a "witch hunt" aimed at damaging him politically.

Although Trump remains a deeply polarizing figure, he is extremely popular with the Republican base, and candidates have flocked to his homes in Florida and New Jersey seeking his endorsement as he has tried to position himself as his party's kingmaker.

Trump has said he is committed to helping Republicans regain control of Congress in next year's midterm elections. But his efforts to support — and recruit — candidates to challenge incumbent Republicans who have crossed him put him at odds with other Republican leaders who have been trying to unify the party after a brutal year in which they lost control of the White House and failed to gain control of either chamber of Congress.

So far, nine of the 10 House Republicans who voted for Trump's impeachment have drawn primary challengers. And Trump has offered to support anyone who steps forward to challenge the remaining candidate, Rep. John Katko of New York, [syracuse.com](http://syracuse.com) reported.

"We're giving tremendous endorsements," Trump boasted Friday morning as he called into the conservative Newsmax channel and explained his endorsement rationale.

"Fake Republicans, anybody that voted for the impeachment doesn't get it," he said. "But there weren't too many of them. And I think most of them are being, if not all, are being primaried right now, so that's good. I'll be helping their opponent."

Gonzalez, a former college and professional football player, has stood by his impeachment vote in the face of fierce criticism from his party's conservative wing, including his censure by the Ohio Republican Party.

At the same time, Trump continues to obsess over his ongoing efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 election, which he insists he won, even though top election officials, his own attorney general and numerous judges have said there is no evidence of the mass voter fraud he alleges.

On Monday, he told the conservative Real America's Voice that he had never conceded the race or ad-

mitted defeat. And he publicly entertained the idea that he could somehow be reinstated into office, even though no legal or constitutional basis for doing so exists.

At the same time, he continues to tease the possibility that he will mount a comeback run for the White House in 2024. Aides say Trump, who was banned from Twitter and Facebook after Jan. 6, will make a decision after the midterms next fall.

Trump's rallies have been an instrumental part of his political brand since he launched his 2016 campaign. The former reality star is energized by performing in front of his audiences and often test-drives new material and talking points to see how they resonate with the crowd. His political operation also uses the events to collect critical voter contact information from attendees and as fundraising tools.

And they have spawned a group of hardcore fans who traveled the country, attending dozens of rallies, often camping out overnight to snag prime spots. Some of those supporters began lining up outside the venue days early this week as they reunited for the event.

## Finland sees spike in virus cases from returning soccer fans

By JARI TANNER Associated Press

HELSINKI (AP) — Finnish health authorities have detected a spike in coronavirus cases that has been traced to soccer fans returning from neighboring Russia following European Championship matches in St. Petersburg.

The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare on Saturday urged "all passengers who have traveled from St. Petersburg to Finland by any bus company to apply for a coronavirus test."

"Any bus or minibus may have been exposed," the institute said.

Finland played two of its Euro 2020 group games in St. Petersburg, facing Russia on June 16 and Belgium on Monday. At least 2,000 Finns are estimated to have traveled to the city for those matches.

The Finns finished in third place in their group and were eliminated. Russia was also eliminated after finishing last.

St. Petersburg hosted six games in the group stage of the tournament and will host one of the four quarterfinal matches on Friday.

Authorities in the Russian city tightened anti-coronavirus restrictions last week in an effort to curb a spike in new infections. That included closing food courts in the city's shopping malls and its Euro 2020 fan zone.

The Finnish health institute's director, Mika Salminen, told public broadcaster YLE that more than 120 virus cases have so far been detected from passengers returning from St. Petersburg, mostly soccer fans, and the number is likely increase.

Though the Finnish Border Guard was prepared for heavy return traffic from St. Petersburg, the key Vaalimaa border station got badly jammed Tuesday with lines of dozens of buses carrying soccer fans and hundreds of cars waiting for the required coronavirus test after border formalities.

As the queue got longer and the border station was to be closed, Finnish authorities decided to let passengers into the country without testing, on the condition they would take one at their respective home region after arrival.

Finnish health officials said earlier this week that they traced some of the infections to a German beer hall-style restaurant in St. Petersburg.

There are two main crossing points between the countries in eastern Finland, making it a trip of between 180-220 kilometers (112-135 miles) from the border to St. Petersburg.

The Russian city's population of more than 5 million nearly equals the entire population of Finland.

According to the latest information from Russia's national coronavirus taskforce, there were 8,457 new infection cases in Moscow and 1,247 in St. Petersburg detected in the past few days.

Finland is one of the least affected European countries by coronavirus with just under 95,000 cases and 969 deaths detected since the start of the pandemic. The 1,340-kilometer (832-mile) long Finnish-Russian land border has been closed for passenger travel from both sides since March 2020 and remains so with certain exceptions, such as traveling to Euro 2020 matches.

## NCAA declares NC State out of CWS because of COVID-19 issues

By ERIC OLSON AP Sports Writer

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Vanderbilt will advance to the College World Series finals after North Carolina State was forced to drop out because of COVID-19 protocols, the NCAA announced early Saturday.

NC State had only 13 players available during its 3-1 loss to the Commodores on Friday. The teams were scheduled to meet again Saturday afternoon in a winner-take-all Bracket 1 final.

The NCAA Division I Baseball Committee declared that game a no-contest.

"This decision was made based on the recommendation of the Championship Medical Team and the Douglas County Health Department," the NCAA said in a statement. "As a result, Vanderbilt will advance to the CWS Finals.

"The NCAA and the committee regret that NC State's student-athletes and coaching staff will not be able to continue in the championship in which they earned the right to participate. Because of privacy issues, we cannot provide further details."

Vanderbilt returns to the finals for a second straight time. The Commodores won the 2019 CWS. There was no tournament last year because of the pandemic.

The Commodores will meet Mississippi State or Texas in the best-of-three finals starting Monday.

NC State players and coaches gathered at home plate to take pictures around the CWS logo early Saturday, after the rain-delayed Texas-Mississippi game was completed.

NC State was missing four starting position players and had only 13 of its 27 players available for its Friday game, which was delayed an hour after the NCAA said it needed time to complete "health and safety protocols." NC State said "several players" had entered the COVID-19 protocol.

"The last 24 hours have been extremely difficult for everyone involved and my heart goes out to the student-athletes, coaches and staff of our baseball program," NC State athletic director Boo Corrigan said in a statement on Saturday morning.

"The health and safety of our student-athletes and staff will always be our unwavering priority. The timing of this is simply devastating for everyone involved, but it doesn't diminish their incredible accomplishments this season."

After the game on Friday, North Carolina State coach Elliott Avent grew frustrated and wouldn't answer directly when asked if he or the baseball program encouraged players to be vaccinated.

"My job is to teach them baseball, make sure they get an education and keep them on the right track forward," he said. "But I don't try to indoctrinate my kids with my values or my opinions. Obviously, we talk about a lot of things. But these are young men that can make their own decisions and that's what they did."

Avent rolled his eyes when asked if he's been vaccinated.

"If you want to talk baseball, we can talk baseball," he said. "If you want to talk politics or stuff like that, you can go talk to my head of sports medicine, Rob Murphy."

NC State did not immediately respond to a request for an interview with Murphy.

The NCAA does not require athletes, coaches and other staff working closely with a team to be tested for COVID-19 if they are fully vaccinated and showing no symptoms. Those who are not vaccinated must be tested at NCAA championships. Tests are done every other day at the CWS.

Avent said he found out there was a problem 45 minutes to an hour before the game. He told ESPN during an in-game interview that players not with the team were getting tested Friday afternoon and, if the results were negative, could have had a chance to play in the rematch Saturday.

The regulars in the lineup were Austin Murr, who moved from first to left field; Jonny Butler, who moved from left to center; Luca Tresh at his usual catcher spot; Devonte Brown in his usual spot in right field; and Vojtech Mensik, who moved from third base to shortstop.

Carson Falksken played second in place of J.T. Jarrett, Eddie Eisert was the designated hitter instead of Terrell Tatum, DeAngelo Giles moved into Vojtech's spot at third and Sam Highfill, the No. 2 starting

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pitcher, played first base.

Avent said he gave his available players the choice to play or forfeit Friday. They all wanted to play, he said.

Avent told reporters Monday an illness was running through the team, but made no mention of it possibly being COVID-19. He said associate head coach Chris Hart had been sick for five or six days and that Jarrett and pitcher Cameron Cotter weren't feeling well.

The pandemic heavily disrupted college sports over the past year and three teams dropped out of an NCAA championship event because of COVID-19: The VCU men's basketball team, the Michigan men's ice hockey team and the Rice women's volleyball team.

## A father and daughter's grave marks the cost of Yemen's war

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

MARIB, Yemen (AP) — Among the growing number of graves of the war dead in the cemetery of the Yemeni city of Marib, one tombstone stands out. It has two "martyrs" listed — a father and his young daughter.

Taher Farag and his 2-year-old Liyan were inseparable, their family say. So earlier this month, when Farag drove to the market to buy food for his wife to make lunch, he took Liyan with him.

Along the way, he stopped at a gas station in Marib's Raudah neighborhood to fill his tank. It was then, as they waited in line, that the ballistic missile fired by Yemen's Houthi rebels hit the station, followed by the blast of an explosives-laden drone. The gas station went up in a ball of flame, incinerating vehicles in line.

At least 21 people were killed, including Farag and his daughter, in the June 5 attack, according to Liz Throssell, a spokeswoman for the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights.

It was the deadliest single attack in the monthslong grind of an offensive launched by Houthi rebels trying to capture Marib, the last stronghold of the Yemeni government in the country's north. Since February, the rebels have been waging their assault, making only slow progress as Saudi-backed government fighters dig in to defend the city and Saudi airstrikes inflict casualties on the rebels.

The Houthis have fired ballistic missiles and sent drones into Marib as well, often hitting civilian areas and camps for displaced people. More than 120 civilians have been killed, including 15 children, and more than 220 wounded in the past six months, according to the government.

At home, Farag's wife Gamila Saleh Ali heard the explosion. She didn't think her husband and daughter were in danger — there are plenty of explosions in Marib. Still, she called his phone to be safe. There was no answer. She called again and again, each time no answer.

Then came the scream of her husband's mother, who lives in the same building. She went out and found her family weeping. "I realized that Liyan and her father were martyred," the 27-year-old said. "I returned to my room and prayed to God."

"She was a fun-loving child," she said of Liyan, while cradling the couple's 10-month-old son. "Her dad adored her. He used to tell me, 'Liyan is mine, and the boy is yours.' ... He was so attached to her and she was so attached to her father."

The 32-year-old Farag was once a farmer in his hometown of Kharif in northwestern Yemen, before fleeing with his family after the Iran-backed Houthis overran most of the country's north in 2014, including the capital, Sanaa.

Like many driven from their homes, he settled in Marib, a seemingly safe refuge outside Houthi territory. He was able to find work driving a taxi. The area is now home to some 2.2 million displaced people, many of them crowded into camps on the city's outskirts, according to official statistics.

They find themselves caught in one of the last active fronts in a war that has dragged on for nearly seven years, between the Houthis and the government, which controls much of the south and is backed by a Saudi-led coalition. The war has been largely stalemated for years but continues to wreak destruction, killing more than 130,000 people and spawning the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

The same day as the strike on the gas station, an Omani delegation landed in Sanaa for talks with rebel

leaders, including the group's religious and military leader, Abdel-Malek al-Houthi. Pressure is mounting on the Houthis to stop their Marib offensive and agree on a nationwide cease-fire, paving the way for peace talks.

In the meantime, Marib's residents endure the frequent blasts of missile and drone attacks.

Mohammed Ali al-Houthi, the head of the rebels' Supreme Revolutionary Committee, said the missile strike targeted a military position and called for an independent investigation. He did not provide evidence.

The gas station is located several hundred meters (yards) from the perimeter fence of a military camp.

"The blast was strong, so strong. It sent me flying far," said one worker at the station being treated at Marib's main hospital. His right leg was broken, and he was burned over much of his body. He spoke on condition he not be named for the safety of family living in Houthi-held territory.

"We found shrapnel and remains of burned bodies. There were screams," said Eissa Mohammed, who lives across the street.

Farag and Liyan's bodies, charred beyond recognition, were found inside his burned-out taxi, hugging each other, officials and family said.

"So we buried them in the same grave," said Farag's younger brother, Ayed.

## **EXPLAINER: Dental, vision and hearing benefits for Medicare**

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Many working-age people assume that Medicare covers just about every kind of health care that an older person may need.

It doesn't.

Some of the biggest gaps involve dental, vision and hearing services. Medicare does not cover dental cleanings or root canals. It doesn't cover everyday eyeglasses and contact lenses. It doesn't cover hearing aids.

Now Democrats are trying to make those benefits a standard part of Medicare under massive, multi-faceted legislation expected later this year to advance President Joe Biden's ambitious domestic agenda.

Many consider such as expansion of the program overdue. But that doesn't mean it will be easy.

### **WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS?**

Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., and other progressives are leading the push for dental, vision and hearing coverage. Their goal is to provide a comprehensive benefit available to as many Medicare recipients as possible without delays such as an extended phase-in period.

But adding more benefits to Medicare is expensive, and the idea will have to compete with other priorities on Democrats' health care wish list.

Republicans are expected to unite in opposition to the far-reaching Biden agenda legislation into which Medicare benefits would get spliced. Democrats would have to pass the bill under special budget rules allowing a simple majority to clear the Senate.

"It's way too soon to handicap the odds," said Tricia Neuman, a Medicare expert with the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation.

### **HOW WOULD THE NEW BENEFITS BE PROVIDED?**

The simplest approach seems to involve making dental, vision and hearing coverage a component of Medicare Part B, which pays for outpatient care.

Part B is voluntary, but the vast majority of Medicare's more than 60 million beneficiaries sign up. There's a premium, and most people now pay \$148.50 a month. While not cheap, that's actually considered a good deal because taxpayers cover 75% of the overall cost of the insurance. Premiums would be expected to rise with richer benefits, but the cost would be spread broadly.

On a side note, most people with private Medicare Advantage plans now have some level of dental coverage, but that can vary greatly. If dental, vision and hearing benefits were standard under Part B, the Medicare Advantage plans would have to provide them as well.

### **WHAT KINDS OF SERVICES WOULD BE COVERED?**



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Though details will take a while to flesh out, comprehensive dental coverage would include regular preventive care such as cleanings and X-rays, minor work such as fillings, and major work including root canals, crowns and dentures.

Vision coverage would include eyeglasses and contacts, plus the needed exams and fittings. Hearing coverage would include hearing aids and their maintenance, as well as audiology services.

HOW MUCH WOULD THIS ALL COST?

Again, that's unclear because key details such as the scope of benefits and cost sharing by Medicare beneficiaries haven't been determined.

But a 2019 bill from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., carried a price tag of almost \$360 billion over 10 years.

Of that, \$238 billion would have paid for dental care, \$30 billion would have paid for vision care, and \$89 billion would have paid for hearing services, the Congressional Budget Office estimated.

The coverage expansion was part of broader legislation that would have empowered Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices. Some of the savings from drug costs would have been plowed back into the program.

Pelosi's bill passed the House, but went nowhere in the Senate. Democrats are still using its approach as a template.

WHAT'S THE NEED?

Dental, vision and hearing are considered integral to good health.

An older person with hearing problems who cannot afford hearing aids may find herself in a deepening state of isolation that can exacerbate depression. Dental infections can spread through the bloodstream to other parts of the body.

But a 2019 Kaiser Foundation report found that nearly 2 out of 3 Medicare recipients had no dental coverage, and nearly half had not seen a dentist in the past year. About 1 in 7 had lost all their teeth.

Black and Hispanic enrollees were far less likely to have visited a dentist in the past year.

"It is obviously a big, gaping hole in the Medicare program," said David Certner, legislative director for AARP.

WHY DOESN'T MEDICARE COVER DENTAL, VISION AND HEARING?

Experts say the reason probably dates back to 1965, when the program was created.

It was modeled after the kinds of private health insurance that were then most commonly available. And those were built around hospitalization and visits to the doctor's office.

Another big gap in coverage — retail pharmacy prescription drugs — wasn't addressed until 2003.

WHAT ELSE ISN'T COVERED BY MEDICARE?

Long-term care.

## Sen. Portman still champions bipartisanship, against tide

By DAN SEWELL Associated Press

CINCINNATI (AP) — For a moment this past week, it was like the old days in Washington. President Joe Biden, a Democrat, smiled as he announced a bipartisan deal. He turned to and put his hand on Republican Sen. Rob Portman's shoulder, a gesture meant to signal a closeness.

But Portman, a three-decade Washington veteran who plans to retire next year, stayed tight-lipped.

"I wasn't smiling because look, I'm all for bipartisanship, but I'm also not naive," Portman told The Associated Press Friday, during a break in a daylong series of calls about the infrastructure deal announced Thursday. "I also knew that the package ... had a long way to go."

The Ohio senator said he wasn't surprised when the hard-won breakthrough started to sink. Republicans complained Biden had blindsided them by tying passage of the agreement to a larger companion package being negotiated by Democrats.

Portman has reason for the pessimism. He has watched in his low-key manner as his party took a hard right turn under President Donald Trump and Washington drifted away from bipartisan governing. He an-

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nounced in January he would not seek a third term, saying it had become too hard to get things done.

But Portman has been trying. He worked through the night repeatedly as the lead Republican negotiator in a bipartisan group on the effort to fix the nation's bridges, roads, and ports, sometimes hosting sessions in a hideaway in the Senate basement. For him and a handful of other lawmakers, the talks have become something of a test of whether Washington can still work.

"If we can't find it on infrastructure, I don't know where else we can find it," Portman said. "I hate to say that and I don't mean to be negative, but this should be relatively easy."

In the wide-ranging interview, Portman insisted he's not giving up on passing infrastructure legislation and he reflected on why he voted for Trump.

—on the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection: "It was a bad night for not just the Capitol and for the people trying to count the votes properly, but for democracy. The rest of the world looked at that and said 'Wow! Is America as strong as it used to be that they would allow this sort of thing?' We've got to get our act together and make sure that it never happens again." Portman supported the creation of an independent commission to investigate the riot, but other Republican senators blocked the move.

—on Trump: "I voted for Donald Trump because I thought he had the right policies. ... I still believe that the policies, the overwhelming majority of them, were good for the country."

He said Trump restored military strength and led "an unbelievable" economic success.

"So there was a lot of good stuff going on."

As he has for years, Portman repeatedly steered clear of any direct criticism of Trump, who on Saturday night in Ohio was holding his first campaign-style event since leaving the White House in January. Trump continues to obsess over his ongoing efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 election, which he insists he won, even though top election officials, his own attorney general and numerous judges have said there is no evidence of the mass voter fraud he alleges.

Portman made clear that he said "that once the election is over, you know, we've got to move on. And I gave the president all the room necessary to do the recounts, to bring the court cases, to see what the resolution was, but once the states certified, once that whole process was done, then it's time for us to acknowledge that you know, we were not successful as Republicans. We came close, but we weren't successful, not at the presidential level.

—on Republican Rep. Anthony Gonzalez from the Cleveland area, under attack from Trump and other Republicans for voting to impeach Trump for his role in the Capitol riot. Portman voted to acquit Trump in the Senate trial.

Portman said the congressman is "a Republican who's been effective in getting things passed. I disagree with him on his impeachment vote, but that's not a reason for me to want him to be out of the Republican Party."

—on Republican Gov. Mike DeWine, facing primary opposition in 2022: "That's the way it is these days. I think Mike DeWine has done a good job in dealing with a really difficult situation. I don't agree with every decision he made in regard to COVID; this COVID issue is really hard to deal with."

Portman said he is watching closely the primary race to succeed him, but doesn't know whether he will make an endorsement from "a crowded field" that includes former state Treasurer Josh Mandel and former state GOP chair Jane Timken, among others, and is expected to soon be joined by "Hillbilly Elegy" author J.D. Vance.

Portman, who served under Presidents George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush, said he looks forward to returning to Ohio full time to be with his wife, Jane, and his family and to work in the private sector. Could he see himself running for office again or joining a future administration?

"I guess I wouldn't rule it out if there was a way I could serve my country and do so in a productive way," he said. "I like to get stuff done."

## Newspaper gunman insanity case starting after three years

By BRIAN WITTE Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — Three years after the deadliest attack on a newsroom in U.S. history, residents

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who were shaken by the assault on their local newspaper that killed five people are hopeful that an end to the gunman's dragging court case is finally near.

Opening statements in the second phase of a trial are scheduled for Tuesday to determine whether Jarrod Ramos was legally sane at the time of the mass shooting.

Jury selection was completed Friday in the case against Ramos, who called 911 moments after the rampage from inside the newsroom, identified himself as the shooter and said he surrendered. He was later arrested lying face down under a desk.

Ramos pleaded guilty to all 23 counts against him in October 2019, but he is contending he's not criminally responsible due to mental illness.

Ray Feldmann, who knew some of the victims as well as survivors, remembers driving out of his neighborhood on June 28, 2018 and seeing a swarm of police and emergency vehicles converged around the newspaper's office, blocks from his home. Now, he says the attack lives in his memory with a magnitude comparable to his recollections of historic events like the 9/11 attacks and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

"It's just hard," Feldmann said in a recent interview. "The three-year anniversary is coming up in a few days, and there still hasn't been a trial. I think it does weigh on people."

The difficulty of the case was evident during jury selection, as potential jurors described how hard it would be to view evidence, while others described connections they had with their local newspaper.

Juror 14 sobbed in court, as Judge Michael Wachs asked her follow-up questions after she indicated she would have trouble watching a video recording during the trial of the attack inside the newsroom that shows victims being shot.

"I cannot handle it," she said through a mask, choking up in court, before the judge dismissed her from the jury pool.

Juror 27 spoke of how she had met Wendi Winters, a reporter who was one of the five killed. Winters wrote a weekly column focusing on a student at a school in the community. Before being dismissed from the jury, juror 27 described how she used to take children to the newspaper for photographs, and had been troubled by thoughts of what it would have been like to have been at the newspaper at the time of the shooting.

John McNamara, Gerald Fischman, Rob Hiaasen and Rebecca Smith also died in the attack.

"This hurts," said Donna Cole, a longtime local journalist in Annapolis who used to write for the newspaper and knew Winters. "This hurts the community. This hurts people that didn't know any of these people. The entire community was impacted by this mass shooting. We want to see justice served."

The case is happening as the newspaper is going through a transition with a new owner, New York-based hedge fund Alden Global Capital. Rick Hutzell, the former editor, recently volunteered for a buyout and left the paper this month.

The second part of the trial was initially set for November 2019, but Ramos' lawyers were granted a postponement. The defense contended they had not received adequate information about what experts for prosecutors intended to tell the jury. The trial was delayed again in February 2020 after one of Ramos' three public defenders left the case for medical reasons, pushing it to June 2020. The pandemic delayed it further.

Steuart Pittman, the county executive, said of the court case: "people want to be done with it."

"I know that it's been difficult for the people closest to the tragedy, the families of the victims, people at The Capital newspaper, our first responders who were there, and really everybody," Pittman said. "It's been difficult to have this hanging over everybody's head."

The judge estimated the case will last 10 business days. He said during jury selection a "vast majority" of the case will consist of testimony from mental health experts called by defense attorneys and prosecutors.

"It's going to come down to the battle of the experts to a certain extent," said Ross Suter, senior vice president of litigation solutions for Magna Legal Services.

Under Maryland's insanity defense law, a defendant has the burden to show by a preponderance of the evidence that he is not criminally responsible for his actions. State law says a defendant is not criminally

responsible for criminal conduct if, because of a mental disorder or developmental disabilities, he lacked substantial capacity to appreciate the criminality of his conduct.

If Ramos were found not criminally responsible, he would be committed to a maximum-security psychiatric hospital instead of prison. Prosecutors are seeking life without possibility of parole.

Ramos, 41, had a well-documented history of harassing the newspaper's journalists. He filed a lawsuit against the paper in 2012, alleging he was defamed in an article about his conviction in a criminal harassment case in 2011. The defamation suit was dismissed as groundless.

## Some donors sticking with Cuomo after harassment allegations

By MARINA VILLENEUVE Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Gov. Andrew Cuomo's political star was dimmed by allegations he sexually harassed women and misled the public about COVID-19 deaths in nursing homes.

But will that hurt him with campaign donors?

Some of the Democrat's most reliable political contributors — including unions, wealthy executives and Democratic Party officials — say they still plan to give money to his expected campaign for a fourth term in office.

The governor is planning a \$10,000 per-person fundraiser for June 29 in New York City. It will be one of his first big, in-person events to raise money for his campaign since the coronavirus pandemic began. He's also hosting a \$25 per-person virtual fundraiser in July.

The full picture of whether the allegations hurt Cuomo with contributors might become clearer on July 15, when his campaign has to disclose donations made since January.

At least some donors say they are sticking with him.

"Yes I am," said Larry Rockefeller, the Republican nephew of former Gov. Nelson Rockefeller and great-grandson of Standard Oil founder John D. Rockefeller. He has donated nearly \$166,000 to Cuomo since 2009. Rockefeller cited Cuomo's leadership during the pandemic, on the environment and on public works like the redevelopment of Penn Station, and LaGuardia Airport.

"We have due process in this country," Rockefeller said, referring to allegations made against Cuomo.

State and federal investigators are probing allegations that Cuomo sexually harassed employees and other women, groped a current female aide, unlawfully used state resources for a \$5.1 million book deal and minimized the state's toll of COVID-19 deaths among nursing home residents to suggest that New York's crisis wasn't as bad as other states.

Cuomo has denied any wrongdoing. He's questioned the motives of his accusers and some of his investigators, including Attorney General Letitia James.

A request for comment was left with his campaign.

Polling suggests Cuomo lost some support from Democrats this year but he resisted numerous calls for his resignation last March from a majority of state and federal Democratic lawmakers.

Many Democratic politicians and the leaders of New York institutions and companies have continued to appear with him at events.

Ed Christian, business manager of Local 1414B, a Flushing chapter of the International Union of Operating Engineers, said Cuomo has been a "tremendous advocate" who the union would continue to support financially.

"Yeah, absolutely," Christian said, citing, like Rockefeller, the rebuilding of Penn Station and LaGuardia Airport.

"It's construction projects that will allow for us to feed our families," he said. Chapters of the union, whose members operate heavy equipment at construction sites, have donated over \$145,000 to Cuomo's campaigns in past years.

Scott Rechler, a donor who was appointed by Cuomo to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority board and as vice chair of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, plans to give again, too, according to his spokesperson David Garten.

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He didn't know if Rechler would withdraw support if the investigations of Cuomo substantiate wrongdoing. "That's a bit of a hypothetical," Garten said. "We have no idea what the report says. We'll see what it says and go from there."

Cuomo had a campaign war chest of \$16.8 million going into 2021, built over the years from donors like real estate titan Dan Tishman, hedge fund manager James Simons, Walmart heir Jim Walton, fertilizer tycoon-turned-investor Alexander Rovt and Estee Lauder magnates William and Leonard Lauder.

Simons, Walton, Rovt and both Lauders didn't respond to repeated requests for comment on whether they would keep giving. Tishman — whose construction company won a \$35 million state contract last year — declined comment through a spokesperson.

James, the attorney general, hasn't said when she expects her team of investigators to complete their investigation of Cuomo's treatment of women. She has vowed to issue a public report when their work is done.

The state Assembly's committee is also investigating whether there are grounds to impeach Cuomo. Federal prosecutors in Brooklyn, meanwhile, are examining how the Cuomo administration mishandled data related to deaths in New York nursing homes.

Longtime Cuomo ally and state Democratic Party Chair Jay Jacobs in early March called sexual misconduct allegations against Cuomo "upsetting," but he has also called for party members to withhold judgment until James' office completes its probe.

"With the assumption that these results don't cause a cataclysmic result, and if the governor then chooses to run for re-election, my guess is that most if not all of the people who've been with him before will be with him again," Jacobs said in an interview this week.

The nation's largest labor union for property service workers, SEIU 32BJ, which has contributed \$95,000 to Cuomo through its American Dream Fund in the past five years, hasn't ruled out contributing to Cuomo's reelection campaign.

Union spokesperson Carolina González said it has been focused on New York City's mayoral primary and doesn't plan to make a decision on the governor's race until later this year.

"Cuomo's still the governor, and he will continue to be the governor until he's not by whatever reason," she said. "The investigations that are happening still haven't finished. There's really nothing for us to say until that process is done."

## 3D video replaces huge sets in Verona as full operas resume

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

VERONA, Italy (AP) — The Verona Arena amphitheater in northern Italy has returned to staging full operas for the first time since the pandemic — but with one big difference.

The monumental sets that normally fill the vast amphitheater stage have been replaced by dynamic, 3D images broadcast on huge LED screens, recreating a Sicilian village or a Fellini-esque film backlot.

Distancing rules meant that stagehands moving sets had to be limited in the cramped backstage in the open-air Roman-era amphitheater, setting in motion a reimagining of the 98th Verona Arena Opera Festival.

For this season, technology is standing in for the sets for which the Arena is famous, ones big enough to fill the vast stage and engage even audience members sitting far away in the uppermost seats.

"We understood already last year in November that we needed to have another plan, in the eventuality that we couldn't use the big sets," said the Arena's general manager, Cecilia Gasdia. "After all, the Verona Arena is used to doing huge shows, a little pharaonic, with great artistic quality."

Deputy creative director Stefano Trespidi tapped technical wizards at DWOK, an Italian company specializing in advanced video design that helped create La Scala's all-virtual 2020 season premier and designed virtual sets for a production of "Aida" at the Sydney opera.

"They are artists and technicians at the same time, and that is not easy," Trespidi said. "This is a great innovation; innovations need time to take hold. The process that we started today we don't know where it will take us. Certainly, it will take us forward."

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Friday's season-opening premiere was a double-bill of Pietro Mascagni's "Cavalleria rusticana" and Ruggero Leoncavallo's "Pagliacci," a production planned for the 2020 season that was never staged due to restrictions that limited performances to concerts. In fact, wooden sets for last year's "Cavalleria" remain unfinished at the Arena's cavernous workshop at the edge of the city, set aside for perhaps a future edition.

Instead, a Sicilian village was created on 400 square meters of LED screens, with projections of a hillside, a church façade and craggy buildings, all with three-dimensional depth. Moving clouds gave the scene dynamism, while singers and actors moved up and down a physical staircase and through a foreground filled with tables and chairs to create a central piazza.

While "Cavalleria rusticana" was nostalgically staged in black, white and gray, the "Pagliacci" cast was dressed in bright technicolor costumes, against a more spare backdrop inspired by a Fellini film set, and underlining the collision of real life and theater in the opera.

The video component also includes cameo imagery from Italian museums in each of the five new operas, including also "Aida," "Nabucco" and "La Traviata." The collaborations, including with the Vatican Museum, the Uffizi and Turin's Egyptian Museum, are meant as a gesture of solidarity with another cultural branch that also suffered from restrictions during the pandemic.

"They found this wonderful solution that works very well," said tenor Yusif Eyvazof, who is singing the role of Canio/Pagliaccio. "It is really so beautiful to see, that you don't see it is not a real set. And the audience can see a real show, and not just a concert."

Eyvazof said the screens had an added benefit: "It is very comfortable for the voice. It is a wall, that gives also acoustic support, and this is very important in the Arena, because we sing outdoors."

Ongoing virus restrictions mean that the Arena, for now, can seat a maximum of 6,000 guests, instead of the pre-pandemic 13,500. Orchestra musicians are separated by two-meter distances, the chorus is spread stage left in the amphitheater seating like a Greek choir, and non-singing cast members wear masks when the stage grows crowded.

For many in the crowd, just seeing live theater was a treat, and the new technology a new element to absorb.

"Even being used to the big sets of the Arena, it is still very beautiful," said Guia Veronese, a regular at the Arena whose 8-year-old son was singing in the Pagliacci boys' choir. "It almost seems real at a certain point."

## As virus surges in Uganda, hospitals accused of profiteering

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA Associated Press

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — As he struggled to breathe earlier this month, Dr. Nathan Tumubone was tormented by thoughts of hospitalization as a COVID-19 patient. Thinking of the costs involved, he knew he wanted to stay home.

He and his wife "steamed" up to five times a day, inhaling what they felt was the relieving vapor rising from a boiling concoction of herbs.

"The truth is I didn't want to go to hospital," said the general practitioner. "We've seen the costs are really high, and one wouldn't want to get in there."

As virus cases surge in Uganda, making scarce hospital beds even more expensive, concern is growing over the alleged exploitation of patients by private hospitals accused of demanding payment up front and hiking fees.

Uganda is among African countries seeing a dramatic rise in the number of infections amid a severe vaccine shortage. The pandemic is resurging in 12 of Africa's 54 countries, the World Health Organization reported Thursday, saying the current wave is "picking up speed, spreading faster, hitting harder."

Africa's top public health official, John Nkengasong of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said Thursday that Africa's third wave is "very devastating" as the delta variant drives infections in many countries.

Just 1% of people across Africa have been fully vaccinated, and Uganda has vaccinated under 1% of its

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44 million people. It has confirmed 75,537 infections, including 781 deaths. The actual totals are believed to be much higher because only a few thousand samples are tested daily.

Hospitals in cities including the capital, Kampala, report difficulties in finding bottled oxygen, and some are running out of space for COVID-19 patients. Intensive care units are in high demand.

Although the practice of requiring deposits from patients has long been seen as acceptable in this East African country where few have health insurance, it is raising anger among some who cite attempts to profiteer from the pandemic.

Without a national health insurance scheme, COVID-19 has highlighted that health care in Uganda is "commoditized, available to the highest bidder," said Daniel Kalinaki, a columnist with the Daily Monitor newspaper.

"The lingering question is how did we go from a place where you paid what you could and made sure to clear your dues on your next visit, to one where patients will not be touched until the whiny-voiced bean counter in the accounts office confirms that their deposit has cleared?"

Many Ugandans don't trust government hospitals, citing the decay they find there as well as the occasional lack of basic supplies. Top government officials routinely seek treatment abroad. Most people attend private facilities that have mushroomed across the country in the years since the health sector was opened up to private investors.

Some hospital bills shared by families of COVID-19 patients emerging from intensive care show sums of up to \$15,000, a small fortune in a country where annual per capita income is less than \$1,000.

Private hospital directors who spoke to the local press defended their fees policy, saying looking after COVID-19 patients is risky and not cheap.

Health authorities have said they are investigating allegations of exploitation.

Cissy Kagaba, a prominent anti-corruption activist who recently lost both parents to COVID-19, told The Associated Press she was shocked when the family received a bill of nearly \$6,000 when her father was let out of an intensive care unit. "Risk allowances" and other items on the receipt looked suspicious, she said.

"When we saw the bill, we couldn't believe how much it was," she said, adding that alleged exploitation of patients mirrors rampant official corruption. "You cannot expect any different from them. If you have a government that exploits its own people, what do you expect from the private sector?"

Tumubone, the doctor who is recovering from COVID-19, said he panicked when it seemed he would need to go to a hospital. He and his wife experimented with home care, inhaling steam from the boiling leaves of guava, mango and eucalyptus trees.

Lockdown measures were tightened in Uganda last week. All schools have been ordered shut, a nighttime curfew remains in place, and only vehicles carrying cargo and those transporting the sick or essential workers are permitted to operate on the roads.

## Vasilevskiy shines again, Lightning blank Islanders 1-0

By FRED GOODALL AP Sports Writer

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Thanks to Andrei Vasilevskiy and another stellar defensive performance, the defending champion Tampa Bay Lightning are headed back to the Stanley Cup Final.

"It's becoming a broken record, but it's not how many you put in the net, it's how many you keep out," coach Jon Cooper said Friday night after Vasilevskiy had 18 saves and benefited from exceptional play in front of him to beat the New York Islanders 1-0 in Game 7 of their NHL playoff semifinal.

"It's a hard lesson to learn, especially the players coming up today and the skill, the rules getting put into place that open up skill and to skate and to score," Cooper added. "But when you get to the playoffs it's about defending."

Yanni Gourde scored a short-handed goal, giving Vasilevskiy all the offensive support needed to advance the Cup Final matchup against the surprising Montreal Canadiens, who upset the Vegas Golden Knights in the other semifinal.

Game 1 is Monday night in Tampa.

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"Just a great effort by the whole team. ... That was just a textbook Game 7," Vasilevskiy said.

Gourde beat Islanders goalie Semyon Varlamov from the slot off a nifty pass from Anthony Cirelli at 1:49 of the second period, culminating a sequence that began with defenseman Ryan McDonagh blocking a shot at the other end.

"It's disappointing because that was an opportunity for us to do something against them. We weren't paying enough attention and it ended up in the back of the net," Islanders coach Barry Trotz said.

"I thought we managed the first period and it was pretty quiet. And then they got the short-handed goal and that energized the building," Trotz added. "In the third period we left it all out there. This group has so much character. They are feeling the pain right now."

Vasilevskiy turned away seven shots in the final period to finish his fifth career playoff shutout — fourth this postseason. It marked the first time in NHL history a Game 7 ended 1-0 with a short-handed goal.

Vasilevskiy, vying for his second Vezina Trophy in three years, also beat the Islanders 8-0 in Game 5 and shut out Florida and Carolina to clinch series wins over Panthers and Hurricanes in the first two rounds.

"He's the best in the world for a reason," Lightning captain Steven Stamkos said. "He's the steady rock that allows us to go out there and play with pace, play with confidence, play with a lead, and I thought we did an unbelievable job of that.

"After we got that goal we just kept pushing," Stamkos added. "Vasy made some big saves when he had to, but guys had huge blocks at the end of the game and it was so nice to be in front of our home fans and have that atmosphere and get that win."

The Lightning improved to 14-0 in games following a playoff loss since beginning last year's championship run. They also bounced back from losses to beat the Islanders in Games 2 and 5 and haven't suffered consecutive playoff losses since being swept by Columbus in the first round in 2019.

The Islanders, who were aiming for their first Stanley Cup Final berth in 37 years, forced a winner-take-all showdown by rallying to win Game 6 on Anthony Beauvillier's overtime goal.

But with the Lightning playing relentless defense, while also outshooting New York 31-18, opportunities were limited Friday night.

Tampa Bay reached the Cup Final for the fourth time in franchise history despite not getting big nights offensively from playoff scoring leader Nikita Kucherov and Brayden Point, whose streak of consecutive games with at least one goal ended at nine — one shy of the NHL playoff record.

Kucherov played despite missing most of Game 6 with an injury. Point failed to score a goal for just the second time in the past 13 games.

New York's season ended with a playoff loss to Tampa Bay for the second straight year. The teams met in last year's Eastern Conference final, with the Lightning advancing in six games.

"I said to them that this group is special. Their character, their work ethic, their will...it's undeniable. It's so strong. This group believed that we could do this," Trotz said.

"This team won't be defined by one game. They will be defined by all the games. You've gotta keep going back," Trotz added. "It's no different than Tampa Bay. They had some heartache before they were able to win a Cup and now they have a chance to win two."

## I CAN GO

Kucherov left Game 6 after a taking a hit to the lower back from Islanders defenseman Scott Mayfield. His status for Friday night was uncertain until just before faceoff. Lightning defenseman Erik Cernak also returned to the lineup after missing the previous two games.

## GAME 7s

The Islanders fell to 4-6 all-time in Game 7s, 4-5 on the road. It was first Game 7 the team has played in the semifinal round since facing Philadelphia in 1975. The Islanders were trying to earn their first Stanley Cup Final berth since 1984.

## ON POINT

Point was trying to match Reggie Leach's playoff record with goals in 10 consecutive games in the same postseason. Leach had a 10-game streak for the Philadelphia Flyers in 1976. With 14 goals in 18 games,



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Point has a chance to become the first player to lead the league in playoff goals in consecutive seasons since Jari Kurri in 1987 and 1988.

## Key GOP senators balk at terms of Biden infrastructure bill

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's bipartisan infrastructure deal has been thrown in doubt as Republican senators said they felt "blindsided" by his insistence that it must move in tandem with his bigger package. The White House doubled down on the strategy, meanwhile, saying it should have come as no surprise.

The rare accord over some \$1 trillion in investments faced new uncertainty Friday, barely 24 hours after Biden strode to the White House driveway, flanked by 10 senators from a bipartisan group, with all sides beaming over the compromise.

Senators were described as "stunned," "floored" and "frustrated" after Biden publicly put the conditions on accepting their deal, according to two people familiar with the private conversations who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the reactions.

"I've been on the phone with the White House, my Democratic colleagues, my Republican colleagues, all darn day," said Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio, the lead Republican negotiator, in an interview Friday.

"My hope is that we'll still get this done. It's really good for America. Our infrastructure is in bad shape," he said. "It's about time to get it done."

White House press secretary Jen Psaki, who was asked at her briefing about the GOP dismay, said senators should not have been surprised by the two-track strategy that Biden has publicly discussed on many occasions.

"That hasn't been a secret. He hasn't said it quietly. He hasn't even whispered it," she said.

Psaki said the president plans to stand by the commitment he made to the senators. "And he expects they'll do the same," she said.

The path ahead is now uncertain.

Senators launched into calls Friday seeking answers from the White House after a tumultuous past month of on-again, off-again negotiations over Biden's \$4 trillion infrastructure proposals, his top legislative priority.

The Democrats' two-track strategy has been to consider both the bipartisan deal and their own more sweeping priorities side by side, a way to assure liberal lawmakers the smaller deal won't be the only one.

But Biden's vow to essentially veto or refuse to sign the bipartisan accord without the companion package being negotiated by Democrats, which is now eyed at nearly \$6 trillion in child care, Medicare and other investments, was an additional step that throws the process into doubt.

"No deal by extortion!" tweeted Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., on Friday.

Biden reached out Friday to the lead Democratic negotiator, Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, and reiterated his strong support for the compromise agreement, according to a readout from the White House.

Tensions appeared to calm later in the day, after senators from the group of negotiators convened a conference call, according to another person who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private meeting.

A bipartisan accord has been important for the White House as it tries to show centrist Democrats including Sinema, Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., and others that it is working across the aisle before Biden tries to muscle the broader package through Congress under special budget rules that allow majority passage without the need for GOP votes.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky set the tone for the sudden turn of events, signaling late Thursday where the party was headed.

He framed the argument in a floor speech and a subsequent Fox News interview, declaring that Biden's messaging from his two news conferences Thursday "makes your head spin."

McConnell has been highly skeptical of Biden's agenda, vowing his "100%" focus to defeat it. He is not part of the negotiating team of five Republican and five Democratic senators who have been laboring for

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months on a potential deal.

Senators who were part of the bipartisan group were initially thrilled at striking the compromise. Many of them spoke about how it would be good not just for rebuilding the nation's roads and bridges, but also for showing the world that the United States government was functioning well.

Only after senators tuned in later to Biden's second news conference, where he outlined the path ahead, did frustrations mount and frantic phone calls begin.

At the press conference, Biden was asked what he meant by having the two packages move through Congress to his desk in "tandem."

"If they don't come, I'm not signing. Real simple," Biden said.

Senators from the group were never told of such an explicit linking of the two packages, the two people familiar with the discussions said.

It never came up in their talks with the White House advisers or with Biden himself during Thursday's meeting of the group of 10 key negotiators, they said.

"There's a lot of conversations taking place right now as to what the president meant," said Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., in an interview with a Fox affiliate in New Orleans shared by his office.

Cassidy noted that the president may have misspoken and said he hoped "it won't be as if we crafted something just to give the president a point of leverage to get something that Republicans disagree with."

Ten Republican senators would be needed to pass the bipartisan accord in the 50-50 Senate, where 60 votes are required to advance most bills.

While the senators in the bipartisan group are among some of the more independent-minded lawmakers, known for bucking their party's leadership, it appears McConnell's criticism of Biden's approach could peel away Republican support.

The White House insisted that senators have been well aware of the two-bill strategy, which has been openly discussed for months. They all but dared the Republicans to argue their way out of supporting what appeared to be a popular compromise of shared priorities.

"That's a pretty absurd argument for them to make," Psaki said. "Good luck."

Democrats plan to push the broader package through using a special budget process that would allow passage of their own priorities on a simple majority vote of 51 senators, with Vice President Kamala Harris a tiebreaker.

Progressive lawmakers have pushed for the more robust investments and could withhold their votes, as well, on any bipartisan package unless they have guarantees the \$1 trillion effort won't be the end of the road.

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, said Friday that the bipartisan infrastructure bill "simply isn't enough."

## Historic heat wave blasts Northwest as wildfire risks soar

By SARA CLINE and MANUEL VALDES Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The Pacific Northwest sweltered Friday and braced for even hotter weather through the weekend as a historic heat wave hit Washington and Oregon, with temperatures in many areas expected to top out up to 30 degrees above normal.

The extreme and dangerous heat was expected to break all-time records in cities and towns from eastern Washington state to Portland to southern Oregon as concerns mounted about wildfire risk in a region that is already experiencing a crippling and extended drought.

Seattle was expected to edge above 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) over the weekend and in Portland, Oregon, weather forecasters said the thermometer could soar to 108 F (42 C) by Sunday, breaking an all-time record of 107 F (42 C) set in 1981. Unusually hot weather was expected to extend into next week for much of the region.

Seattle has only hit 100 F three times in recorded history, the National Weather Service said, and there was a chance it could eclipse the record of 103 F (39 C) on Monday.

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"If you're keeping a written list of the records that will fall, you might need a few pages by early next week," NWS Seattle tweeted, as it announced that the city had already tied a record Friday for the highest morning-low temperature.

The extremely hot weather comes a week after a heat wave in the intermountain West broke records from Montana to Arizona.

The Northwest heat wave sent residents scrambling in a region accustomed to mild summers where many people don't have air conditioning. Stores sold out of portable air conditioners and fans, some hospitals canceled outdoor vaccination clinics, cities opened cooling centers, baseball teams canceled or moved up weekend games, and utilities braced for possible power outages.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee lifted COVID-19 capacity restrictions on publicly owned or operated and non-profit cooling centers in light of the heat. Capacity is currently limited to 50% until the state fully reopens next Wednesday. And in Oregon, Gov. Kate Brown suspended capacity limits for movie theaters and shopping malls — places with air-conditioning — as well as swimming pools ahead of a statewide reopening Wednesday.

According to 2019 figures from the U.S. Census Bureau, Seattle has the lowest rate of air-conditioned homes of any major American city. Only 44% of the homes in the metro area have air conditioning. In the Portland metro area, that figure was 79%.

At a hardware store in Seattle, about a dozen people lined up before opening hoping to snag an air conditioning unit. A worker opened the door at 8 a.m. with bad news: there were only three units.

One of the lucky buyers was Sarah O'Sell, who was worried for her cat amid predictions of triple digits. "Unfortunately, we're starting to see this year after year," said O'Sell, who used a dolly to transport her new unit to her nearby apartment. "We're going to be like California, and that's going to be desert down there. It's only going to get hotter."

The sweltering temperatures expected on the final weekend of the U.S. Olympic Track and Field trials in Eugene, Oregon, also prompted USA Track and Field to reschedule several weekend events to times earlier in the day to avoid the peak heat.

The Portland Pickles, the city's semi-professional baseball team, offered weekend tickets for \$1.11 — the possible high on Sunday — to keep people in the stands. And families lined up in the beating sun for ice cream and a few precious hours at community pools still operating under capacity restrictions due to COVID-19.

Sara Stathos was selling ice cream from inside an air-conditioned food truck in Portland and said the business would shut down over the weekend because the ice cream "basically melts as we hand it to customers" in such hot weather.

"We don't want people standing out in the sun, waiting and getting sick," she said.

The extended "heat dome" was a taste of the future for the Pacific Northwest as climate change reshapes weather patterns worldwide, said Kristie Ebi, a professor at the University of Washington who studies global warming and its effects on public health.

"We know from evidence around the world that climate change is increasing the frequency, intensity and duration of heat waves. We're going to have to get used to this going forward. Temperatures are going up, and extreme temperatures are going up even faster," she said.

"I tell my students when they get to be as old as I am, they're going to look back and think about how nice the summers used to be."

The heat is also worrisome for the region because warm air sucks moisture out of the soil and vegetation more efficiently than cooler air and that makes everything more prone to fire, she said.

Oregon in particular was devastated by an unusually intense wildfire season last fall that torched about 1 million acres (404,685 hectares), burned more than 4,000 homes and killed nine people. Several fires are already burning around the Pacific Northwest, and much of the region is already in extreme or exceptional drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.

Fire crews were being positioned ahead of time in areas where fire risk was high. Counties and cities

across the region enacted burn bans — in some cases even temporarily prohibiting personal fireworks for the July 4 holiday weekend.

## One trophy ignored, Canadiens shift focus to the Stanley Cup

By JOHN WAWROW and STEPHEN WHYNO AP Hockey Writers

MONTREAL (AP) — Shea Weber and the Montreal Canadiens kept their hands off the Clarence S. Campbell Bowl after advancing to the Stanley Cup Final, and even rookie Cole Caufield had no interest in touching it.

"Obviously there's a bigger one out there that we're chasing, so I think that's the only thing on our mind right now," Caufield said, following a 3-2 OT semifinal series-ending win over Vegas in Game 6. "It's good to enjoy it. We've come a long way to get here, but the job is not finished."

Montreal is in the final for the 35th time in the franchise's illustrious history and will face the defending champion Tampa Bay Lightning for a chance to win an NHL-leading 25th championship. Not only do the Canadiens not celebrate second-place finishes, but perhaps it's best Weber avoided the semifinal trophy typically given out to the Western Conference champion because Campbell is not well-liked in Quebec.

Campbell was the league president who suspended Maurice "Rocket" Richard for the remainder of the season and playoffs for hitting a linesman during a game in March 1955, leading to riots in Montreal. The Canadiens had never captured the trophy named for Campbell in their history — they've won the Prince of Wales a record 25 times — but in this unusual season with teams playing in reformatted visions that was the case Thursday night.

Now the focus turns toward the Cup, and there's no such hatred toward namesake Lord Stanley.

"We got another series coming up," said Weber, who's playing in his first Cup final at age 35. "We've got to win four more games but definitely proud of everybody in that locker room right now and what we've accomplished so far. But definitely still work to be done."

The Canadiens are on one of the more surprising runs in postseason history, erasing a 3-1 deficit against Toronto in the first round, sweeping Winnipeg in the second and shutting down heavily favored Vegas in six games in the third. Only minutes after giving up the series-deciding overtime goal to Artturi Lehkonen, Golden Knights netminder Robin Lehner said: "Hell of a team. Works really hard. Sticks with their structure and they have a lot of great players. Everyone underestimates them."

Three-time Cup winner Patrick Sharp, now an NBC Sport analyst, expected Montreal to lose every round. Only after watching Canadiens goaltender Carey Price and his teammates frustrate Vegas did he realize he and so many others were just wrong.

"We should've known better," Sharp said Friday. "It's a team that's got some belief, no question about that, and those teams are often the most dangerous this time of year."

The lineup is also a perfect mix of veterans like Price, Weber, Corey Perry and Eric Staal who have been in plenty of playoff games before and young players like Caufield, Jesperi Kotkaniemi and Nick Suzuki.

The 20-year-old Caufield was playing college hockey as recently as March, and Suzuki just beat the Vegas organization that drafted and then traded him in a deal for former Montreal captain Max Pacioretty.

Price is the backbone, having stopped 495 of 530 shots to go into the final as a front-runner for the Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP. Like Weber, it will be his first final.

Credit also has to go to coaching, with Montreal heading into the final with assistant Luke Richardson as the third person behind the bench in the past four months. Interim coach Dominique Ducharme took over when Claude Julien was fired in February, and Richardson is filling in after Ducharme tested positive for the coronavirus last week.

The Canadiens made sure Ducharme was on video from afar when they returned to their locker room Thursday night to share in the joy. Now that they've guaranteed at least four more games and their jubilant city is poised to celebrate, Ducharme could potentially return midway through the final.

With Ducharme on their minds, players quickly shifted from enjoying another series victory to thinking about trying to get another.

"They're not done yet," Richardson said. "They saw a fire in their eyes. They're already talking about it."

... Get right back at it. And we're looking forward to the challenge."

## Daytime Emmys salute late TV icons Alex Trebek, Larry King

By BETH HARRIS Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Daytime Emmys turned into a love letter to Alex Trebek, honoring the beloved "Jeopardy!" host and the show seven months after his death.

Trebek won as game show host and "Jeopardy!" earned game show honors on Friday night.

ABC's "General Hospital" claimed four trophies, including best drama. Maurice Benard took lead actor honors for the third time as Sonny Corinthos.

Jacqueline MacInnes Wood of CBS' "The Bold and the Beautiful" won as lead actress, adding to her trophy from two years ago for her role as Steffy Forrester.

It was a family affair, with the children of Trebek and Larry King accepting on their late fathers' behalf.

Trebek's son, Matt, and daughter, Emily, stood behind the host's podium on the quiz show's set. Trebek died of pancreatic cancer in November at age 80.

"For as long as we can remember, he was always so proud to be a part of 'Jeopardy!', to work on a show that was based on knowledge, risk and the challenge — people had to think," Trebek's son said. "He loved every bit of it."

Emily added, "He was always excited to go to work, even during his battle with cancer. He was so fortunate that he was able to do what he loved, and we know that he not once took it for granted."

It was Trebek's third straight victory and sixth overall in the category. He was nominated a record 32 times during his career.

Executive producer Mike Richards dedicated the best game show trophy to Trebek, who hosted for 37 years.

"He was more than just a game show host, he was a legend, a towering figure," Richards said in pre-taped remarks. "He believed that 'Jeopardy!' was more than just a game show. He loved it because it stood for facts, competition, and the celebration of intelligence."

Kelly Clarkson's eponymous talk show earned two trophies. The singer was honored as host, beating out daytime newcomer Drew Barrymore, among others, and the show won in the entertainment talk category.

Trebek was remembered in a special tribute segment, along with Regis Philbin and King. Philbin died last July at age 88. Among those honoring Trebek in taped comments were U.S. first lady Jill Biden and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

"I got to talk with him a few years ago, and he expressed to me how proud he was to be a Canadian," Trudeau said. "I had to tell him that all Canadians are incredibly proud that he's one of us as well."

King, who died in January at age 87, won as informative talk show host for his eponymous show on Ora TV. His sons, Chance and Cannon, accepted.

"This last season was a testament to his love for broadcasting," Chance King said. "As much as he is gone, he is with us in our hearts forever."

Marla Adams and Max Gail won supporting actor trophies.

Adams plays Dina Mergeron on CBS' "The Young and the Restless." The 82-year-old actor accepted at home with the Emmy statue on a table behind her. "Y&R" also won the best writing category.

Gail appeared on stage while socially distanced because of the coronavirus pandemic to accept for his role as Mike Corbin on "General Hospital." It was the 78-year-old actor's second trophy in the supporting category, having won in 2019. "GH" also won directing honors.

"Red Table Talk," featuring Jada Pinkett Smith, her daughter, Willow, and her mother, Adrienne Banfield-Norris, won for informative talk show.

Sheryl Underwood of "The Talk" hosted.

## Biden vows 'sustained' help as Afghanistan drawdown nears

By ERIC TUCKER, BEN FOX and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

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WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Friday promised Afghanistan's top leaders a "sustained" partnership even as he moves to accelerate winding down the United States' longest war amid escalating Taliban violence.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, chair of the High Council for National Reconciliation, met at the Pentagon with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin before their sit-down with Biden at the White House later in the afternoon. While Biden vowed that the U.S. was committed to assisting Afghanistan, he also insisted that it was time for the American military to step back.

"Afghans are going to have to decide their future," Biden said in brief remarks at the start of his meeting with the Afghan leaders. Biden did not elaborate on what a "sustained" partnership might entail.

The leaders' visit to Washington comes as the Biden administration has stepped up plans for withdrawal ahead of the president's Sept. 11 deadline to end a nearly 20-year-old war that has come with a breath-taking human cost.

Ghani also paid a visit on his own Friday to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and with House Republican lawmakers. He met with Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell on Thursday.

More than 2,400 U.S. troops have been killed and 20,000 wounded in the war since 2001, according to the Defense Department. It's estimated that over 3,800 U.S. private security contractors have been killed. The suffering has been even greater for Afghanistan with estimates showing more than 66,000 Afghan troops killed and more than 2.7 million forced to flee their homes — mostly to Iran.

Roughly 650 U.S. troops are expected to remain in Afghanistan to provide security for diplomats after the main American military force completes its withdrawal, which is set to be largely done in the next two weeks, U.S. officials told The Associated Press.

Several hundred additional American forces will remain at the Kabul airport, potentially until September. They'll assist Turkish troops providing security, a temporary move until a more formal Turkey-led security operation is in place, the officials said Thursday.

Overall, officials said the U.S. expects to have American and coalition military command, its leadership, and most troops out by July Fourth, or shortly after that, meeting an aspirational deadline that commanders developed months ago.

The officials were not authorized to discuss details of the withdrawal and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

The departure of the bulk of the more than 4,000 troops that have been in the country in recent months is unfolding well before Biden's Sept. 11 deadline. And it comes amid accelerating Taliban battlefield gains, fueling fears that the Afghan government and its military could collapse in a matter of months.

Ghani said at a news conference following the Oval Office meeting that the talks with Biden were productive. He pointed to an uptick in Afghans signing up for the military as a sign of hope. But he also acknowledged the difficulty that lies ahead, suggesting the moment was analogous to the difficulties the U.S. faced at the start of its civil war.

"There have been reverses, we acknowledge it — but the key now is stabilization," he added.

Abdullah, who took part in the meeting with Biden, later emphasized the importance of continued U.S. support.

"We tend to forget that al-Qaida had reached a certain level of capacity in Afghanistan that was an actual danger and homeland security threat," Abdullah told the AP in an interview. "If Afghanistan is abandoned completely, without support, without engagement, there's a danger that Afghanistan can turn once again into a haven for terrorist groups."

Secretary of State Antony Blinken, speaking Friday in Paris, noted the increased violence and cited "a real danger" that if the Taliban tries to take the country by force, "we'll see a renewal of a war or possibly worse."

But, Blinken said, the Biden administration came to the conclusion that not removing U.S. troops, as the Trump administration had promised the Taliban in February 2020, would have been a bad choice. The administration believes the Taliban would have resumed attacks on U.S. forces, prompting an escalation of the war.

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Blinken added that a continued U.S. presence "certainly would have helped significantly" the Kabul government. "But what is almost certain is that our military would have come to us and said, well, the situation has changed, we need more forces. And we would have repeated the cycle that we've been in for 20 years. And at some point, you have to say this has to stop."

Still, Biden faces strong criticism from some Republicans for pulling out of Afghanistan, even though President Donald Trump made the 2020 deal with the Taliban to withdraw all U.S. forces by May 2021.

McConnell on Thursday charged Biden has "chosen to abandon the fight and invite even greater terrorist threats" and urged the president to delay the withdrawal of U.S. forces.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki pushed back on Friday that Biden inherited an untenable situation from Trump, marked by a relatively small coalition troop presence and an agreement brokered by the Trump administration and the Taliban to draw down all U.S. forces.

"That's the hand we were dealt," Psaki said. "The president made a decision which is consistent with his view that this was not a winnable war."

Biden acknowledged the difficult situation Ghani and Abdullah face as they try to build back their country while staving off Taliban aggression.

"They're doing important work trying to bring back unity among Afghan leaders across the board and Afghans are going to have to decide their future, what they, what they want," Biden said. "What they want. It won't be for lack of us."

Ghani in his meeting with House Republican leadership faced questions about how his government would use the \$3 billion in security assistance it is seeking from the United States and recent gains by the Taliban.

"We want to support them. We want them to be able to defend their country from the Taliban. But I'll tell you it's a fairly grim assessment," said Rep. Michael McCaul of Texas, the senior Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. "The question is: Can they push back the Taliban?"

## Chauvin gets 22 1/2 years in prison for George Floyd's death

By AMY FORLITI and STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Former Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin was sentenced Friday to 22 1/2 years in prison for the murder of George Floyd, whose dying gasps under Chauvin's knee led to the biggest outcry against racial injustice in the U.S. in generations.

The punishment — which came after Chauvin broke his yearlong silence to offer condolences to the Floyd family and express hope that they eventually have "some peace of mind" — is one of the longest prison terms ever imposed on a U.S. police officer in the killing of a Black person.

Still, Floyd family members and others were disappointed. The sentence fell short of the 30 years prosecutors had requested. And with good behavior, Chauvin, 45, could get out on parole after serving two-thirds of his sentence, or about 15 years.

"Just because it's the most time doesn't mean it's enough time," said Nekima Levy Armstrong, a Minneapolis protest leader.

Judge Peter Cahill went beyond the 12 1/2-year sentence prescribed under state guidelines, citing Chauvin's "abuse of a position of trust and authority and also the particular cruelty" shown to Floyd.

Floyd family attorney Ben Crump said the family had gotten "some measure of accountability" but is hoping Chauvin gets the maximum at his upcoming federal civil rights trial. Crump said this was the longest sentence a police officer has ever received in Minnesota.

But he added: "Real justice in America will be Black men and Black women and people of color who will not have to fear being killed by the police just because the color of their skin. That would be real justice."

Outside the courthouse, a crowd of about 50 people clasped hands or placed them on each other's shoulders. The reaction was subdued as people debated whether the sentence was long enough. Some cursed in disgust.

At George Floyd Square, as the intersection where Floyd was pinned to the pavement is now known, members of the crowd broke into applause, and several said, "We'll take it."

Chauvin was immediately led back to prison. He showed little emotion when the judge pronounced the

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sentence. His eyes moved rapidly around the courtroom, his COVID-19 mask obscuring much of his face.

The fired white officer was convicted in April of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter for pressing his knee against Floyd's neck for up to 9 1/2 minutes as the 46-year-old man gasped that he couldn't breathe and went limp on May 25, 2020.

Bystander video of Floyd's arrest on suspicion of passing a counterfeit \$20 bill at a corner store prompted protests around the world and led to scattered violence in Minneapolis and beyond, as well as demands for overhauling police departments.

On Friday, Chauvin, who did not testify at his trial, removed his mask and turned toward the Floyd family, speaking only briefly because of what he called "some additional legal matters at hand" — an apparent reference to the federal civil rights trial, where his words could be used against him.

"I do want to give my condolences to the Floyd family. There's going to be some other information in the future that would be of interest. And I hope things will give you some peace of mind," he said without further explanation.

Defense attorney Eric Nelson had asked that Chauvin be let off on probation, saying the former officer's "brain is littered with what-ifs" from that day: "What if I just did not agree to go in that day? What if things had gone differently? What if I never responded to that call? What if? What if? What if?"

Chauvin's mother, Carolyn Pawlenty, pleaded for mercy for her son, saying his reputation has been unfairly reduced to that of "an aggressive, heartless and uncaring person" and a racist.

"I want this court to know that none of these things are true and that my son is a good man," she told the judge, adding: "Derek, I want you to know I have always believed in your innocence, and I will never waver from that."

"I will be here for you when you come home," she said.

Prosecutor Matthew Frank, in asking the judge to exceed the sentencing guidelines, said "tortured is the right word" for what the officer did to Floyd.

"This is not a momentary gunshot, punch to the face. This is 9½ minutes of cruelty to a man who was helpless and just begging for his life," Frank said.

Floyd family members had tearfully asked the judge to impose the maximum, which was 40 years. Several spoke before the sentence, and his 7-year-old daughter, Gianna, was seen in a recorded video.

"I miss you and I love you," Gianna Floyd said in the video when asked what she would say to her daddy. She had a list of things she would have liked to do with him: "I want to play with him, have fun, go on a plane ride."

Afterward, Floyd's nephew Brandon Williams said the sentence was insufficient, "when you think about George being murdered, in cold blood with a knee on his neck for 9 minutes and 29 seconds execution-style in broad daylight." LaTonya Floyd, George Floyd's sister, said of the punishment: "That's nothing. That's nothing. He should have got the max, period."

The concrete barricades, razor wire and National Guard patrols at the courthouse during Chauvin's three-week trial in the spring were gone Friday, reflecting an easing of tensions since the verdict.

Before the sentencing, the judge denied Chauvin's request for a new trial. The defense had argued that the intense publicity tainted the jury pool and that the trial should have been moved out of Minneapolis.

The judge also rejected a defense request for a hearing into possible juror misconduct. Nelson had accused a juror of not being candid during jury selection because he didn't mention his participation in a march last summer to honor the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Prosecutors countered the juror had been open about his views.

Philip Stinson, a criminal justice professor at Bowling Green State University, said 11 non-federal law officers, including Chauvin, have been convicted of murder for on-duty deaths since 2005. The penalties for the nine who were sentenced before Chauvin ranged from from six years, nine months, to life behind bars, with the median being 15 years.

With Chauvin's sentencing, the Floyd family and Black America witnessed something of a rarity: In the small number of instances in which officers accused of brutality or other misconduct against Black people



have gone to trial, the list of acquittals and mistrials is longer than the list of sentencing after conviction. In recent years, the acquittals have included officers tried in the deaths of Philando Castile in suburban Minneapolis and Terence Crutcher in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

"That's why the world has watched this trial, because it is a rare occurrence," said Arizona-based civil rights attorney Benjamin Taylor.

Chauvin has been held since his conviction at the state's maximum-security prison in Oak Park Heights, where he has been kept in a cell by himself for his own protection, his meals brought to him.

The three other officers involved in Floyd's arrest are scheduled for trial in March on state charges of aiding and abetting both murder and manslaughter. They will also stand trial with Chauvin on the federal charges. No date has been set for that trial.

## Police: Man who shot Colorado gunman was killed by officer

By COLLEEN SLEVIN and JAMES ANDERSON Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — Johnny Hurley was hailed by police as a hero for shooting and killing a gunman they say had killed one officer and expressed hatred for police in a Denver suburb. But when another officer rushed in to respond and saw Hurley holding the suspect's AR-15, he shot Hurley, killing him, police revealed Friday.

The disclosure helped clarify what happened on Monday when three people — Hurley, Arvada Police Officer Gordon Beesley and the suspected gunman, Ronald Troyke — died in a string of shootings in the historic downtown district of Arvada, an area with popular shops, restaurants, breweries and other businesses about 7 miles (10 kilometers) northwest of downtown Denver.

According to a timeline and video released by police, Troyke, 59, ambushed Beesley after he pulled his truck into a parking spot near Beesley's patrol car as Beesley was responding to a report of a suspicious person.

The video shows Troyke running toward Beesley down an alley. When Beesley turns around, Troyke raises his gun and fires at him as two people stand nearby, police said. Beesley falls to the ground in the video.

According to the video, apparently from a surveillance camera, and a police narration of it, Troyke grabs an AR-15 rifle from his truck and is carrying it when Hurley confronts him and shoots him with a handgun. When another officer arrives, Hurley is holding Troyke's AR-15 and the officer opened fire, police said.

Hurley's shooting of Troyke and the officer's shooting of Hurley are not shown on the video.

Police had not previously confirmed Hurley's role or said who shot him. In the video posted Friday, Police Chief Link Strate described Hurley as a hero whose actions likely saved lives. He didn't offer an apology but called Hurley's death by a responding officer "equally tragic" to Beesley's killing.

"The threat to our officers and our community was stopped by a hero named Johnny Hurley," Strate said. "Johnny's actions can only be described as decisive, courageous and effective in stopping further loss of life."

In a separate statement, the Arvada Police Department said: "Finally, it is clear that the suspect bears responsibility for this tragic sequence of events."

The unnamed officer's shooting of Hurley is being investigated by a team of other area law enforcement officers led by the district attorney's office. The district attorney will use the findings to decide whether the officer was justified in using deadly force or whether the officer should be charged with a crime.

That officer has been placed on administrative leave pending the investigation.

Police say Beesley was targeted because he was an Arvada police officer. The department on Friday released excerpts from a document written by Troyke in which he said he planned to kill as many Arvada police officers as he could, seeing his actions as a way to hold police accountable.

"We the people were never your enemy, but we are now," it said.

About 40 minutes before the shootings, Troyke's brother called police asking for them to check on him because he said his brother was going to "do something crazy." Beesley and another officer tried finding Troyke at his home near downtown but were unable to, police said.

A teenager then called police to report a suspicious person — an older man who walked up, made a weird

noise and showed him a condom. That's the call Beesley was responding to when he was shot and killed.

Hurley's family issued a statement late Friday saying they were thankful for support from the city and police and were waiting for the outcome of the third-party investigation into the shooting that killed the 40-year-old.

A witness had said this week that Hurley was shopping in the area on Monday when he heard gunshots and ran out to confront the shooter with his own gun.

"He did not hesitate; he didn't stand there and think about it. He totally heard the gunfire, went to the door, saw the shooter and immediately ran in that direction," Bill Troyanos, who works at the Army Navy Surplus store in downtown Arvada, told Denver news station KMGH-TV.

Troyanos said he heard Hurley fire five or six shots. The gunman fell against a parked vehicle, he said.

## Juror in Scott Peterson trial didn't disclose being a victim

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A woman who eagerly sought to be a juror in the murder trial of Scott Peterson and who voted to sentence him to death committed misconduct by not disclosing she had been a crime victim, defense attorneys said Friday in their bid for a new trial.

New details show Juror 7 failed to disclose her boyfriend beat her in 2001 while she was pregnant. It was previously revealed that she failed to disclose that while pregnant with another child she obtained a restraining order against the boyfriend's ex-girlfriend, whom she feared would hurt her unborn child.

Peterson, 48, was sentenced to death in the 2002 murders of his pregnant wife, Laci, and the son she was carrying.

"It is apparent from her conduct before, during, and after the trial that during (jury selection) she failed to disclose numerous incidents that posed threats of harm to her unborn children," Peterson's lawyers said. "This enabled her to sit in judgment of Mr. Peterson for the crime of harming his unborn child."

A judge is deciding whether to order a new trial because of the allegations the juror committed misconduct by falsely answering questions during the selection process. The juror was not named in the court papers but has previously been identified as Richelle Nice, who co-authored a book about the case with six other jurors.

The California Supreme Court overturned Peterson's death sentence because prosecutors improperly dismissed potential jurors who disclosed they personally disagreed with the death penalty but would be willing to impose it.

The Stanislaus County district attorney's office declined to comment on the new allegation of misconduct, saying it would address the case in court.

In court filings, prosecutors have brushed off accusations of misconduct. They included a declaration by Nice that indicated she either misunderstood or misinterpreted the questions about other legal proceedings she had been involved in.

Prospective jurors were asked if they had ever been involved in a lawsuit or participated in a trial as a party or witness and if they had ever been crime victim or witness. Nice answered "no" to those questions. The defense said those answers were false.

The defense noted that the restraining order was a lawsuit in which Nice testified. The prosecution and Nice said she interpreted a lawsuit as a dispute involving money or property. She explained that she considered the restraining order involved "harassment" and was not a criminal act.

"I did not interpret the circumstances leading to the petition for a restraining order as a crime. I still do not," Nice declared, according to the court papers. "Minor indignities ... do not stick out to me, let alone cause me to feel 'victimized' the way the law might define that term."

However, the defense scoffed at the characterization as "minor," saying the restraining order case alleged that Nice's boyfriend's ex-girlfriend had "committed acts of violence against" her and she "really fears for her unborn child."

The defense said that by concealing facts and providing false answers, the juror undermined the jury

selection process and committed misconduct that harmed Peterson's right to a fair trial.

"Mr. Peterson was entitled to be tried by a jury of 12 impartial jurors, not 11," defense lawyers wrote.

A lawyer for Nice did not return a message seeking comment.

The defense said Nice "bent over backwards" to be seated on the jury.

"She was willing to sit on the jury for five months without pay, although she had four minor children to care for, and though it caused her such extreme financial hardship that she had to borrow money from a fellow juror," the defense wrote. "Juror 7's conduct during jury selection was so unusual that the judge commented that she 'stepp(ed) up and practically volunteer(ed) to serve.'"

Laci Peterson, 27, was eight months pregnant with their unborn son, Connor, when she was killed. Investigators said Peterson took the bodies from their Modesto home on Christmas Eve 2002 and dumped them from his fishing boat into San Francisco Bay, where they surfaced months later.

Peterson was convicted in 2005 in San Mateo County after his trial was moved from Stanislaus County because of worldwide pre-trial publicity.

Attorney Pat Harris claims that he has new evidence to show there was a nearby burglary on the day Laci Peterson disappeared. He said she was killed when she stumbled upon the crime.

If a new trial is ordered, prosecutors said they will not seek the death penalty.

## Death toll in Florida collapse rises to 4; 159 still missing

By TERRY SPENCER and ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

SURFSIDE, Fla. (AP) — With nearly 160 people unaccounted for and at least four dead after a seaside condominium tower collapsed into a smoldering heap of twisted metal and concrete, rescuers used both heavy equipment and their own hands to comb through the wreckage on Friday in an increasingly desperate search for survivors.

As scores of firefighters in Surfside, just north of Miami, toiled to locate and reach anyone still alive in the remains of the 12-story Champlain Towers South, hopes rested on how quickly crews using dogs and microphones could complete their grim, yet delicate task.

"Any time that we hear a sound, we concentrate in that area," Miami-Dade Assistant Fire Chief Raide Jadallah said. "It could be just steel twisting, it could be debris raining down, but not specifically sounds of tapping or sounds of a human voice."

Buffeted by gusty winds and pelted by intermittent rain showers, two heavy cranes began removing debris from the pile using large claws in the morning, creating a din of crashing glass and metal as they picked up material and dumped it to the side. A smoky haze rose from the site.

Once the machines paused, firefighters wearing protective masks and carrying red buckets climbed atop the pile to remove smaller pieces by hand in hope of finding spots where people might be trapped. In a parking garage, rescuers in knee-deep water used power tools to cut into the building from below.

Surfside Mayor Charles Burkett said crews were doing everything possible to save as many people as they could.

"We do not have a resource problem, we have a luck problem," he said.

The White House said President Joe Biden, who spoke with Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis after the collapse, was receiving updates from Homeland Security.

Officials said they still don't know exactly how many residents or visitors were in the building when it fell, but they were trying to locate 159 people who were considered unaccounted for and may or may not have been there.

Flowers left in tribute decorated a fence near the tower, and people awaiting news about the search watched from a distance, hands clasped and hugging. Congregants prayed at a nearby synagogue where some members were among the missing.

On the beach near the collapsed structure, visitor Faydah Bushnaq of Sterling, Virginia, knelt and scratched "Pray for their souls" in the sand.

"We were supposed to be on vacation, but I have no motivation to have fun," Bushnaq said. "It is the

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perfect time to say a prayer for them.”

Three more bodies were removed overnight, and Miami-Dade Police Director Freddy Ramirez said authorities were working with the medical examiner’s office to identify the victims. Eleven injuries were reported, with four people treated at hospitals.

Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava said rescuers were at “extreme risk” going through the rubble. “Debris is falling on them as they do their work. We have structural engineers on-site to ensure that they will not be injured, but they are proceeding because they are so motivated and they are taking extraordinary risk on the site every day,” she said.

With searchers using saws and jackhammers to look for pockets large enough to hold a person, Levine Cava said there was still reason to have hope.

Rachel Spiegel described her mother, 66-year-old Judy Spiegel, who was among the missing, as a loving grandmother known for chauffeuring her two granddaughters everywhere, advocating for Holocaust awareness and enjoying chocolate ice cream every night.

“I’m just praying for a miracle,” Spiegel said. “We’re heartbroken that she was even in the building.”

Teenager Jonah Handler was rescued from the rubble hours after the collapse, but his mother, Stacie Fang, died. A man walking his dog on the beach heard him calling for help through the dust cloud and got help for the boy; dramatic video showed the teen’s rescue by firefighters.

Relatives of Handler and Fang issued a statement expressing thanks “for the outpouring of sympathy, compassion and support we have received.”

“There are no words to describe the tragic loss of our beloved Stacie,” it said.

Many people waited at a reunification center for results of DNA swabs that could help identify victims.

While officials said no cause for the collapse has been determined, DeSantis said a “definitive answer” was needed in a timely manner. Video showed the center of the building appearing to tumble down first, and a section nearest to the ocean teetering and coming down seconds later.

About half the building’s roughly 130 units were affected, and rescuers used cherry pickers and ladders to evacuate at least 35 people from the still-intact areas in the first hours after the collapse. Television video early Friday showed crews fighting flareups of fires on the rubble piles.

Computers, chairs, comforters and other personal belongings were evidence of shattered lives amid the wreckage of the Champlain, which was built in 1981 in Surfside, a small suburb north of Miami Beach. A child-size bunk bed perched precariously on a top floor, bent but intact and apparently inches from falling into the rubble.

Fernando Velasquez said his 66-year-old brother Julio, his sister-in-law Angela and their daughter Theresa, who was visiting from California, were in the building when it fell.

“I miss my brother very much. I talk to him almost every day,” said Velasquez, of Elmhurst, New York. “His call was always a welcoming call. But I know he’s in heaven, because he was in love with Christ. If he is gone, he is in a much better place.”

The missing include people from around the world.

Israeli media said the country’s consul general in Miami, Maor Elbaz, believed that 20 citizens of that country are missing. Another 22 people were unaccounted for from Argentina, Venezuela, Uruguay and Paraguay, where an aide said first lady Silvana de Abdo Benítez flew to Miami because her sister, brother-in-law, their three children and a nanny were among the missing.

Gilmer Moreira, press director for the government palace, said the wife of Paraguayan President Mario Abdo Benítez has “has already received official information about the search for her family” and was awaiting more details.

## **EXPLAINER: Will Chauvin’s prison experience remain unusual?**

By KATHLEEN FOODY Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Former Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin has been sentenced to more than 22 years in prison for the murder of George Floyd. But it’s not clear yet what Chauvin’s experience will look like.

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## AN UNUSUAL START

Since his April conviction, Chauvin has been held at the state's only maximum security prison, in Oak Park Heights.

That's unusual — people don't typically go to a prison while waiting for sentencing. Chauvin is there for security reasons.

Most state prisons have a unit to separate inmates from the general population for safety or security.

But Oak Park Heights has what the Department of Corrections calls Minnesota's "most secure" unit to separate individuals from others in the prison for disciplinary or security reasons.

## HOW DOES THAT UNIT OPERATE?

Photos provided by the state show an empty cell in that unit has white cinderblock walls, slim rectangular windows, a metal toilet and sink and a thin mattress on a fixed bedframe.

Chauvin has been kept there for security since his conviction, alone in a 10 foot-by-10 foot cell that is monitored by corrections staff via camera and in-person checks. He has meals brought to his room and is allowed out for solitary exercise for an average of one hour a day.

Department of Corrections spokeswoman Sarah Fitzgerald said Chauvin is allowed a maximum of 10 photos, a radio and canteen food. He also can subscribe to periodicals and have three or fewer non-contact visits each week.

She said prison also uses a paid system that allows people to receive emails, which are printed out and provided to the recipient.

## WHAT NEXT?

Fitzgerald said Chauvin returned to the unit at the maximum security prison following his sentencing on Friday.

She said his ultimate placement hasn't been determined, "but his safety will be our predominate concern when determining final placement."

With good behavior, Chauvin could get out on parole after serving two-thirds of his sentence, or about 15 years.

## Helicopter carrying Colombia's president attacked; all safe

BUCARAMANGA, Colombia (AP) — Colombian President Iván Duque said Friday that a helicopter carrying him and several senior officials came under fire in the southern Catatumbo region bordering Venezuela, in a rare instance of a direct attack on a presidential aircraft.

Duque said everyone on board the helicopter was safe, including himself, Defense Minister Diego Molano, Interior Minister Daniel Palacios and the governor of Norte de Santander state, Silvano Serrano. They had just attended an event titled "Peace with Legality, the Sustainable Catatumbo chapter."

"I want to inform the country that after fulfilling a commitment in Sardinata, in Catatumbo approaching the city of Cúcuta, the presidential helicopter was the victim of an attack," the president said in a statement.

He said the helicopter's equipment and capabilities "prevented something lethal from happening." A video released by the presidency showed several bullet holes in the Colombian air force helicopter.

Duque did not provide the time of the attack or say who he believed carried it out, but several armed groups are known to operate in the area.

The president said the "cowardly" attack would not make him stop fighting drug trafficking, terrorism and organized crime. "The message is that Colombia is always strong in the face of crime and our institutions are above any threat," he said.

Cúcuta, where the flight was headed, was already on a security alert after a June 14 car bomb attack at a military base that caused 36 injuries to both members of the military and civilians. Colombian authorities have not confirmed who was behind that attack, but have said they suspect dissidents from the now-defunct Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia guerrillas or the rebel National Liberation Army. The latter has denied being behind the attack.

In 2018, when the conservative Duque began his presidency, the government said it was investigating

"possible attacks" being planned against the president at a public event. The attacks never materialized.

## Key GOP senators balk at terms of Biden infrastructure bill

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's bipartisan infrastructure deal was thrown in doubt Friday as Republican senators felt "blindsided" by his insistence that it must move in tandem with his bigger package, while the White House doubled down on the strategy and said it should have come as no surprise.

The rare accord over some \$1 trillion in investments faced new uncertainty barely 24 hours after Biden strode to the White House driveway, flanked by 10 senators from a bipartisan group, with all sides beaming over the compromise.

Senators were described as "stunned," "floored" and "frustrated" after Biden publicly put the conditions on accepting their deal, according to two people familiar with the private conversations who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the reactions.

"I've been on the phone with the White House, my Democratic colleagues, my Republican colleagues, all darn day," said Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio, the lead Republican negotiator, in an interview Friday.

"My hope is that we'll still get this done. It's really good for America. Our infrastructure is in bad shape," he said. "It's about time to get it done."

White House press secretary Jen Psaki, who was asked at her briefing about the GOP dismay, said senators should not have been surprised by the two-track strategy that Biden has publicly discussed on many occasions.

"That hasn't been a secret. He hasn't said it quietly. He hasn't even whispered it," she said.

Psaki said the president plans to stand by the commitment he made to the senators. "And he expects they'll do the same," she said.

The path ahead is now uncertain.

Senators launched into calls Friday seeking answers from the White House after a tumultuous past month of on-again, off-again negotiations over Biden's \$4 trillion infrastructure proposals, his top legislative priority.

The Democrats' two-track strategy has been to consider both the bipartisan deal and their own more sweeping priorities side by side, a way to assure liberal lawmakers the smaller deal won't be the only one.

But Biden's vow to essentially veto or refuse to sign the bipartisan accord without the companion package being negotiated by Democrats, which is now eyed at nearly \$6 trillion in child care, Medicare and other investments, was an additional step that throws the process into doubt.

"No deal by extortion!" tweeted Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., on Friday.

Biden reached out Friday to the lead Democratic negotiator, Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, and reiterated his strong support for the compromise agreement, according to a readout from the White House.

Tensions appeared to calm later in the day, after senators from the group of negotiators convened a conference call, according to another person who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private meeting.

A bipartisan accord has been important for the White House as it tries to show centrist Democrats including Sinema, Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., and others that it is working across the aisle before Biden tries to muscle the broader package through Congress under special budget rules that allow majority passage without the need for GOP votes.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky set the tone for the sudden turn of events, signaling late Thursday where the party was headed.

He framed the argument in a floor speech and a subsequent Fox News interview, declaring that Biden's messaging from his two news conferences Thursday "makes your head spin."

McConnell has been highly skeptical of Biden's agenda, vowing his "100%" focus to defeat it. He is not part of the negotiating team of five Republican and five Democratic senators who have been laboring for months on a potential deal.

Senators who were part of the bipartisan group were initially thrilled at striking the compromise. Many

of them spoke about how it would be good not just for rebuilding the nation's roads and bridges, but also for showing the world that the United States government was functioning well.

Only after senators tuned in later to Biden's second news conference, where he outlined the path ahead, did frustrations mount and frantic phone calls begin.

At the press conference, Biden was asked what he meant by having the two packages move through Congress to his desk in "tandem."

"If they don't come, I'm not signing. Real simple," Biden said.

Senators from the group were never told of such an explicit linking of the two packages, the two people familiar with the discussions said.

It never came up in their talks with the White House advisers or with Biden himself during Thursday's meeting of the group of 10 key negotiators, they said.

"There's a lot of conversations taking place right now as to what the president meant," said Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., in an interview with a Fox affiliate in New Orleans shared by his office.

Cassidy noted that the president may have misspoken and said he hoped "it won't be as if we crafted something just to give the president a point of leverage to get something that Republicans disagree with."

Ten Republican senators would be needed to pass the bipartisan accord in the 50-50 Senate, where 60 votes are required to advance most bills.

While the senators in the bipartisan group are among some of the more independent-minded lawmakers, known for bucking their party's leadership, it appears McConnell's criticism of Biden's approach could peel away Republican support.

The White House insisted that senators have been well aware of the two-bill strategy, which has been openly discussed for months. They all but dared the Republicans to argue their way out of supporting what appeared to be a popular compromise of shared priorities.

"That's a pretty absurd argument for them to make," Psaki said. "Good luck."

Democrats plan to push the broader package through using a special budget process that would allow passage of their own priorities on a simple majority vote of 51 senators, with Vice President Kamala Harris a tiebreaker.

Progressive lawmakers have pushed for the more robust investments and could withhold their votes, as well, on any bipartisan package unless they have guarantees the \$1 trillion effort won't be the end of the road.

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, said Friday that the bipartisan infrastructure bill "simply isn't enough."

## In town for COVID funeral, man vanishes in Florida collapse

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON undefined

MIAMI (AP) — When an old high school friend lost a long battle with COVID-19, Jay Kleiman went back for the funeral from Puerto Rico to the condominium where he grew up north of Miami Beach.

But hours before the ceremony, the high-rise building in the affluent neighborhood of Surfside collapsed, leaving more than 100 people missing overnight. Now Kleiman may himself be dead, along with his mother and brother staying at the apartment.

"It is so tragic that he flew for a friend who died from COVID complications, and ended up there," said Mark Baranek, who coached both Kleiman and his friend George Matz for a flag football team from their synagogue.

Kleiman, 52, is part of a growing list of missing people along with his brother Frankie Kleiman, and his mother Nancy Kress Levin. For the family and their friends, the tragedy of the building collapse comes on top of the devastation that the coronavirus pandemic has already brought.

The family's roots in the Miami area go back decades. Like so many others in Miami, Nancy Kress Levin fled the Cuban Revolution in 1959. First she settled with her husband in Puerto Rico, and then in the 1980s she moved as a single mom with her two boys to Surfside. There, they lived in a then-new building popular with Hispanic Jews who had come mostly from Cuba.

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As an adult, Kleiman moved back to Puerto Rico to work with his father in the garment industry. He was used to hard times; the business suffered with the financial crisis in the Caribbean territory and Hurricane Maria in 2017. But they pulled through.

He and Matz, the friend who died from COVID-19, grew closer after they fathered children, according to another friend of Matz, Justin Gould. Their children also became friends through sleepaway camps and other trips and activities for the Jewish community.

Matz battled with COVID-19 since March, catching the virus before the state expanded eligibility for the vaccine to people 50 and older.

"He was a couple of days away from getting the vaccine," his friend Gould said.

At the funeral, the rabbi asked the congregation to also pray for all the people who were at the building.

Matz's death was not the family's only brush with the coronavirus. The father of Lauren Miller, a close friend who said Kleiman was her first love, died in January. Kleiman and his mother had checked in on Miller every day since, she said.

On Thursday, Miller saw the news on TV that the Surfside building had collapsed. She screamed frantically.

"I saw the building and I remembered the shape of the building, and I knew that was it," she told the AP. "It's a building I had been in many times as a teenager."

"I called him 17 times. And I called his mother. And I texted his mother."

She heard nothing. When she talked to the AP Friday, she whimpered on the phone, her voice breaking at times.

Miller said Kleiman's mother "was everything to him." She and Kleiman had met at a summer camp in Barryville, New York, when she was only 15, and had kept in touch over the years about their children and their lives.

"He was just always in my heart," Miller said. "Jay was not family. ... But he was the family I chose for myself."

## Trump's company could face criminal charges in New York City

By BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Manhattan prosecutors are considering filing criminal charges soon against Donald Trump's company, stemming from a long-running investigation into the former president's business dealings.

The New York Times, citing sources familiar with the matter, reported that charges could be filed against the Trump Organization as early as next week related to fringe benefits the company gave to top executives, such as use of apartments, cars and school tuition.

Trump Organization lawyer Ron Fischetti said he met virtually with prosecutors Thursday for around 1 1/2 hours to try and persuade them not to seek a criminal indictment against the company, but that the charges would not be unexpected.

"The charges are absolutely outrageous and unprecedented, if indeed the charges are filed. This is just to get back at Donald Trump," he told The Associated Press on Friday. "We're going to plead not guilty and we'll make a motion to dismiss."

The Manhattan district attorney's office declined to comment.

No charges have been filed thus far in the long-running probe. Prosecutors have been scrutinizing Trump's tax records, subpoenaing documents and interviewing witnesses, including Trump insiders and company executives.

Law enforcement officials familiar with the matter say the investigation has reached a critical point. A grand jury was recently empaneled to weigh evidence and New York Attorney General Letitia James said she was assigning two of her lawyers to work with Vance on the criminal probe while she continues a civil investigation of Trump.

In addition to fringe benefits, prosecutors have looked into whether the Trump Organization lied about the value of real estate holdings to lower taxes or to obtain bank loans or insurance policies on favorable terms. They have also looked into the company's role in paying hush money to two women who say Trump



had affairs with them, accusations Trump has denied.

Some of the scrutiny has been focused on longtime Trump Organization chief financial officer Allen Weisselberg.

Vance's investigation of Weisselberg, 73, stemmed in part from questions about his son's use of a Trump apartment at little or no cost, cars leased for the family and tuition payments made to a school attended by Weisselberg's grandchildren.

Weisselberg's attorney, Mary Mulligan, declined to comment.

There's nothing illegal about companies giving lavish perks to valued employees, but in many circumstances those benefits count as compensation subject to income tax.

Fischetti said any charges against the company based on fringe benefits would be overreach by prosecutors.

"We looked back 100 years of cases and we haven't found one in which an employee has been indicted for fringe benefits — and certainly not a corporation," he said. For it to be a crime, he said, "it would have to be for the benefit of the corporation with the knowledge of the corporation. They don't have the evidence at all."

## Officer asks McCarthy to denounce GOP remarks on Jan. 6 riot

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A police officer who was injured in the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection confronted House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy in a meeting on Friday, asking him to publicly denounce statements by GOP members who have voted against honoring police and downplayed the violence of the attack.

Officer Michael Fanone has said for weeks that he wanted to meet with McCarthy, who has opposed the formation of a bipartisan commission to investigate the attack and has remained loyal to former President Donald Trump. It was a violent mob of Trump's supporters that laid siege to the Capitol and interrupted the certification of Joe Biden's presidential election victory after Trump told them to "fight like hell" to overturn his defeat.

Fanone said after the meeting that he had asked McCarthy to denounce 21 House Republicans who recently voted against giving police officers a congressional medal of honor for defending the Capitol and also Georgia Rep. Andrew Clyde, who had compared video of the rioters to a "tourist visit."

He said McCarthy told him he would "address it in a personal level with some of those members," a response he said wasn't satisfactory. McCarthy's office did not respond to a request for comment on the meeting.

As the House Republican leader, Fanone said, "it's important to hear those denunciations publicly." And as a police officer who served that day, he said, "that's not what I want to hear."

McCarthy and Fanone were joined by Capitol Police Officer Harry Dunn, who was also among the officers who responded to the rioting. Gladys Sicknick, the mother of Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick, was also expected to be in the meeting but did not speak to reporters afterward. Brian Sicknick collapsed and died after engaging with the mob, and a medical examiner later ruled that he died of natural causes.

The meeting comes as many Republicans have made clear that they want to move on from the Jan. 6 attack — frustrating law enforcement officers who were brutally beaten by the rioters as they pushed past them and broke into the building. Senate Republicans have blocked an independent, bipartisan investigation of the attack and some House members are increasingly downplaying the insurrection. Fanone said he found Clyde's comments "disgusting."

Dunn said afterward that it was an "emotional meeting." He declined to go into detail and thanked McCarthy for his time.

"He was receptive, and I think ultimately, we have the same goal. It's just going to take a little time getting there, I guess," Dunn said.

The goal, Dunn said, is "accountability, justice for everybody that was involved."

As the officers and family members push for answers, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced Thursday that she is creating a special committee to investigate the attack. She said a partisan-led probe was the

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only option left after the Senate Republicans blocked the commission. .

Fanone, Dunn and Gladys Sicknick have all aggressively lobbied for the independent panel — which would be modeled after a similar panel that investigated the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks — and they visited the offices of several Republican senators before the vote last month. Seven Republican senators voted with Democrats to consider the legislation that would form the bipartisan panel, but it still fell short of the 60 votes needed to move forward.

Fanone was one of many Metropolitan Police officers who was called in to help deal with the increasingly chaotic scene as delays kept National Guard away. He has described being dragged down the Capitol steps by rioters who shocked him with a stun gun and beat him.

Dunn, a Capitol Police officer, has similarly described fighting the rioters in hand-to-hand combat and being the target of racial slurs as he tried to hold them back.

Both officers said they discussed the select committee with McCarthy, who said earlier Friday that he couldn't comment on it because he hadn't talked to Pelosi.

Fanone said he asked for a commitment not to put "the wrong people" on the panel and that McCarthy said he would take it seriously.

Dunn confirmed that account, saying McCarthy "committed to us to taking it serious."

In addition to Clyde, other Republicans have increasingly made statements defending the rioters and have spread conspiracy theories about what happened that day. Arizona Rep. Paul Gosar has repeatedly insisted that a Trump supporter who was shot and killed that day while trying to break into the House chamber was "executed." Others have suggested that the Justice Department should not be charging the insurrectionists with crimes.

And last week, the 21 Republicans voted against giving medals of honor to the U.S. Capitol Police and the Metropolitan Police to thank them for their service on Jan. 6. Dozens of those officers suffered major injuries, including chemical burns, brain injuries and broken bones. McCarthy voted for the measure.

Seven people died during and after the rioting, including Ashli Babbitt, the woman who was shot and killed, and three other Trump supporters who died of medical emergencies. In addition to Sicknick, two police officers died by suicide in the days that followed.

Fanone made clear that the last several months have taken a toll. He said he was "mentally and physically exhausted" and that he felt isolated.

"This experience is not something that I enjoy doing," he said. "I don't want to be up here on Capitol Hill. I want to be with my daughters. But I see this as an extension of my service on Jan. 6th."

## 'We're gonna stay strong': Floyd family reacts to sentence

Some of George Floyd's family members on Friday called Derek Chauvin's 22 1/2-year sentence for murder in his death insufficient, while others expressed optimism that it would be an impetus for change.

One of Floyd's brothers, Rodney Floyd, called the sentence a "slap on the wrist."

"We've suffered a life sentence for not having him in our life, and that hurts me to death," he said.

Another brother, Terrence Floyd, said he was "a little leery about the sentencing" until he had a dream in which his father appeared.

"I knew my father was saying, 'You're good. he's good. keep doing what you're doing. For me, for your brother, for your name,'" he said. "We're Floyd strong and we're gonna stay strong."

Bridgett Floyd, George Floyd's sister and founder of the George Floyd Memorial Foundation, said the sentence "shows that matters of police brutality are finally being taken seriously."

"We have a long way to go and many changes to make before Black and brown people finally feel like they are being treated fairly and humanely by law enforcement in this country," Bridgett said in a statement released Friday.

Nephew Brandon Williams said the sentence wasn't harsh enough.

"When you think about George being murdered, in cold blood with a knee on his neck for 9 minutes and 29 seconds execution style in broad daylight, 22 and a half years is not enough," Williams said.

"We were served a life sentence. We can't get George back."

## Stock close higher, S&P 500 has best week since February

The Associated Press undefined

Stocks ended mostly higher Friday, helping the S&P 500 index close out its best week since February. It's a notable turnaround for the market, which only the previous week had its worst week since February on concerns about inflation.

The S&P 500 index closed up 14.21 points, or 0.3%, to 4,280.70. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 237.02 points, or 0.7%, to 34,433.84 and the Nasdaq Composite lost 9.32 points, or 0.1%, to 14,360.39. With Friday's gains, the S&P 500 index ended the week up 2.7%, its best five-day period since Feb. 5 .

The Dow's gains were driven by a surge in Nike, which reported blowout earnings late Thursday and gave investors a strong outlook for the year. Nike rose 15.5%.

Markets have calmed since the Federal Reserve surprised investors last week by saying it could start raising short-term interest rates by late 2023, earlier than expected, if recent high inflation persists. The calming of investors' nerves has largely helped the market undo the damage from the previous week.

Investors got another data point on inflation on Friday. The Commerce Department said inflation tied to a gauge of consumer spending that is closely watched by the Federal Reserve increased 0.4% in May and is up 3.9% over the past 12 months, well above the Fed's 2% target for annual price increases.

"Today's inflation data should calm some nerves about runaway inflation. Remember, the PCE is the Fed's favorite measure of inflation, and it very well could be near a peak in inflation," Ryan Detrick, chief market strategist for LPL Financial, wrote in an email to investors.

Investors are also embracing a bipartisan deal for infrastructure spending. President Biden and a group of Democrat and GOP senators were able to reach a near \$1 trillion deal to build out numerous parts of the country's infrastructure, including roads, rails and ports. The plan, costing \$973 billion over five years, is the culmination of months of talks, and a larger spending plan from President Biden is still possible later this year.

FedEx fell 3.6% after the company announced it would increase its spending to reduce delivery delays across its network.

Virgin Galactic jumped 38.9% after the company got approval from the Federal Aviation Administration to start its flights into space, the final approval the company to begin commercial spaceflight.

## On border tour, Harris laments 'infighting' over immigration

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris on Friday used her first trip to the U.S.-Mexico border since taking office to call for an end to political "rhetoric" and "infighting" over immigration, an issue that Republicans have been eager to weaponize against her.

Immigration "cannot be reduced to a political issue," Harris told reporters. "We're talking about children, we're talking about families, we're talking about suffering. And our approach has to be thoughtful and effective."

Harris's trip came after months of criticism from Republicans and some in her own party over her absence and that of President Joe Biden from the border at a time when immigration officers have logged record numbers of encounters with migrants attempting to cross into the U.S.

Her half-day stop — in which she toured a Customs and Border Protection processing center and met with migrant children there, visited an intake center on the border and held a roundtable with local service providers — is unlikely to quell GOP efforts to use immigration as a political cudgel against the administration.

Harris defended both the timing of her visit and the choice of El Paso for the stop. Some critics had said the location is too far removed from the epicenter of border crossings creating a strain on federal resources. She told reporters after landing in El Paso that she had said in March that she would come to the border and it was "not a new plan."

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And she said the choice of El Paso was meant to underscore a shift to a more humane approach to immigration policy by the Biden administration after the hardline stance of former President Donald Trump.

"It is here in El Paso that the previous administration's child separation policy was unveiled," she said. She also noted Trump's "remain in Mexico" policy, which forced asylum seekers to wait on the other side of the border for their claims to be adjudicated.

"We have seen the disaster that resulted from that here in El Paso," she said.

Harris visited the region with Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, Texas Democratic Rep. Veronica Escobar and Illinois Democratic Sen. Dick Durbin, a prominent Democratic voice on immigration reform. Both Mayorkas and Escobar said they invited Harris specifically to the area, and Mayorkas was quick to emphasize that border security is in his portfolio, not the vice president's.

But Republicans faulted Harris for a trip that they dismissed as little more than a photo session. Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, a conservative Republican and leading administration critic on immigration, charged that Biden's policies "opened the floodgates to human smugglers and drug cartels."

While Cruz said he was glad Harris had visited, "if the vice president came to Texas without a concrete plan to secure our border and is unwilling to reverse her administration's failed immigration policies that caused the crisis, then her visit is nothing short of a glorified photo-op."

Trump said on Friday in an interview with the conservative outlet Newsmax that "I think she should go to the real part of the border, not a part of the border that's seldom violated."

Harris has borne the brunt of attacks from Republicans over immigration since Biden assigned her to lead the administration's efforts to address the root causes of migration to the U.S. from countries like Mexico, El Salvador and Guatemala. She's emphasized that her focus is on improving conditions for residents of those countries through economic and humanitarian aid, to encourage them to stay home rather than make the journey to the U.S..

Republicans have tried to paint the administration as indifferent to border security, seeking to revive a potent political weapon against Democrats for the 2022 midterm elections. Trump plans to visit the area less than a week after Harris, and he's certain to seize on her trip to keep driving the GOP narrative.

Other administration officials have made multiple visits to the border, but the absence of Biden and Harris had left some Democrats worried that damage already has been done. There's concern that the Biden administration has ceded the border security debate to Republicans.

"The administration is making Democrats look weak," said Texas Democratic Rep. Henry Cuellar in an interview with The Associated Press. "I've heard, from Democrats and Republicans in my area, what the heck is going on with this administration?"

Cuellar's district spans from south of San Antonio to the U.S.-Mexico border, and last year he won reelection by the slimmest margin of his nearly two-decade-long career. While he says he's not worried about his own reelection, he adds, "I worry about my colleagues."

Biden's first few months in office have seen record numbers of migrants attempting to cross the border. U.S. Customs and Border Protection logged more than 180,000 encounters on the Mexican border in May, the most since March 2000. The numbers were boosted by a coronavirus pandemic-related ban on seeking asylum, which encouraged repeated attempts to cross because getting caught carried no legal consequences.

Republicans jumped on those figures to attack Biden and Harris as weak on border security. Administration officials, including Harris, refute the charge. Harris repeatedly sent a message to migrants during her recent visit to Guatemala: "Do not come."

But those comments drew fire from some progressives, most notably New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, who called the message "disappointing."

It was an incident that underscored the political no-win situation for Harris, taking on an intractable problem that's frustrated past administrations and has been used by both parties to drive wedges and turnout during campaign season. If Biden chooses not to run for a second term, Harris will be seen as the leading contender to replace him, and the immigration issue could become either a chance to showcase her accomplishments or an albatross.

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During a meeting with faith-based organizations, as well as shelter and legal service providers, Harris said she and Biden "inherited a tough situation."

But she maintained that "in five months we've made progress...there's still more work to be done, but we've made progress."

## Months after Nashville bombing, slow recovery work continues

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — For a moment, the sight of a few Christmas trees in the back of the bombed-out building took the workers aback. There they were, still standing at the approach of summer, adorned with festive holiday decorations amid the rubble of the powerful blast months earlier.

It was now early June, nearly half a year after Nashville woke up to a Christmas Day bombing that ripped a hole in the heart of Music City's historic downtown. A recreational vehicle had been intentionally detonated, killing the bomber, injuring three others and forcing more than 60 businesses to close.

"Frozen in time," said Steve Prosser, an engineer taking part in the monthslong cleanup effort. On Friday, he stood near the historic Rhea building not far from where the bomb had exploded. "I've never worked on a project like this. No one in Tennessee has."

Construction crews, engineers and developers have painstakingly worked to clear away the rubble, a necessary first step before revitalization can begin. The work is slow and tedious and means workers haven't been able to access some of the buildings until just recent weeks.

That's when the Christmas trees, along with holiday wreaths and other winter decorations, prominently displayed in one of Nashville's oldest buildings, were discovered. Amid debris piled all around, the holiday decorations remained intact, virtually in pristine condition.

Outside, faux pine Christmas garland strands with red ribbons are still wrapped around the light poles that survived the blast. Together, the decorations serve as reminders of the jarring details surrounding the bombing.

According to the FBI, Anthony Quinn Warner chose the location and timing to maximize the impact of the explosion while still minimizing the likelihood of "undue injury." The FBI also concluded that the Antioch, Tennessee, man acted alone and set off the bomb to end his own life.

Before the RV blew up, it blared a recorded warning calling for people to evacuate, and then the 1964 song "Downtown" by Petula Clark.

To date, 31 businesses have since reopened after closing because of the blast that took place just off Lower Broadway, a flashy business thoroughfare known for its honky tonks. City officials have slowly allowed more public access to the area as COVID-19 restrictions have eased and some of the buildings farthest from the epicenter were spared crippling structural damage.

Meanwhile, the center of the explosion remains fenced off, and will be for the remainder of the year as more than 30 buildings — many of which were built in the Civil War-era — undergo repairs and rebuilding.

"Six months ago, at this very time, we were staring at television screens trying to wrap our heads around what happened a few hours earlier," said Betsy Williams, who ran a vacation rental business in the building across the street from where the RV was parked. "It's been a tough six months."

## Justice Department suing Georgia over state's new voting law

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department is suing Georgia over the state's new election law, alleging Republican state lawmakers rushed through a sweeping overhaul with an intent to deny Black voters equal access to the ballot.

"Where we believe the civil rights of Americans have been violated, we will not hesitate to act," Attorney General Merrick Garland said Friday in announcing the lawsuit.

Republican lawmakers in the state pushed back immediately, pledging a forceful defense of Georgia's law.

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The Biden administration's move comes two weeks after Garland said his department would scrutinize new laws in Republican-controlled states that tighten voting rules. He said the federal government would take action if prosecutors found unlawful activity.

The suit also comes as pressure grows on the Biden administration to respond to GOP-backed laws being pushed in the states this year. A Democratic effort to overhaul election laws was blocked this week by Republican senators.

As of mid-May, 22 restrictive laws had passed in at least 14 states, according to the Brennan Center for Justice, which researches voting and supports expanded access. Justice Department officials hinted that prosecutors were looking at other voting laws across the United States and warned that the government would not stand by if there were illegal attempts to restrict voter access.

The increased enforcement of voting rights laws also signals that President Joe Biden and Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke are making good on a promise to refocus the department around civil rights after a tumultuous four years during the Trump administration. Clarke was one of the nation's leading civil rights attorneys before her nomination to lead the department's civil rights division.

Georgia's secretary of state, Brad Raffensperger, said he would contest the suit. The Republican official was harshly criticized by then-President Donald Trump and his allies for rebuffing efforts to challenge the outcome of the state's vote in the 2020 election. Raffensperger largely supported the new law and faces a primary challenge from a congressman backed by Trump.

"The Biden Administration has been spreading lies about Georgia's election law for months," Raffensperger said in a statement. "It is no surprise that they would operationalize their lies with the full force of the federal government. I look forward to meeting them, and beating them, in court."

Gov. Brian Kemp, R-Ga., called the Justice Department's lawsuit "legally and constitutionally dead wrong" and said the accusations made by prosecutors were baseless and "quite honestly, disgusting."

"Today, the Biden Justice Department launched a politically motivated assault on the rule of law and our democracy," he said at a news conference.

While much of the more controversial aspects of Georgia's new voting law were dropped before it was passed, it is notable in its scope and for newly expansive powers granted to the state over local election offices.

The bill, known as SB 202, also adds a voter ID requirement for mail ballots, shortens the time period for requesting a mailed ballot and results in fewer ballot drop boxes available in metro Atlanta — provisions that drew the challenge from the federal government.

"The changes to absentee voting were not made in a vacuum," Clarke said. "These changes come immediately after successful absentee voting in the 2020 election cycle, especially among Black voters. SB 202 seeks to halt and reverse this progress."

The lawsuit also takes aim at another controversial measure — a ban on the distribution of food and water by various groups and organizations to voters standing in line to cast a ballot. Democrats say the support is needed to encourage voters who find themselves in long lines. Republicans argue the measure is needed to prevent unlawful electioneering from happening at polling places.

In 2020, just two states had ID requirements for voters requesting a mailed ballot. Along with Georgia, lawmakers in Florida have also passed a law requiring additional identification for mail voting. Clarke described the Georgia law as adding "new and unnecessarily stringent" identification requirements to mail voting.

In Georgia, drop boxes were permitted last year under an emergency rule prompted by the coronavirus pandemic. State Republicans have defended the new law as making drop boxes a permanent option for voters and requiring all counties to have at least one. But critics say the new limits mean there will be fewer drop boxes available in the state's most populous communities.

For the entire metro Atlanta area, Democrats estimate the number of drop boxes will fall from 94 last year to no more than 23 for future elections based on the new formula of one drop box per 100,000 registered voters.

Clarke noted that metro Atlanta is home to the largest Black voting-age population in the state.

The NAACP and civil rights leaders such as Stacey Abrams applauded the administration's step. NAACP President Derrick Johnson said Georgia's law was a "blatant assault on the American people's most fundamental and sacred right, the right to vote."

The law already is the subject of seven other federal suits filed by civil rights and election integrity groups that raise a number of claims under the Constitution and the Voting Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination in voting.

The Supreme Court also is weighing a voting rights dispute from Arizona that predates last year's election in which the court could again significantly cut back on the use of the voting rights law.

Eight years ago Friday, the high court removed the Justice Department's most effective tool in combating discriminatory voting laws: the requirement that states with a history of racial discrimination, mostly in the South, obtain advance approval of any voting changes from the government or a court.

The department also announced Friday that it was creating a task force and advising FBI and U.S. attorneys to prioritize investigations of threats against election officials.

## Joy and sorrow amid boy's dramatic rescue, mother's death

By KELLI KENNEDY Associated Press

SURFSIDE, Fla. (AP) — It was just a small hand waving through the wreckage, yet one of the few hopeful moments amid a largely fruitless effort to find survivors.

Nicholas Balboa was walking his dog on the beach when he heard the rumbling he thought was thunder, he told The Associated Press in a telephone interview Friday. Sensing something was wrong, he dropped off his dog and hurried back outside.

Residents were flooding the streets and pointing at a gaping hole and dust cloud where a seaside condominium tower had collapsed. Fire and rescue crews had not yet arrived, and it was eerily quiet on the back side of the building. As he began to take photos of the wreckage, he heard what sounded like a child's voice.

Balboa, 31, climbed through a pile of glass and rebar in his flip-flops, desperate to get closer.

"Keep yelling so I can follow your voice," Balboa said. He soon saw a hand waving from the rubble.

The boy, Jonah Handler, said he and his mother, Stacie Fang, were the only ones in the condo that had imploded when part of the building went down. He kept asking about his mom. Balboa and a stranger tried desperately to clear away the rubble surrounding Jonah but it was too heavy. It looked like a wall or support beam, Balboa said.

"I'll be right back. I'm going to get help," Balboa said, trying to comfort the boy.

"Please don't leave me, please don't leave me," the boy cried.

"He was absolutely terrified. The sheer terror in his voice, that fact that his mother, that he can't find her," said Balboa, who was in town from Arizona visiting his father.

Video of Jonah's rescue has played on repeat in the news, tugging hearts as rescuers with flashlights slowly helped him out from under a pile of cement and twisted steel and carried him away on a stretcher.

Asked about his condition, Lisa Mozloom, a friend of the family told the AP, "He will be fine. He's a miracle." Mozloom said Jonah had been taken to the hospital at one point but said he was "stable."

Authorities have said at least four people died in the building collapse, and with 159 still unaccounted for they fear the death toll will rise sharply. They have not publicly released the identities of the deceased, but Mozloom confirmed Fang's death.

"There are no words to describe the tragic loss of our beloved Stacie," members of her family said in a statement that Mozloom released on their behalf. They said they were deeply grateful to those who had reached out and that "the many heartfelt words of encouragement and love have served as a much needed source of strength during this devastating time."

The family requested privacy "on behalf of Stacie's son, Jonah," saying it needed time to "to grieve and to try to help each other heal."

Balboa said he was heartbroken to learn of Fang's death. "I lost my mom recently, so I know how it's going to be," he said.

## **EXPLAINER: Why some schools in Canada have unmarked graves**

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Leaders of Indigenous groups in Canada say investigators have found more than 600 unmarked graves at the site of a former residential school for Indigenous children, which follows the discovery of 215 bodies at another school last month.

The new discovery was at the Marieval Indian Residential School, which operated from 1899 to 1997 where the Cowessess First Nation is now located, about 85 miles (135 kilometers) east of Regina, the capital of the province of Saskatchewan.

Ground-penetrating radar registered 751 "hits," indicating at least 600 bodies were buried, said Chief Cadmus Delorme of the Cowessess. Some and perhaps most are from over a century ago. The gravesite is believed to hold the bodies of children and adults, and even people from outside the community who attended church there.

Perry Bellegarde, chief of the Assembly of First Nations, said it is not unusual to find such graves at former residential schools but is always a devastating discovery that reopens old wounds about the forced assimilation of native children at those often-abusive institutions.

Many non-Indigenous Canadians were not aware of the extent of the problems at the schools until the remains of 215 children were found last month at what was once the country's largest such school in British Columbia.

### **WHAT ARE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS?**

From the 19th century until the 1970s, more than 150,000 Indigenous children were forced to attend state-funded Christian boarding schools in an effort to assimilate them into Canadian society. Thousands of children died there of disease and other causes, with many never returned to their families.

Nearly three-quarters of the 130 residential schools were run by Roman Catholic missionary congregations, with others operated by the Presbyterian, Anglican and the United Church of Canada, which today is the largest Protestant denomination in the country.

The Canadian government has admitted its role in a century of isolating native children from their homes, families and cultures, and that physical and sexual abuse was rampant in the schools, where students were beaten for speaking their native language. That legacy of abuse and isolation has been cited by native leaders as a cause of alcoholism and drug addiction widely seen on reservations today.

Indigenous leaders have called it a form of cultural genocide.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Friday called it "an incredibly harmful government policy that was Canada's reality for many, many decades and Canadians today are horrified and ashamed of how our country behaved."

He said the policy "forced assimilation" on the children.

### **WHAT'S BEHIND THE DISCOVERY OF THE REMAINS?**

A National Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was set up as part of a government apology and settlement, issued a report in 2015 that identified about 3,200 confirmed deaths at schools. While some died of diseases like tuberculosis amid the often-deplorable conditions, it noted that a cause of death for about half of them often was not recorded.

The government wanted to keep costs down at the schools, so adequate regulations were never established, the reconciliation commission said..

It said the practice at the schools was to not send the bodies home to their communities. Delorme said the graves at the Saskatchewan school were marked at one time, but that the Catholic operators of the facility had removed them.

### **WHAT APOLOGIES HAVE BEEN MADE?**

Former Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized in Parliament in 2008 for the government's role.



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Among the Christian denominations, the Presbyterian, Anglican and United churches also apologized for their roles in the abuse.

A papal apology was one of 94 recommendations from the reconciliation commission, but the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops said in 2018 that the pope could not personally apologize for the residential schools.

Former Pope Benedict XVI met with some former students and victims in 2009 and told them of his "personal anguish" over their suffering.

After last month's discovery, Pope Francis expressed his pain and pressed religious and political authorities to shed light on "this sad affair," but didn't offer an apology.

Trudeau said Friday he has spoken to Francis personally "to impress upon him how important it is not just that he makes an apology but that he makes an apology to indigenous Canadians on Canadian soil."

Archbishop Don Bolen of the Regina Archdiocese posted a letter on its website this week to the Cowessess First Nation in which he repeated an apology he said he made two years ago.

## WHAT COMPENSATION HAS BEEN OFFERED?

The reconciliation commission was created as part of a \$5 billion Canadian (\$4 billion U.S.) class action settlement in 2005, the largest in Canadian history.

Under the settlement, students who attended the schools were eligible to receive \$10,000 Canadian (\$8,143 U.S.) for the first school year and \$3,000 Canadian (\$2,443 U.S.) for every year thereafter. Victims of physical and sexual abuse were eligible for further compensation.

Trudeau has said the government will help preserve gravesites and search for unmarked burial grounds at other schools, but he and his ministers have stressed the need for indigenous communities to decide for themselves how they want to proceed.

The government previously announced \$27 million Canadian (\$22 million U.S.) for the effort in what it called a first step.

## Aid group MSF 'horrified' as colleagues murdered in Ethiopia

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — The medical charity Doctors Without Borders said Friday it was "horrified by the brutal murder" of three colleagues in Ethiopia's Tigray region, the latest attack on humanitarian workers helping civilians in the deadly conflict there.

A statement by the aid group, also known by its French acronym MSF, said two Ethiopian colleagues and one from Spain were found dead Friday, a day after colleagues lost contact with them while they were traveling.

"This morning the vehicle was found empty and a few meters away, their lifeless bodies," the statement said.

"We condemn this attack on our colleagues in the strongest possible terms and will be relentless in understanding of what happened," MSF added, calling it "unthinkable" that the three — emergency coordinator Maria Hernandez, assistant coordinator Yohannes Halefom Reda and driver Tedros Gebremariam Gebremichael — paid for their work with their lives.

In a statement, Ethiopia's foreign ministry expressed condolences for the deaths it said occurred in the town of Abi Addi, and it suggested that Tigray fighters were to blame. It also called for military escorts — a thorny issue for many aid groups because Ethiopian forces, like all sides in the conflict, have been accused of abuses.

Another MSF team was attacked in March after witnessing Ethiopian soldiers pulling men off two public buses and shooting them dead. Soldiers beat the MSF driver and threatened to kill him, the aid group said at the time.

This latest attack occurred amid some of the fiercest fighting in Tigray since the conflict began in November. This week Ethiopia's military acknowledged carrying out an airstrike on a busy market in Tigray that health workers said killed several dozen civilians. The military claimed it was targeting combatants.

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Ethiopian soldiers detained six victims of the airstrike en route to a hospital and three were later released, a regional health official told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation. The three who are still being detained — two women and a 15 year-old boy — were not receiving medical care, said the official who added, "this is very desperate." It's unclear why they're held.

The conflict in Tigray has been deeply challenging for humanitarian workers who have pleaded for better access to the region since the fighting began, with Ethiopian forces backed by ones from neighboring Eritrea pursuing Tigray's former leaders.

At least 12 aid workers have now been killed since the conflict began.

Death by starvation is another looming crisis in Tigray. On Friday the head of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Samantha Power, tweeted that "terrifying" new findings show that up to 900,000 people in the region now face famine conditions, "with millions more at risk."

The United Nations on Thursday warned that at least 33,000 children in inaccessible parts of Tigray "are severely malnourished and face imminent death without immediate help."

Meanwhile, Ethiopia awaits the results of Monday's national election, the first test at the polls for Abiy who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019, a year after taking office. He now stands accused by critics of backsliding on political reforms.

Abiy's government has said the election would be the first free and fair one in Ethiopia, Africa's second most populous country. But on Friday, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the vote "was not free or fair for all Ethiopians," citing opposition boycotts, detentions of political leaders and insecurity in various parts of the country.

The statement also called for a cease-fire in Tigray and the withdrawal of Eritrean forces, who have been accused by witnesses of atrocities including gang-rapes and massacres.

In separate statement Friday, the European Union and 12 countries including Britain and Japan described "problematic conditions" regarding Monday's election and urged a national dialogue to de-escalate conflict.

## Russia launches Mediterranean drills amid rift with Britain

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — The Russian military on Friday launched sweeping maneuvers in the Mediterranean Sea featuring warplanes armed with state-of-the-art hypersonic missiles, a show of force amid a surge in tensions following an incident with a British destroyer in the Black Sea.

Moscow said one of its warships fired warning shots and a warplane dropped bombs in the path of British destroyer Defender on Wednesday to force her out of an area near Crimea that Russia claims as its territorial waters. Britain denied that account, insisted its ship wasn't fired upon and said she was sailing in Ukrainian waters.

The Russian drills that began Friday in the eastern Mediterranean come as a British carrier strike group is in the area. Earlier this week, British and U.S. F-35 fighters from HMS Queen Elizabeth flew combat sorties against the Islamic State group.

Russia has waged a military campaign in Syria since September 2015, allowing Syrian President Bashar Assad's government to reclaim control over most of the country after a devastating civil war.

The Russian Defense Ministry said that a pair of MiG-31 fighter jets capable of carrying Kinzhal hypersonic missiles arrived at the Russian airbase in Syria and flew training missions to practice strikes on targets in the Mediterranean. The Hemeimeem airbase, in the coastal province of Latakia, serves as the main hub for Moscow's operations in the country.

It's the first time the warplanes armed with Kinzhal have been deployed outside Russia's borders.

The military says the Kinzhal has a range of up to 2000 kilometers (about 1,250 miles) and flies at 10 times the speed of sound, making it hard to intercept.

The Defense Ministry said the maneuvers in the eastern Mediterranean also involve several warships, two submarines and long-range Tu-22M3 bombers along with other combat aircraft. The supersonic, nuclear-capable Tu-22M3s were first deployed to Syria last month in a demonstration of an increased Russian

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military foothold in the Mediterranean.

The Russian military has modernized the runway at Hemeimeem to accommodate heavy bombers and built a second one to expand the operations there.

Russia also has expanded and modified a naval base in the Syrian port of Tartus, the only such facility that Russia currently has outside the former Soviet Union.

The Russian military has increased the number and scope of its drills amid a bitter strain in relations with the West, which have sunk to post-Cold War lows after Moscow's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. As part of President Vladimir Putin's efforts to beef up Russia's military, the Russian navy in recent years has revived the Soviet-era practice of constantly rotating its warships in the Mediterranean.

Speaking to reporters Sunday aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth, Commodore Steve Moorhouse said the eastern Mediterranean has become more "congested and contested" with the heavier Russian military presence in Syria, resulting in regular encounters with Russian ships and warplanes. He noted that a Russian warship has come within 10 kilometers (16 miles) of the carrier.

In Wednesday's Black Sea incident, Britain insisted the Defender had been making a routine journey through an internationally recognized travel lane and remained in Ukrainian waters near Crimea. The U.K., like most of the world, recognizes Crimea as part of Ukraine despite the peninsula's annexation by Russia.

Russia denounced the Defender's move as a provocation and warned that next time it could fire to hit intruding warships if they again try to test the Russian military's resolve.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov on Friday derided the British denials that the Russian military fired warning shots at the Defender and urged Britain and its allies not to "tempt fate" again. He added that the Defender is "just a juicy target for the Black Sea Fleet's missile systems."

## Knife attack in German city leaves 3 dead, suspect arrested

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — A man armed with a long knife killed three people and injured five others, some seriously, in Germany's southern city of Wuerzburg on Friday before being shot by police and arrested, authorities said.

Police identified the suspect as a 24-year-old Somali man living in Wuerzburg. His life was not in danger from his gunshot wound, they said.

Bavaria's top security official Joachim Herrmann said the injured include a young boy, whose father was probably among the dead.

The suspect was in psychiatric treatment before the attack and had been known to police, Herrmann said. There was no immediate word on a possible motive.

Videos posted on social media showed pedestrians surrounding the attacker and trying to hold him at bay with chairs and sticks.

A woman who said she had witnessed the incident told German RTL television that the police then stepped in.

"He had a really big knife with him and was attacking people," Julia Runze said. "And then many people tried to throw chairs or umbrellas or cellphones at him and stop him."

"The police then approached him and I think a shot was fired, you could hear that clearly."

Police spokeswoman Kerstin Kunick said officers were alerted around 5 p.m. (1500 GMT) to a knife attack on Barbarossa Square in the center of the city. Würzburg is a city of about 130,000 people located between Munich and Frankfurt.

Bavaria's governor Markus Soeder expressed shock at the news of the attack. "We grieve with the victims and their families," he wrote on Twitter.

"A big thank you and respect for the spirited intervention by many citizens, who confronted the suspected attacker in a determined way," Soeder added. "And also to all first responders for their work at the scene."

Almost five years ago a 17-year-old refugee from Afghanistan wounded four people with an ax on a train near Wuerzburg. He then fled and attacked a woman passer-by before police shot him dead.

## Trudeau says Pope Francis should apologize on Canadian soil

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Friday he has urged Pope Francis to come to Canada to apologize for church-run boarding schools where hundreds of unmarked graves have been found, and he said Canadians are “horrified and ashamed” by their government’s longtime policy of forcing Indigenous children to attend such schools.

Indigenous leaders said this week that 600 or more remains were discovered at the Marieval Indian Residential School, which operated from 1899 to 1997 in the province of Saskatchewan. Last month, some 215 remains were reported at a similar school in British Columbia.

From the 19th century until the 1970s, more than 150,000 Indigenous children were forced to attend state-funded Christian schools, most run by Roman Catholic missionary congregations, in a campaign to assimilate them into Canadian society.

Indigenous leaders have called for Pope Francis to apologize — a demand echoed again Friday by Trudeau, who said the pope should visit Canada to do it.

“I have spoken personally directly with His Holiness, Pope Francis, to impress upon him how important it is not just that he makes an apology but that he makes an apology to indigenous Canadians on Canadian soil” Trudeau said.

“I know that the Catholic church leadership is looking and very actively engaged in what next steps can be taken.”

Following that discovery of the British Colombia remains, Francis expressed his pain and pressed religious and political authorities to shed light on “this sad affair.” But he stopped short of a formal apology.

Don Bolen, archbishop of Regina, Saskatchewan, posted a letter to the Cowessess First Nation on the archdiocese’s website this week in which he repeated an apology he said he made two years ago.

Nearly three-quarters of the 130 residential schools were run by Catholic missionary congregations, with others operated by the United, Presbyterian and Anglican churches, which earlier apologized for their roles in the abuse.

Former Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a formal apology in Parliament in 2008 and Canada offered billions of dollars in compensation as part of a lawsuit settlement between the government, churches and the approximately 90,000 surviving students.

The government has admitted that physical and sexual abuse was rampant in the schools, with students beaten for speaking their native languages. Thousands of children died there of disease and other causes, many never returned to their families.

“This was an incredibly harmful government policy that was Canada’s reality for many, many decades and Canadians today are horrified and ashamed of how our country behaved,” Trudeau said. “It was a policy that ripped kids from their homes, from their communities, from their culture and their language and forced assimilation upon them.”

Trudeau said many Canadians won’t be able to celebrate as the country marks its birthday on July 1.

“Canadians across the country are waking up to something that quite frankly that Indigenous communities have long known,” Trudeau said.

“The trauma of the past echoes very much today.”

Indigenous leaders have called the residential schools a system of “cultural genocide.”

A search with ground-penetrating radar at the Marieval school resulted in 751 “hits,” indicating that at least 600 bodies were buried in the area after accounting for a margin of error in the search technique, said Chief Cadmus Delorme of the Cowessess First Nation, whose lands today include the school.

Delorme said the search continues and the numbers will be verified in coming weeks.

He said the gravesite is believed to hold both children and adults, and perhaps people from outside the community who attended church there.

Delorme said that the individual graves had once been marked, but that the church at some point removed the markers.

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Last month the remains of 215 children, some as young as 3, were found buried on the site of what was once Canada's largest Indigenous residential school near Kamloops, British Columbia.

On Friday, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, which operated 48 residential schools in Saskatchewan and British Columbia, including those where the bodies were recently found, said it will disclose all historical documents it has.

It said in a statement that it already has worked to make the documents available through universities, archives and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but that the work is not complete because of provincial and national privacy laws.

A National Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued a report in 2015 that identified about 3,200 confirmed deaths at schools, but noted the schools did not record the cause of death in almost half of them. Many died of tuberculosis, an illness symptomatic of the deplorable living conditions.

In the United States, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland announced this week that the federal government is launching an investigation into its past oversight of Native American boarding schools there. She said it will review records to identify past schools, locate burial sites and uncover the names and tribal affiliations of students.

## AP Exclusive: Diplomats say China puts squeeze on Ukraine

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — China pressured Ukraine into withdrawing its support for a call for more scrutiny of human rights in China's western region of Xinjiang by threatening to withhold Chinese-made COVID-19 vaccines destined for Ukraine unless it did so, diplomats told The Associated Press on Friday.

Ukraine briefly joined a statement by over 40 countries, presented by Canada at the Human Rights Council in Geneva on Tuesday, urging China to allow immediate access for independent observers to Xinjiang. Some human rights groups have alleged Chinese mistreatment of Muslim Uyghurs and others in the region.

On Thursday, Ukraine pulled its name off the list of supporting states after Chinese authorities warned Kyiv that they would block a planned shipment of at least 500,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines to Ukraine unless it did so, said diplomats from two Western countries. The diplomats spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

Ukraine has agreed to purchase 1.9 million doses of CoronaVac vaccine from China's Sinovac Biotech. As of early May, Ukraine had received 1.2 million doses, according to Health Minister Maxim Stepanov.

In the past, China's government has been no stranger to pressuring other countries in Geneva diplomatic circles or in national capitals either to line up behind its statements or avoid backing statements that criticize, question or seek scrutiny of human rights in the country.

But the alleged pressure would mark an escalation of intense recent efforts by Beijing to push back against criticism of its rights record, this time by potentially jeopardizing health - even lives - as a way to minimize international attention to it, the diplomats said.

One of the Western diplomats called it sign of "bare-knuckles" diplomacy by China. The other diplomat cited "reports of significant pressure in Kyiv," adding, "last night the delegation told us they needed to pull out."

The Chinese Foreign Ministry in Beijing and a spokesman for the Chinese diplomatic mission in Geneva did not immediately respond to emails seeking comment. Ukrainian authorities did not immediately respond to requests seeking comment.

The situation could still change. Under the practice of the 47-member council, countries can add their names to statements or resolutions up to two weeks after the end of a session. The current 3 1/2-week session that began Monday runs until July 13.

Canadian Ambassador Leslie Norton said in a statement Tuesday that "credible reports indicate that over a million people have been arbitrarily detained in Xinjiang." Norton's statement was initially backed by 41 countries and is now supported by 44. Ukraine was briefly country No. 45.

Norton also pointed to "reports of torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment,

forced sterilization, sexual and gender-based violence, and forced separation of children from their parents by authorities" in China.

Also Tuesday, a Chinese diplomat decried shortcomings in Canada's own rights record, pointing notably to abuses against Indigenous peoples. Belarus read a joint statement -- allegedly by 64 countries -- speaking out in defense of China's right to manage its own internal affairs such as with Hong Kong or Xinjiang.

A spokesman for the council's secretariat said Belarus had not provided a list of those 64 countries. Belarus' diplomatic mission in Geneva did not immediately respond to an e-mail from The Associated Press seeking a list of those countries.

## DeWine criticizes GOP advancing transgender girl sports ban

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and ANDREW WELSH-HUGGINS Report for America/Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Ohio's Republican governor questioned Friday the need for a legislative ban on transgender girls competing in sports, pushing back on GOP lawmakers' attempt to pass the controversial measure.

Gov. Mike DeWine's comment appearing to oppose such a policy came one day after fellow Republicans in the House inserted the ban into an unrelated bill, saying such a prohibition was needed to protect girls from unfair competition.

But DeWine said there were better ways to deal with the question.

"This issue is best addressed outside of government through individual sports leagues and athletic associations, including the Ohio High School Athletic Association, who can tailor policies to meet the needs of their member athletes and member institutions," he said.

The governor's spokesperson said it was too early to say whether DeWine would veto the ban if it came to his desk.

The OHSAA has consistently said there's no evidence of a problem posed by transgender girls competing in sports, and the number of such participants is minor.

The proposal, titled the Save Women's Sports Act, would require schools and higher education institutions in the state to designate "separate single-sex teams and sports for each sex."

"It is a shameful day in this body today," Democratic state Rep. Michael Skindell said on the House floor Thursday. "This is one of the most extreme political attacks on transgender people in the nation."

Supporters say the measures are necessary to maintain fairness and protect the integrity in women's sports in Ohio, though lawmakers have not pointed to a single instance where this has been an issue in the state.

"Across our country, female athletes are currently losing scholarships, opportunities, medals and training opportunities," GOP Rep. Jena Powell, a cosponsor of the bill, said on the House floor as Democrats pounded their desks in opposition.

House Republicans added the ban to a bill allowing college athletes to be compensated for use of their name, image or likeness in promotions. The legislation must go back to the Senate for approval of the transgender prohibition.

"I continue to strongly pursue legislation to ensure student athletes receive in law their rights to their own name, image, & likeness by the July 1, 2021 deadline," GOP Sen. Niraj Antani, the sponsor of the measure to compensate college athletes for their likeness, tweeted. "I'm optimistic in my prospects & I will continue to work hard to get this done for our student athletes."

The Ohio High School Athletic Association has ruled in 48 cases of transgender students applying to compete since September 2015 and says and there have been only 11 transgender female approvals.

"Those 11 approvals have resulted in no disruption of competition regarding competitive equity and they have not caused any loss in female participation, championships or scholarship opportunities," Tim Stried, a spokesperson for the association, said in a statement. "The OHSAA is confident that our policy, which is based on medical science, is appropriate to address transgender requests and works for the benefit of all student-athletes and member schools."

The college athlete compensation bill would prohibit universities or college athletic conferences from punishing athletes if they are compensated based on their sports performance.

Such compensation could involve anything from a book signing at a bookstore to a deal with a local restaurant. Exceptions include sponsorships for marijuana, alcohol, tobacco and casinos.

Athletes would have to notify universities 15 days ahead of signing endorsement contracts. The measure mirrors similar efforts in other states and on the federal level as athletes fight for rights to compensation.

Ohio State football coach Ryan Day has testified before Senate and House committees that Ohio schools need the bill passed quickly to be competitive with colleges and universities in states with similar laws.

## Widow seeks 'thorough' investigation into John McAfee death

By RENATA BRITO and ARITZ PARRA Associated Press

SANT ESTEVE SESROVIRE, Spain (AP) — The widow of John McAfee, the British-American tycoon who died in a Spanish prison this week while awaiting extradition to the United States, on Friday demanded a "thorough investigation" of his death, saying her husband did not appear suicidal when they last spoke.

Authorities in Spain are conducting an autopsy on McAfee's body but have said that everything at the scene in his cell indicated that the 75-year-old killed himself.

An official source familiar with the investigation told The Associated Press that a suicide note had been found in McAfee's pocket. The source, who was not authorized to speak about an ongoing judicial inquiry, refused to comment on the content of the note.

McAfee's Spanish lawyer, Javier Villalba, said that the family had not been informed by authorities about the note.

In her first public remarks since the software entrepreneur's death on Wednesday, McAfee's widow Janice McAfee said she wanted a "thorough investigation" to provide "answers about this was able to happen."

"His last words to me were 'I love you and I will call you in the evening,'" the 38-year-old told reporters outside the Brians 2 penitentiary northwest of Barcelona where she recovered her late husband's belongings. She said they spoke earlier on the day he was found dead.

"Those words are not words of somebody who is suicidal," she added.

John McAfee was arrested at the Barcelona airport in October last year on a warrant issued by prosecutors in Tennessee who were seeking up to three decades of imprisonment for allegedly evading more than \$4 million in taxes.

The day before he was found dead, Spain's National Court had announced that it was agreeing to his extradition to the U.S. but the decision was not final.

"We had a plan of action already in place to appeal that decision," Janice McAfee told reporters. "I blame the U.S. authorities for this tragedy: Because of these politically motivated charges against him my husband is now dead."

The National Court judge said John McAfee had provided no evidence to back his allegations that he was being politically persecuted. "On the contrary, according to his own testimony, he took part in primaries of a certain party to defend his convictions with a result little favorable to him," the judge wrote in the ruling seen by AP.

In an e-mailed statement, the U.S. State Department confirmed for the first time the tycoon's death, offering the family condolences. It said: "We are closely monitoring local authorities' investigation into the cause of death. We stand ready to provide all appropriate assistance to the family. Out of respect to the family during this difficult time, we have no further comment."

Results of McAfee's autopsy could take "days or weeks," authorities have said.

The couple reportedly met in 2012 in Miami and married the following year. John McAfee had several children from previous relationships, Janice McAfee said.

The entrepreneur had not been connected with the companies that took over the antivirus software he built after he sold his shares in the 1990s. That early success had made McAfee rich and followed him in his troubled biography.

In 2012, he was sought for questioning in connection with the murder of his neighbor in Belize, but was never charged with a crime. The controversy didn't stop him from making long-shot runs for the U.S. presidency starting in 2016.

But it was his more recent tax problems that kept him away from the U.S., the country where the British-born entrepreneur was raised and had built his early success.

The Tennessee prosecutors' indictments from 2020 showed that the tycoon allegedly failed to declare income made by promoting cryptocurrencies, attending speaking engagements and selling the rights for a documentary on his eventful life.

"Even though he was born in England, America was his home," Janice McAfee said. "He came there when he was a child. He had his first girlfriend there, his first case, you know, his first job. He made his first millions there and he wanted to be there. But, you know, politics just wouldn't allow for that to happen."

John McAfee's social media postings indicated that he had chosen a northeastern Spanish coastal resort town as his base in Europe at least since late 2019.

"All John wanted to do was spend his remaining years fishing and drinking," his widow said on Friday. "He had hope that things would work out. We knew that there would be an uphill battle to continue to fight this situation. But he's a fighter ... And anybody that knows John, that knows him even a little bit, knows that about him."

"He was just so loving. He had a big heart and he just loved people and he just wanted to have peace in his life," Janice McAfee added. "My prayers are that his soul has found the peace in death that he could not find in life."

## **George Floyd's family members to speak at Chauvin sentencing**

By KATHLEEN FOODY and AARON MORRISON Associated Press

An attorney for George Floyd's family said Friday that family members were feeling anxious ahead of a sentencing hearing for former Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin.

Chauvin was convicted of second-degree unintentional murder and other charges in Floyd's death on May 25, 2020, and he faces a practical maximum of 30 years when he's sentenced Friday afternoon.

Family attorney Ben Crump told The Associated Press that family members were feeling "anxious and tense." Floyd's brother Philonise, his brother Terrence and his nephew Brandon Williams plan to make victim impact statements at Chauvin's sentencing.

Philonise Floyd often occupied the Floyd family's assigned seat in the socially distanced courtroom where Chauvin's trial was held. He also testified as part of prosecutors' efforts to humanize George Floyd to the jury, recalling their childhood in a poor part of Houston and his brother's knack for making banana mayonnaise sandwiches.

Philonise Floyd testified last year before Congress in support of a federal overhaul of policing just a day after his older brother's funeral.

Terrence Floyd, a bus driver in New York, also is a frequent representative for the Floyd family at protests and other events. Last fall, he appeared with Joe Biden in the presidential campaign's final days and separately joined a push encouraging people to vote.

Brandon Williams too has acted as a representative for the broader Floyd family since his uncle's death, advocating for a federal overhaul of policing and joining other family members who met with Biden at the White House on the one-year anniversary of George Floyd's death.

"To us, George Floyd is a cause. He's a case; he's a hashtag. To them -- that's their flesh and blood. You know, that that's their brother," Crump said.

Crump also said he wanted to see a sentence above what is typically given for a second-degree murder conviction.

"There was nothing typical about what Derek Chauvin did in torturing George Floyd to death," Crump said. "So we don't expect it to be a typical sentence. It needs to be a sentence that sets a new precedent for holding police officers accountable for the unjustifiable killings of Black people in America."



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In Minnesota, the presumptive sentence for second-degree unintentional murder for someone with no criminal record like Chauvin is 12 1/2 years, and the judge could sentence Chauvin to up to 15 years while staying within the guidelines. But Judge Peter Cahill has already found that there are aggravating factors that would allow him to go above the state's sentencing guidelines. Prosecutors are seeking a 30-year sentence, while Chauvin's defense has asked for probation.

With Chauvin's sentencing, the Floyd family is experiencing something that few Black American families have experienced since the advent of professional policing in the U.S. The list of acquittals and mistrials, in the rare cases where officers accused of brutality or misconduct have gone to trial, is longer than the list of those convicted and sentenced.

In recent years, the list of acquittals has included officers tried in the deaths of Philando Castile in suburban Minneapolis, Terence Crutcher in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and two mistrials over the death of Samuel Dubose in Cincinnati.

"That's why the world has watched this trial, because it is a rare occurrence," said Arizona-based civil rights attorney Benjamin Taylor, who has represented victims of police brutality in court. "Everybody knows that this doesn't happen every day."

"Black people deserve justice," said Taylor, who is Black.

## Merchant ship crews still stuck at sea amid pandemic

By UROOBA JAMAL and IVANA BZGANOVIC Associated Press

Swansea, WALES (AP) — More than 15 months into the coronavirus pandemic, tens of thousands of seafarers vital to the global shipping industry remain stranded at sea or in ports, unable to leave their ships or get to new assignments due to global travel restrictions.

Friday is International Seafarers Day, and ships around the world, from Los Angeles to Singapore to Antwerp, Belgium, planned to blare their horns in solidarity.

"They've been the forgotten heroes of this pandemic and they've really been collateral damage, because it was so easy for countries to say we'll take nobody into our country, except, of course, they wanted the ships to come in and just discharge their cargo," said Guy Platten, head of the International Chamber of Shipping.

It's been a problem since near the beginning of the pandemic, but Kasper Sjøgaard of the Global Maritime Forum said the situation has worsened recently, largely due to new travel restrictions countries have imposed in response to the delta variant of the coronavirus, which was first identified in India.

The forum found that the percentage of stranded seafarers jumped from 5.8% to 7.4% from May to June, figures that are continuing to rise, Sjøgaard said.

More than 80% of world trade is transported by sea, meaning seafarers play a critical role in global commerce. The International Chamber of Shipping estimates that 200,000 are affected by travel restrictions, either stuck at sea or unable to leave home to get to their ships.

Some have been stranded for as long as 20 months, which contravenes the International Labor Organization's Maritime Labour Convention, which allows a maximum of 11 months.

Daresh Villarayan of Punnaikayal in Tamil Nadu, India, spent a month on the MT Peterpaul while it was stuck in Sri Lanka. He has also had to quarantine numerous times. He recorded video of himself and his crewmates talking about their predicament from the ship, which is now back on the move.

"Because of corona, there are a lot of problems in the life of a seaman," he said.

Hermant Solanki, another Indian crew member from Surat, Gujarat, could not find work for eight months. He tried to join a ship in Egypt, but instead had to spend a month in a hotel before finally making his way to the MT Peterpaul.

The chamber says seafarers from India are most affected because they have the most travel restrictions imposed on them.

About 900,000 crew members are from countries that aren't producing vaccines, meaning their movements may be further limited if they can't get vaccinated.

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Beyond tooting horns, there has been a global push to better safeguard seafarers' rights. In January, more than 700 organizations and companies, from the World Economic Forum to BP and Shell, signed the Neptune Declaration on Seafarer Wellbeing and Crew Change. One call to action was declaring seafarers as essential workers. Sixty countries so far have done so.

The chamber says 12 countries have prioritized the push to vaccinate merchant crews, while ports in the United States, Belgium and the Netherlands are vaccinating all crews who arrive, regardless of nationality. Even as the pandemic has raged, some 400,000 seafarers have kept the industry going, Platten said.

"We owe the seafarers a huge debt of gratitude because not one time during the last 15 months have they stopped sailing on the ships, stopped delivering the vital ... the fuel, the food, the medical supplies and all the other essentials that keep the world going," he said.

## 'Iron Man' racer, NASCAR champion Jack Ingram dies at 84

By JENNA FRYER AP Auto Racing Writer

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Jack Ingram, a hard-hosed, hot-tempered racer who won five NASCAR championships and more than 300 races, has died, the NASCAR Hall of Fame said Friday. He was 84.

No details were released by the Hall of Fame. A 2014 inductee, Ingram lived in the Asheville area and had been hospitalized in May.

"Jack was a fixture at short tracks across the Southeast most days of the week, racing anywhere and everywhere. He dominated the Late Model Sportsman division like few others," NASCAR chairman Jim France said.

"Jack was an 'old school racer' and his work on his own car helped propel him to victory lane hundreds of times. Of our current 58 NASCAR Hall of Fame members, he is one of only six that was elected based on his career and contributions in the grassroots level of our sport."

Nicknamed the "Iron Man" for his relentless pursuit on the race track, Ingram dominated NASCAR Sportsman competition during the 1970s. He won three consecutive championships from 1972 to 1974 and continued to compete when the series underwent a transformation and became what is now known as the Xfinity Series.

Prior to Kyle Busch, who won his 100th career Xfinity Series race last week, Ingram was considered the greatest driver in history for NASCAR's second-tier series. He won two championships when the series was called the Busch Series, including the inaugural 1982 title.

"Tough as nails. Old school. Lots of respect for him and that era he performed in," Dale Earnhardt Jr. posted on social media.

A driver used to racing 80-some events a year, Ingram said the reformatted Busch Series with its 29 events "was like taking a holiday." Ingram won a series-high seven times while winning the 1982 title. He beat fellow North Carolinian Sam Ard for that championship by 49 points.

"NASCAR has lost a true racer's racer," Hall of Fame director Winston Kelley said.

Ard beat Ingram in 1983 and 1984, but Ingram won his fifth title in 1985. In addition to the two runner-up finishes to Ard, Ingram finished third in the standings in 1986 and fourth in '87.

His record 31 series victories stood until Mark Martin passed him in 1997. Busch has since passed Martin for the all-time mark.

Ingram ended his career with 122 top-five and 164 top-10 finishes in 275 starts on the second-tier series.

"He was known unilaterally as 'The Iron Man' for his relentless, hard-driving style to win, along with the incredible schedule he kept, crisscrossing the country racing wherever there was a checkered flag to be captured," Kelley said. "Ingram owned, built and worked on the cars himself and although his talent could have allowed him to compete in the premier series of NASCAR, he chose to stay in the series he knew and loved best."

## 1st cruise ship to sail from US as industry seeks comeback

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

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MIAMI (AP) — The first cruise ship to board passengers at a U.S. port in 15 months is set to sail Saturday from the industry's South Florida hub in a symbolic stride toward normalcy that will be watched closely by health experts as vaccines curb the coronavirus' spread in the country.

Industry officials hope the Celebrity Edge's voyage serves as a bookend for people for whom the gravity of the pandemic first hit home in the alarming reports last year of deadly outbreaks on crowded ships, with guests quarantined for weeks, vessels begging to dock and sickened passengers carried away on stretchers at ports.

"We are excited to be part of that," said Russ Schwartz, a Florida school principal who is honeymooning on the ship and is confident it will be smooth sailing. "Things have changed drastically. Back then we really didn't know much about the virus. Cruises at that point weren't prepared."

Celebrity Cruises, one of Royal Caribbean Cruises' brands, says at least 95% of those boarding the Celebrity Edge have been vaccinated against the coronavirus in line with health requirements from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the ship will run at a reduced capacity.

It will be a luxurious voyage aboard a boat that was unveiled in December 2018 featuring a giant spa and multi-floor suites. The \$1 billion vessel will be led by Capt. Kate McCue, who in 2015 became the first American woman to captain a cruise ship and has drawn a following of more than 1 million on TikTok and 250,000 on Instagram.

The stakes are high for cruise lines as they emerge from a CDC-imposed shutdown that lasted 15 months. During that period the three industry giants — Carnival, Norwegian and Royal Caribbean — have had to raise more than \$40 billion in financing just to stay afloat without any revenue.

Collectively they lost \$20 billion last year and another \$4.5 billion in the first quarter of 2021, according to Securities and Exchange Commission filings.

"The cruise lines are getting up off their knees after getting crippled by COVID-19," said Michael Winkelman, a maritime attorney. "There's just too much money at stake for the cruise lines not to get it right."

To comply with both the CDC's 95% vaccination requirement and a new Florida law banning businesses from requiring customers to show proof of vaccination, Celebrity Cruises is simply asking guests if they would like to share their status, spokeswoman Susan Lomax said.

Those who don't voluntarily show proof of vaccination will be treated as unvaccinated and be subjected to additional protocols such as wearing face masks and being restricted to designated seating areas in common areas like dining rooms, casinos and theaters.

Last year the CDC castigated the cruise industry for keeping bars, gyms and self-service buffets open and continuing to allow crew members to gather even as the pandemic raged.

Beginning in March 2020, data showed 3,689 confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 on cruise ships in U.S. waters, and at least 41 deaths. The CDC says it spent 38,000 person-hours handling just the cruise response to COVID-19, including contact tracing for 11,000 passengers.

Medical evacuation and logistical efforts for passengers disembarking ships such as the Zaandam in Fort Lauderdale and the Grand Princess in Oakland, California, also diverted resources from local agencies that were trying to curb the spread of COVID-19.

Dozens of passengers have since filed lawsuits saying companies failed to protect them and warn them about the virus, especially after an outbreak on Carnival's Diamond Princess off the coast of Japan with more than 700 confirmed cases and nine deaths.

The prolonged shutdown has also been challenged in court. In April, Florida sued the federal government to demand cruise ships be allowed to start sailing, arguing the ban disproportionately harms the state where the industry generates billions each year for the economy.

Last week a judge granted a preliminary injunction that prevents the CDC from enforcing sailing conditions, which the state says effectively block most cruises.

Celebrity Edge will sail before the injunction takes effect, so it is complying with the conditions.

The Cruise Lines International Association, which represents about 90% of the global cruise capacity, said it appreciated Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' efforts to back the industry and cruise lines are prioritizing health and safety. About 600,000 passengers have sailed in member ships outside the U.S. since last

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summer and incidence of the coronavirus has been low.

"The industry's protocols are working as intended," the association said in a statement. "The highly successful rollout of vaccines in the United States is a game changer and facilitates safe travel."

About 44% of people nationwide are fully vaccinated, according to the CDC, and new COVID-19 cases in the U.S. are down sharply from their peak earlier this year.

Katherine Quirk-Schwartz, a Celebrity Edge passenger and registered nurse who's excited for the upcoming cruise and hopes to meet Capt. McCue, recalled how her hospital took in some of the first COVID-19 patients from cruise ships when they were finally allowed onshore in Florida after days of negotiation.

"It's almost like full circle. It's amazing to reflect on that," she said. "As more things change, more things open up, we will see more of the effects of the vaccine. People are getting back to living, people are getting back to sailing." \_\_\_\_\_

Associated Press writer David Koenig contributed from Dallas.

## Rescuers focus on detecting sounds of survivors in rubble

By FREIDA FRISARO and TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

SURFSIDE, Fla. (AP) — Search and rescue teams worked through the night, encountering rainstorms and small fires in the rubble, hoping to detect any sounds coming from survivors following the collapse of a beachside condominium complex near Miami.

The crews, which include some 130 firefighters working in teams, are approaching the pile from above and below as they search for any signs of life in what had been a wing of the Champlain Towers South in Surfside, Florida.

Overnight, crews pulled three bodies from the pile, bringing the official death toll to four, Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava said. The tower collapsed early Thursday, leaving 159 people unaccounted for, she said. But Friday's focus remained on finding survivors among the rubble, which is more than 30 feet (9 meters) high.

Crews have heard some tapping and other noises, but Assistant Miami-Dade Fire Chief Raide Jadallah emphasized that the rescuers don't know whether the sounds are human-made or just caused by the settling of the huge mass of concrete, metal and other belongings lost in the collapse.

"Any time that we hear a sound, we concentrate in that area," Jadallah said during a news conference Friday morning. "It could be just steel twisting, it could be debris raining down, but not specifically sounds of tapping or sounds of a human voice."

Crane operators are meticulously picking up large pieces of concrete and other heavy debris from the pile using large claws, creating a sound of crashing glass and metal as they pick up a haul and dump it to the side as crews look on. The cranes periodically come to a pause, allowing firefighters a chance to pick up and remove lighter debris.

At the same time, other firefighters are tunneling from below, using saws and jackhammers, to search for pockets in the rubble, Jadallah said.

Surfside Mayor Charles Burkett said the removal of the debris should make it safer for rescuers to tunnel into pockets where survivors might be trapped.

"Right now we are picking up dangerous pieces that look like they could fall on our search and rescue guys," he said.

Periodic downpours, as well as strong winds, were adding to the challenges. A fire somewhere deep within the rubble was also a concern. "We're working around that, it's not stopping us," the mayor said.

Levine Cava said it is "incredibly motivating" to watch the search and rescue teams.

"This work is being done at extreme risk to these individuals. Debris is falling on them as they do their work," she said. "We have structural engineers on site to ensure that they will not be injured but they are proceeding because they are so motivated and they are taking extraordinary risk on the site every day."

Jadallah said firefighters know the risk, but are driven by the hope of finding survivors.

"This is the risk that we take: it's the risk vs. benefit," he said. "Every time that we have that belief that

there's hope with personnel that are trapped, we do risk our lives."

## **Analysis: Biden rebuts doubts, wins bet on bipartisanship**

By JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Day after day, as the partisan battle lines hardened on Capitol Hill over President Joe Biden's domestic agenda, his calls for bipartisanship seemed increasingly out of step.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said his goal was to focus "100%" on stopping Biden's agenda. Progressive Democrats, meanwhile, pushed Biden to use the brute force power of a majority, even the most slender one, to pass legislation without any GOP support.

But on Thursday, it was Biden, the Washington careerist schooled in the ways of compromise, standing in front of the White House, flanked by Democrats and Republicans alike, claiming a bipartisan deal had been struck on a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure package.

And, like a dream sequence from another era, senators from both parties dutifully spoke about the virtues of not getting all you want and trying to reach something that has been highly elusive in Washington for more than a decade: consensus.

"It's been a very long time since the last time our country was able to strike a major bipartisan deal on American infrastructure, which is so badly needed, I might add," Biden said. "We've devoted far too much energy to competing with one another and not nearly enough energy in competing with the rest of the world to win the 21st century."

Biden had campaigned on his ability to get deals done across the aisle, and Thursday's announcement was an undeniable victory, one that may give nervous moderate Democrats cover as they likely will be asked to support the rest of the president's agenda on a party-line basis.

But the accomplishment itself was fragile, one that faces opposition on the liberal flank of his own party and one that is far smaller than Biden first proposed. And the president's promise that he would sign the bipartisan deal only if a far larger, \$4 trillion reconciliation bill — which would contain his other priorities — also came to his desk made very real the possibility that Thursday's celebration of bipartisanship may end up being fleeting.

A new "era of good feeling" it is not.

Still, Biden proved that all his stated intentions about working with Republicans were not simply to burnish his image as a moderate with swing voters.

From the moment he announced his 2020 campaign, his third try at the White House, he insisted that he could restore a sense of bipartisan comity to Washington. He seemed oblivious to hyperpartisanship that had gripped the capital, one building since the 1990s and dramatically accelerated under the divisive presidency of Donald Trump.

The quest to successfully reach across the aisle remained quixotic after he took office.

Although the nation was in the grips of the pandemic, not a single Republican lawmaker on Capitol Hill voted for the president's \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill even though it enjoyed widespread support among GOP voters. Goaded by Trump, who had incited an insurrection at the Capitol to prevent the certification of Biden's very election, an increasing number of Republicans propagated the lie that the 2020 campaign was fraudulent and doubted the president's legitimacy.

And McConnell, whom Biden frequently referred to as a friend with whom he could do business, had built a solid wall of defiance among Republicans bent on thwarting the president's agenda.

The Republicans' vocal intransigence only fueled Democrats' worries about Biden's approach, which many felt was a pointless waste of time. They asked why a president who promised to act with such urgency and who outlined a far-reaching liberal agenda to rival those authored by Franklin D. Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson, would fritter away time courting obstructionist Republicans.

Historically, however, bipartisanship is not unusual for infrastructure packages — the last big infrastructure bill in 2015, costing over \$300 billion, passed Congress overwhelmingly.

But the Democrats' current margins are small: Only a handful of seats in the House while the Senate is

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50-50, with ties broken by Vice President Kamala Harris. And with the clock ticking toward the midterms, many on the party's left flank urged Biden to ditch the effort at bipartisanship and go it alone.

But Biden had bet his political capital that he could work with Republicans and showcase that "that American democracy can deliver" and be a counterexample to rising global autocracies, and namely China.

"This agreement signals to the world that we can function, deliver, and do significant things," the president said. "These investments represent the kind of national effort that throughout our history has literally -- not figuratively — literally transformed America and propelled us into the future."

Biden and his aides also believed that they needed a bipartisan deal on infrastructure to create a permission structure for more moderate Democrats — including Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona and Joe Manchin of West Virginia — to then be willing to go for a party-line vote for the rest of the president's agenda.

And some liberals, meanwhile, like Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, have been floating the theory that giving the moderates in his party a win on this will help others on the left keep the pressure on to pass the bigger bill.

But there were limits to what was achieved.

Congress had to do an annual infrastructure bill by the end of September, which required 10 Republican votes, so the bill agreed to on Thursday, in essence, was simply expanding and accelerating a package that was already on the horizon.

Moreover, the new bill was for far less than the approximately \$2 trillion he originally sought, which continued to raise some ire on the left. And while it focused on hard infrastructure — things like highways and subways and broadband — it left unaddressed so much of what Biden had proposed earlier this year, including sweeping reforms to housing, child care and efforts to combat climate change.

Those White House priorities, the administration said, would now be tackled separately in a congressional budget process known as reconciliation, which requires only a simple majority to pass. And Biden made clear that the two items would be done "in tandem" and that he would not sign the bipartisan deal without the other, bigger piece.

Both Manchin and Sinema signaled Thursday that they supported the approach, but some doubts remained about whether all the Democrats would stay in line to pass the massive piece of legislation.

But McConnell said that Biden's insistence on pairing the two bills — one of which would almost surely not receive GOP support — undermined his bipartisan outreach and "almost makes your head spin."

"An expression of bipartisanship, and then an ultimatum on behalf of your left-wing base," the Republican leader proclaimed.

But Biden was only reveling Thursday in achieving GOP support for the deal, an agreement that he said evoked his political North Star: the bipartisan spirit of yore. As if to symbolize his effort, the former Delaware senator even put his hand on the shoulder of a stoic-looking Republican Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio as the president made a surprise appearance with a bipartisan group of senators to announce the basis for an accord outside the White House.

"This reminds me of the days when we used to get an awful lot done up in the United States Congress," Biden said.

## Jailed Belarus journalist, girlfriend moved to house arrest

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The dissident Belarusian journalist and his Russian girlfriend who were arrested after being pulled off a flight that was diverted to Minsk have been transferred from jail to house arrest — a move the country's exiled opposition leader said Friday was positive but still left them "hostages."

Raman Pratasevich, whose messaging app channel was widely used in last year's massive protests against authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko, and girlfriend Sofia Sapega were seized on May 23 when their Ryanair flight from Greece to Lithuania was forced to land in Minsk because of a reported bomb threat.

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Several world leaders denounced the dramatic gambit as a hijacking, and it prompted another round of Western sanctions on Belarus, where Lukashenko responded to the months of mass protests with a brutal crackdown.

Pratasevich, who faces a potential 15 years in prison, has been seen since his arrest in videos on state television and at a government press briefing expressing regret for his activities. The opposition said he spoke under duress.

Belarus' Investigative Committee said in a statement that Pratasevich and Sapega have been moved to house arrest after they had cooperated with investigators and accepted a pre-trial deal. It said they "agreed to help investigators probe the crimes, expose their accomplices and do everything possible to compensate for the damage that was inflicted" and made "consistent confessional testimony."

Opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya called their move to house arrest "good news" but stressed that their situation remains precarious.

"House arrest is not freedom, they're still facing charges, their every step is still being watched. It means they're still hostages," said Tsikhanouskaya, who left Belarus for Lithuania last year under pressure from the authorities.

She added that her team is in touch with Pratasevich's parents, who "aren't given any information about their son, aren't allowed to talk to him" and are "convinced that the regime is playing a game, using Ramon's and Sofia's lives."

She urged the West not to ease its pressure on Lukashenko and keep pushing for the release of all political prisoners and early elections, noting that Western sanctions have been quite powerful.

"We are really glad that conditions have changed ... but still they are prisoners," Tsikhanouskaya told The Associated Press. "This so-called release after imposing sanctions is a political game."

Pratasevich's mother Natalia Pratasevich told Poland's TVN by phone that she has gotten no official word regarding her son or if conditions of his detention have changed. She said a move to house arrest is "likely an improvement in their living conditions. But I'll repeat, none of the charges against them have been dropped. They remain hostages and captives just like before."

Tsikhanouskaya's adviser Franak Viacorka, who spoke to the parents, added that they don't believe authorities plan to free their son. Instead, Viacorka said, the move might be aimed at holding off additional sanctions.

"We urge the European and the global community not to give in — everyone needs to be free and not under house arrest," he said, adding that Lukashenko's goal is "to create an illusion of softening and concessions. But this is just one prison replaced with another."

Viacorka said Pratasevich's sister has been able to pass on some belongings to him and talk to him. "The house arrest is not freedom, he lives there with operatives of the KGB, agents who watch him round the clock," he said.

Sapega's lawyer, Anton Gashinsky, also confirmed that his client was transferred to house arrest recently, without specifying when. She is now staying in an apartment in Minsk, and her parents met her on Thursday at a restaurant.

Gashinsky wouldn't say whether Pratasevich was also there — but said Sapega didn't go alone.

Pratasevich's lawyer, Inessa Olenskaya, refused to comment on her client's whereabouts and status, citing a nondisclosure agreement.

Marie Struthers, Amnesty International's Eastern Europe and Central Asia Director, said putting the pair under house arrest "looks like a cynical ploy by the Belarusian authorities to secure the lifting of international sanctions."

The months of mass protests were fueled by Lukashenko's reelection to a sixth term in an August 2020 vote that was widely seen as rigged. The subsequent crackdown saw more than 35,000 people arrested and thousands beaten by police. Most opposition leaders have been jailed or forced to leave the country.

In the wake of these violations and the flight diversion, the United States, the European Union, Britain and Canada joined forces on Monday to impose sanctions on several top Belarusian officials. The EU also

imposed a series of bruising economic sanctions that target key Belarus exports, including potash — a common fertilizer ingredient — and petroleum products.

Belarus' Foreign Ministry says the sanctions will hurt ordinary people and "border on the declaration of an economic war." On Friday, the ministry again condemned the sanctions and promised "retaliatory measures" in the coming weeks. "It's about time European politicians realized that pressure and sanctions are not a language one should use with Belarus," the statement read.

## **AP: Police cling to crash theory in Black man's fatal arrest**

By JIM MUSTIAN Associated Press

MONROE, La. (AP) — More than a year and a half after Louisiana state troopers were captured on body camera video brutalizing Black motorist Ronald Greene during his fatal arrest, police brass were still trying to blame his death on a car crash at the end of a high-speed chase.

Police officials quietly commissioned a study late last year into the role the crash could have played in Greene's 2019 death, part of a behind-the-scenes bid to reduce the agency's legal liability, according to internal documents obtained by The Associated Press.

The effort came despite the footage showing troopers stunning, punching and dragging the unarmed man — and one trooper's admission that he bashed him in the head with a flashlight, a use of deadly force not previously reported.

The documents, which also detail how four troopers grossly exaggerated Greene's threat to justify their uses of force, provide the fullest account yet of the deadly May 10, 2019, arrest. And they show the extent to which top brass and troopers alike sought to cover up or explain away actions in a case that is now the focus of a federal civil rights investigation.

"It's horrific," Greene's mother, Mona Hardin, told the AP. "There's nothing they can say to change, to warp, what's shown. I don't care which way they want to coat it, what different colors of paint they want to layer on this mess — they can't erase it."

Greene, a 49-year-old barber, failed to pull over for a traffic violation and led troopers on a midnight chase across rural northern Louisiana at speeds of up to 115 mph (185 kph) before his car spun to a stop on a roadside near Monroe.

Troopers told Greene's relatives hours later that he died on impact after crashing into a tree, an explanation called into question by photos of Greene's body on a gurney showing his bruised and battered face, a hospital report noting he had two stun gun prongs in his back, and the fact that his SUV had only minor damage.

Even Louisiana State Police appeared to back off the crash explanation later when they issued a one-page statement saying only that Greene struggled with troopers who were trying to arrest him and that he died on his way to the hospital.

The truth about what really happened began to emerge last month when the AP obtained and published body camera video showing troopers converging on Greene's car, repeatedly jolting him with a stun gun, wrestling him to the ground, putting him in a chokehold and punching him in the face, all while he apologizes and wails for mercy. A trooper can later be seen dragging a shackled Greene facedown and then leaving him unattended in a prone position for more than nine minutes before he finally became unresponsive.

But even after viewing that footage internally, and just three weeks after showing it privately to Greene's family, ranking police officials last November remained fixated on blaming the man's death on a car crash. They quietly asked a crash reconstructionist to estimate the "g-force" Greene might have suffered in a crash, suggesting that may have accounted for his fatal injuries.

Though the autopsy listed Greene's cause of death as "cocaine induced agitated delirium complicated by motor vehicle collision, physical struggle, inflicted head injury and restraint," it notably left unresolved whether some of Greene's most significant injuries — a fractured breastbone and lacerated aorta — were caused by the crash or state troopers.



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One high-ranking official, Capt. John Peters, wrote in a November email to a state police attorney that the crash reconstructionist estimated that the "violent rotation" of Greene's vehicle — combined with "impacts" and the sudden speed reduction when the chase ended — "generated approximately 19g's of force." Aortic ruptures can occur in crashes, experts said, but depend on many factors.

"That could have significant value on the civil side as we try to reduce our percentage of liability," he added.

Faye Morrison, a state police attorney, responded: "This will definitely be important re cause of death and damages."

Morrison was reassigned this week as the agency investigates her role in the Greene case.

Capt. Nick Manale, a state police spokesperson, said only that the crash reconstruction "was part of an ongoing investigation."

"It shows misplaced efforts and attention," said Rafael Goyeneche, a former prosecutor who is president of the Metropolitan Crime Commission, a New Orleans-based watchdog group. "They're more focused on civil liability issues than the conduct of the troopers."

Master Trooper Chris Hollingsworth told investigators that Greene "didn't have any apparent injuries" when he rushed the man's SUV following the chase.

Hollingsworth, who was later recorded saying "he beat the ever-living f--- out of" Greene, told investigators he was aware the head was a "red zone" of deadly force but acknowledged striking Greene in the head three times with a flashlight and jolting him six times with a stun gun out of fear for his own safety.

"He was much bigger than I was and much stronger, and he had already kept two troopers from being able to handcuff him," Hollingsworth said. "He could have done anything once my hold was broke off of him."

Shown the gurney pictures of Greene's body, Hollingsworth acknowledged the flashlight could have caused the half-moon shaped gashes on his head but added, "I'm not a doctor."

Police spokesperson Manale did not comment on Hollingsworth's use of deadly force. Hollingsworth died in a single-vehicle crash last year just hours after learning he would be fired for his role in Greene's arrest.

The documents show Hollingsworth and three other troopers greatly overstated Greene's resistance to justify their use of force, with one telling investigators he had survived "a fight for his life" and another falsely contending that even after Greene was cuffed and shackled, he was "constantly moving, trying to get up."

But investigators said those concerns weren't justified based on body camera footage that showed Greene appearing to raise his hands and saying over and over, "OK, OK. I'm sorry" and "I'm your brother! I'm scared! I'm scared!"

"I've had a female fight me and put up a much bigger fight than what I'm seeing on this video," one investigator remarked, contending Hollingsworth and another responding trooper, Dakota DeMoss, never gave Greene a chance to surrender.

DeMoss, who was recently fired, also admitted to investigators it was a "rookie move" to leave Greene handcuffed facedown on the ground with his hands and feet restrained for more than nine minutes — a tactic use-of-force experts have criticized as dangerous and likely to have restricted his breathing.

DeMoss said he "got a knot in his stomach" when he learned Greene had died.

"I could tell by the way the paramedics were looking at each other," he told investigators. "I just got this gut-wrenching sick feeling."

## Habitat for Humanity struggles with high construction costs

By HALELUYA HADERO AP Business Writer

Reeling from massive cutbacks in volunteers during the COVID-19 pandemic, and grappling with high construction costs, Habitat for Humanity leaders would be the first to admit they're struggling.

The past year has felt like one punch after the other, they say. First hit: Habitat's local affiliates had to limit volunteers over virus concerns, forcing them to fork over more money to hire contractors. Second

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hit: Revenue was dented by temporary closures of ReStores, the reuse stores operated by local Habitat organizations. The third: Construction delays caused by pandemic-induced kinks in the supply chain, which make affiliates wait longer for supplies.

What could have been the knockout blow was the spike in construction costs. Lumber prices, according to the National Association of Home Builders, increased by more than 300% since April 2020. Demand for new homes, as well as demand for supplies for renovation projects and other factors, also kept costs high, experts say. Prices have come down in recent weeks, but they are still significantly higher than before the pandemic.

Morgan Pfaff, the executive director of Habitat for Humanity of Wisconsin River Area, which operates in rural Baraboo, Wisconsin, said the group had to cancel the second house it was going to build this year because it just can't afford it. The one house they are building is costing more because it doesn't have enough volunteers. "It's going to be, at least, an additional \$13,000 of contracted labor that we hadn't budgeted for," Pfaff said. "Then you add in the cost of materials, and it's really upside down."

Faced with challenges on all sides, Habitat's network of independent, locally run affiliates are trying to cope with increased costs by taking out loans, increasing fundraising and using alternative construction materials, among other things. Some affiliates are using materials local stores helped them stockpile before the price hikes went into effect. Now, in the midst of the surges, officials say donors are also stepping up.

In each of the past three years, the nonprofit has built an average of 3,000 new homes in the U.S. It continues to be one of the top affordable homebuilders in the country, despite a 4% drop so far this year compared to 2019, according to Adrienne Goolsby, senior vice president of U.S. and Canada at Habitat for Humanity International. However, experts say its work — and the work of other housing nonprofits — can't solve the shortage of nearly 7 million affordable homes in America alone.

Habitat received about \$1.5 billion in contributions and other in-kind gifts throughout its network, according to the organization's annual report for fiscal year 2019, which shows the latest figures without the impact of the pandemic. Those gifts, coupled with federal grants, help affiliates subsidize mortgages for Habitat homes, which families build alongside volunteers and pay off through a no-interest mortgage that cannot exceed 30% of the homeowners' monthly income.

"One of the challenges facing Habitat is that a lot of affiliates are working with families who were previously approved for a finance package that did not account for these increased costs," said Nancy Lee, the executive director of Habitat for Humanity South Carolina, which oversees 29 local affiliates in the state.

"As the cost to build increases, we're seeing a lot of affiliates absorbing that financial burden themselves," she added. "That is not a sustainable approach, and the ramifications we're seeing in South Carolina include affiliates having to consider either slowing down anticipated build schedules and/or finding alternative ways to overcome the price increases, if this situation persists."

Another reason Habitat homes are affordable is because the affiliates get materials for free or at a low-cost from Habitat for Humanity International's corporate partners. But, the affiliates still have to make purchases at a market rate. Burdened by the recent cost spikes, some are now focusing more on home repairs instead of new construction, said Goolsby.

"Our affiliates are quite innovative as well, some of them are using substitute materials where it's allowed," Goolsby said. For example, instead of using wood-based exterior sheathing for homes, some are considering a shift to rigid board insulation, which is made of foam.

Others chose not to change their building model to counteract the lumber prices and will continue to absorb the costs. One such affiliate, Tennessee's Habitat for Humanity of Montgomery County, will begin to pass an 8% increase onto homeowners for future builds, said Rob Selkow, its executive director. Even with the hikes, he notes most of the future recipient families will fall in the same low-income bracket.

Since the Habitat affiliates operate independently, it's unclear how many will pass more costs on to homeowners. Lee, of South Carolina, says some affiliates base a home's sale price on their total out-of-pocket expenses, which could price out some families. That's a scenario they want to avoid, she said.

In South Carolina, affiliates are absorbing much of the extra cost through forgivable second mortgages. Those typically aren't paid back to the affiliates unless a family moves, or sells the home they've purchased

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before paying off their first mortgage, according to Lee.

All of this has contributed to construction setbacks. Habitat for Humanity International, which expects high construction costs to be sustained, says it will "continue to look at how production has been affected, and identify and manage risks to affordable home construction."

Aware of the challenges, individual donors have stepped up their giving to the umbrella organization, which has been able to provide grants to struggling affiliates, Goolsby says. Some have also been getting more funding from local community foundations.

"You know what's going through my head right now? Staying alive. We're working hard on staying alive," said Virginia Ohler, the executive director of the West Tuality Habitat for Humanity in Forest Grove, Oregon. Her affiliate has been spending more time fundraising. It has also borrowed money and stockpiled on construction materials.

"Some of our local suppliers have been extremely helpful to us, and they've worked with us to help mitigate costs," she said. "But, you can't buy a year's worth of materials ahead of time. So at some point, it'll catch up with us."

Though there are challenges left and right, the recent decrease in lumber prices is one bright spot. Habitat for Humanity International also lifted its recommended guidance on volunteer usage earlier this month, which could soon start saving affiliates labor costs.

But the price hikes, nonprofits say, have extended beyond the cost of basic construction. Lee Jeter, Sr., executive director of the Fuller Center for Housing of Northwest Louisiana, an affiliate of the Georgia-based housing nonprofit The Fuller Center for Housing, says his office has also seen an increase in their payments of property and liability insurance.

The increase is "really going to cost us, as a non-profit, to relook our whole portfolio and how we conduct business," he said. "With all of these increasing costs, how do we continue to maintain the same quality of service that we provide to our clients without placing ourselves in a financial hardship? Those are hard questions."

## Pence 'proud' of his role certifying 2020 election results

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

SIMI VALLEY, Calif. (AP) — Former Vice President Mike Pence has defended his role in certifying the results of the 2020 election, saying he's "proud" of what he did on Jan. 6 and declaring there's "almost no idea more un-American than the notion that any one person could choose the American president."

Pence, a potential 2024 presidential contender, delivered his strongest rebuttal to date of former President Donald Trump's continued insistence that he could unilaterally overturn the results of the last election, even though the Constitution granted him no such power. A mob of Trump supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 in a bid to halt the certification process and transition of power, with some chanting, "Hang Mike Pence!"

Pence, in remarks at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library on Thursday, directly addressed those who continue to blame him for Trump's defeat to now-President Joe Biden, who won the Electoral College on a 306-232 vote.

"Now there are those in our party who believe that, in my position as presiding officer over the joint session, that I possessed the authority to reject or return electoral votes certified by the states," Pence said. "But the Constitution provides the vice president with no such authority before the joint session of Congress.

"And the truth is," he continued, "there's almost no idea more un-American than the notion that any one person could choose the American president. The presidency belongs to the American people and the American people alone."

Pence said he will "always be proud that we did our part, on that tragic day, to reconvene the Congress and fulfill our duty under the Constitution and the laws of the United States."

It was Pence's most overt attempt to date to distance himself from Trump's rhetoric about the election

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while painting himself as an heir to Trump's mantle and key to his accomplishments in office. Trump has continued to insist that he won the November election, even though his administration's own election experts, his attorney general, state election officials and numerous judges, including some he appointed, have repeatedly and forcefully rejected his allegations of mass voter fraud.

Pence, speaking as part of a series organized by the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation & Institute, repeatedly praised Trump — as he has in other speeches since leaving office — and compared him to Reagan, whom Pence has long hailed as a hero.

But he also argued that the American public needs to trust that Republicans will "always keep our oath to the Constitution, even when it could be politically expedient to do otherwise."

"Now I understand the disappointment many feel about the last election. I can relate. I was on the ballot," he added. "But you know, there's more at stake than our party and our political fortunes in this moment."

Trump was impeached after Jan. 6 on a charge of inciting an insurrection, and he was acquitted by the Senate the next month, after leaving office. More than 500 people face federal charges in the insurrection, including a member of the Oath Keepers extremist group who pleaded guilty this week.

Pence's appearance Thursday in front of a sold-out crowd of more than 800 at the hilltop library was his latest in recent months as Pence considers a White House bid. He took a brief pause from the public stage after leaving office in January, but he kicked off a series of appearances in April in early-voting states, looking to sharpen his conservative profile for voters more familiar with him standing in Trump's shadow.

Earlier this month in New Hampshire, Pence defended the Trump administration record but also appeared to put some distance between himself and the former president, saying, "I don't know if we'll ever see eye to eye" on the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol.

Last week, Pence was booed and jeered during a speech at the conservative Faith and Freedom Coalition's annual Road To Majority conference in Florida — a reflection of lingering resentments in some wings of the party over what they see as a lack of loyalty from the former vice president.

Pence entered Thursday to a standing ovation, but there were mixed views about whether he would be a good choice on the presidential ticket in 2024.

Joseph Quiroz, 45, an accountant from Pasadena, said he would like to see Pence run and considered him his top choice at this juncture, largely because of his experience in Washington and as a former governor.

Quiroz, a Republican, said he voted for Trump in 2016 but believed "the best thing would be a new face."

Bob Refer, 72, a Republican and a retired policeman from San Diego, said he liked Pence. But, he said, "I think he's too nice a guy. He's not forceful enough."

While Refer liked Trump and his readiness to take on a fight, he was dubious about another run for the billionaire businessman in 2024.

But he quickly added: "I'd like someone like him (Trump)."

## Blinken basks in Biden's post-Trump Europe glow

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

PARIS (AP) — European leaders may have breathed audible sighs of relief when U.S. President Joe Biden visited them last week to proclaim the Trump era over, but they are giving his top diplomat even more effusive welcomes.

As Antony Blinken tours traditional American allies this week, senior European officials are treating him like the rock star he once aspired to be for simply representing the shift from former President Donald Trump.

Policy differences, some of them significant, have been largely tossed aside for what appear to have become mutual celebrations of Biden's anti-Trump persona in western Europe.

Top diplomats in Germany and France dropped all diplomatic caution in expressing their glee that Trump is no longer in charge on the other side of the Atlantic as they welcomed Blinken to their countries on Thursday and Friday. Similar sentiments are expected from Italian officials when Blinken travels to Rome on Sunday.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas rejoiced that America "is back on our side again" while French

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Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian hailed the end of Trump's four years in office during which he said Europe alone was left to shoulder the burden of international responsibility and leadership.

In Blinken, Europe is encountering a French-fluent soulmate who spent his formative years living and attending high school in Paris and traveling in the 1970s and 80s, a time he recalls with deep fondness and affection for most things European.

It's far cry from his predecessor, Mike Pompeo, whose previous European experience was serving as a tank commander in West Germany in the waning years of the Cold War. And, like his boss, Pompeo regarded Europe largely as an overly dependent annoyance, and held little regard for the European predilection for multilateralism and consensus.

Pompeo prided himself on challenging long-held European beliefs and often spoke longingly of a speech he once delivered in Brussels in which he trashed the United Nations, the European Union and other multilateral institutions before an audience with a vested interest in them.

Blinken is the literal opposite, championing cooperation and close relationships with some of America's longest-standing allies.

Sharing a beer with Maas before a group of young German exchange students at a restored 1920s Berlin dance hall, Blinken spoke of a teenage road trip he and friends had taken from Paris to Hamburg, where they tried unsuccessfully to follow The Beatles into rock music history. "That didn't happen," he said wryly.

"Anyway, I have extremely warm and strong and long memories of being in Germany and having very close friends," he said, before proclaiming that he and Maas are "in violent agreement" on most issues.

Maas, who had a notoriously testy relationship with Pompeo, could barely contain his excitement at having a new interlocutor, one with whom he spent several hours over the course of four joint events in less than two days.

"From the very first telephone conversation we had after Tony took the office of secretary of state, at the end of the telephone call I couldn't help myself by saying 'Tony, I still have to get used to the fact that I can speak to the American foreign secretary and always be of the same view because that used to be different beforehand,'" Maas said.

Maas hailed Biden's election as "a genuine game-changer for international politics, the biggest for quite a while.

"The United States are back on the international stage and that is really something that we missed," he said on Thursday.

A day later, Le Drian offered Blinken similarly warm remarks of relief and appreciation.

"Welcome back," Le Drian said. "It is excellent news for all of us that America is back. It is a comeback to the values that we share, it is a comeback to the multilateralism that we built together and it is our responsibility to continue with it intensively. This is what France and the Europeans had to fight for alone for four very long years."

## Russia mandates vaccinations for some as virus cases surge

By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — They tried grocery giveaways and lotteries for new cars and apartments. But an ambitious plan of vaccinating 30 million Russians by mid-June still has fallen short by a third.

So now, many regional governments across the vast country are obligating some workers to get vaccinated and requiring the shots to enter certain businesses, like restaurants.

As many Western countries lift coronavirus restrictions and plan a return to normal life after mass vaccinations, Russia is battling a surge of infections — even though it was the first in the world to authorize a vaccine and among the first to start administering it in December.

Daily new cases have grown from about 9,000 in early June to about 17,000 on June 18 and over 20,000 on Thursday and Friday.

Officials have blamed Russians' lax attitude toward taking necessary precautions and the growing preva-

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lence of more infectious variants. But perhaps the biggest factor is the lack of vaccinations.

Over 21 million people, or about 14% of the population of 146 million, have received at least one shot as of Friday. According to figures from earlier this week, only 16.7 million, or about 11%, have been fully vaccinated.

Health Minister Mikhail Murashko said only 0.5% of those who had gotten both doses have contracted COVID-19.

Experts say those numbers are due to several factors, including the public's wariness of the rushed approval and rollout of the Sputnik V vaccine; an official narrative that Russia had tamed its outbreak; criticism on state TV of other vaccines as dangerous; and a weak promotional campaign that included incentives such as consumer giveaways.

In light of the surge, 18 Russian regions — from Moscow and St. Petersburg to the remote far-eastern region of Sakhalin — made vaccinations mandatory this month for employees in certain sectors, such as government offices, retail, health care, education, restaurants and other service industries.

Moscow authorities said companies should suspend without pay employees unwilling to get vaccinated, and they threatened to temporarily halt operations of businesses that don't meet the goal of having 60% of staff get at least one shot by July 15 and both shots by Aug. 15.

As of Monday, all Moscow restaurants, cafes and bars will admit only customers who have been vaccinated, have recovered from COVID-19 in the past six months, or can provide a negative coronavirus test from the previous 72 hours. City officials also limited most elective hospital care to those who are fully vaccinated or can provide tests showing they have antibodies to fight the infection.

The moves seem to be an act of desperation by authorities.

"They backed themselves into a corner, they have no choice now," said Judy Twigg, a political science professor specializing in global health at Virginia Commonwealth University.

"They overhyped this vaccine so that people didn't trust it. Then they took a series of measures that were clearly attempted to make it seem as though the government had everything under control, the pandemic was no big deal. ... And now they're in this situation, not surprisingly, where low vaccination rates have left an opening for the delta variant to come in," she said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov insisted Friday there were no mandatory vaccinations and "no one is making" Russians get shots. Earlier this week, Peskov explained that those required to get vaccinated because of their line of work can refuse it and seek a different job.

The governor of the southern region of Krasnodar, home to the Black Sea resort of Sochi, said hotels and sanitariums will only accommodate vacationers with a negative coronavirus test or a vaccination certificate starting July 1. As of Aug. 1, only vaccinated individuals will be admitted.

Russia's Association of Tour Operators has since reported "a flood of requests" to cancel bookings in the usually popular destination.

The mandates have drawn mixed responses, with some saying they are welcome if they prevent closures of businesses, while other say it's unclear how employers can persuade those who don't want the shots.

"Most restaurateurs believe that vaccination is necessary," said Sergei Mironov, founder of a restaurant chain and vice president of the Federation of Restaurateurs and Hoteliers. "But it is necessary to create (the right) conditions for the vaccination (drive)."

"There are too many rumors, and even doctors say different things," and convincing younger employees to get vaccinated is especially difficult, he said.

Tatyana Moskalkova, the government's human rights commissioner, said the unvaccinated have cited discrimination by employers, with threats of dismissal or withholding bonuses.

At a TV awards ceremony Tuesday, popular actor Yegor Beroyev wore a yellow star akin to those worn by Jews under the Nazis in World War II, and he spoke of "waking up in a world where (COVID-19 vaccination) became an identification mark of whether you are a citizen, ... will you be able to visit institutions and events, will you enjoy all the benefits and rights."

As proof of vaccination for entering a restaurant, customers must visit a government website and get a

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QR code, a digital pattern designed to be read by a scanner.

Restaurant owners won concessions Thursday when Moscow agreed the QR codes aren't needed for the next two weeks at establishments with outdoor terraces, and underage customers won't have to provide documentation if accompanied by their parents.

Still, the situation for many restaurants "is hard and will be harder by the day," Mironov said.

In Moscow, online searches for fake inoculation documents increased shortly after the mayor announced mandatory vaccinations, social anthropologist Alexandra Arkhipova told an online lecture on vaccine hesitancy.

Police quickly cracked down, launching 24 criminal cases last week against sellers of fake vaccination certificates. Still, several accounts offering the bogus documents could be found easily on the Telegram messaging app this week.

The number of such offers has grown about 19% every month since March, said Evgeny Egorov, digital risk protection analyst at Group-IB, a Singapore-based cybersecurity company. In mid-June, Group-IB found at least 90 active offers, he said.

The independent pollster Levada Center said polls show about 60% of Russians are unwilling to get vaccinated.

Levada director and sociologist Denis Volkov said the vaccination mandates could change the minds of many because it's a clear signal from the government that the shots are necessary.

"I often hear (from respondents) that they wouldn't do it, are afraid and so on, but if there are restrictions, and it is required for travel, state services, or at work, then yes," Volkov said.

It could be starting to change attitudes. Deputy Prime Minister Tatyana Golikova said the average vaccination rate across Russia has almost doubled in the past week, and long lines have been seen at pop-up vaccination clinics in Moscow shopping malls.

Murashko, the health minister, said Sputnik V, Russia's most widely used vaccine out of four domestically developed shots, has been cleared for pregnant women, a group previously ineligible for vaccination. He cited "positive" study results but didn't provide the data.

A demand for vaccines could also lead to shortages. As of mid-May, just over 33 million doses were produced in Russia, and a significant amount was exported.

Several regions have reported supply problems this week, but Peskov assured those were "temporary logistical difficulties."

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, June 26, the 177th day of 2021. There are 188 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 26, 2013, in deciding its first cases on the issue, the U.S. Supreme Court gave the nation's legally married gay couples equal federal footing with all other married Americans and also cleared the way for same-sex marriages to resume in California.

On this date:

In 1483, Richard III began his reign as King of England (he was crowned the following month at Westminster Abbey).

In 1917, the first troops of the American Expeditionary Force deployed to France during World War I landed in St. Nazaire.

In 1919, the New York Daily News was first published.

In 1945, the charter of the United Nations was signed by 50 countries in San Francisco.

In 1948, the Berlin Airlift began in earnest after the Soviet Union cut off land and water routes to the isolated western sector of Berlin.

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy visited West Berlin, where he delivered his famous speech express-

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ing solidarity with the city's residents, declaring: "Ich bin ein Berliner" (I am a Berliner).

In 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson announced his choice of Abe Fortas to succeed the retiring Earl Warren as chief justice of the United States (however, Fortas later withdrew in the face of stiff Senate opposition).

In 1977, 42 people were killed when a fire sent toxic smoke pouring through the Maury County Jail in Columbia, Tennessee. Elvis Presley performed his last concert at Market Square Arena in Indianapolis.

In 1993, President Bill Clinton announced the U.S. had launched missiles against Iraqi targets because of "compelling evidence" Iraq had plotted to assassinate former President George H.W. Bush.

In 1996, the Supreme Court ordered the Virginia Military Institute to admit women or forgo state support.

In 1997, the first Harry Potter novel, "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" by J.K. Rowling (ROHL-ing), was published in the United Kingdom (it was later released in the United States under the title "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone").

In 2008, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a handgun ban in the District of Columbia as it affirmed, 5-4, that an individual right to gun ownership existed.

Ten years ago: New York City's gay pride parade turned into a carnival-like celebration of same-sex marriage as hundreds of thousands of revelers rejoiced at the state's new law giving gay couples the same marital rights as everyone else.

Five years ago: Fourteen people suffered stab wounds, cuts and bruises when fighting erupted outside the California state Capitol in Sacramento between more than 300 counter-protesters and about 30 members of the Traditionalist Worker Party, a white nationalist group. Fireworks exploded as a huge Chinese-owned container ship made the inaugural passage through the newly expanded Panama Canal.

One year ago: After protesters in Washington, D.C., attempted to pull down a statue of Andrew Jackson, President Donald Trump signed an executive order to protect monuments, memorials and statues. Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan met with demonstrators who had thwarted the city's effort to dismantle an "occupied" protest zone. (The zone would be dismantled five days later.) Texas and Florida reversed course and clamped down on bars as the daily number of confirmed coronavirus infections in the U.S. surged to an all-time high of 40,000. Clemson said 37 football players had tested positive for the coronavirus since the school reopened facilities for workouts earlier in the month. A federal judge ordered the release of children held with parents in U.S. immigration jails.

Today's Birthdays: Jazz musician-film composer Dave Grusin is 87. Actor Josef Sommer is 87. Singer Billy Davis Jr. is 83. Rock singer Georgie Fame is 78. Actor Clive Francis is 75. R&B singer Brenda Holloway is 75. Actor Michael Paul Chan is 71. Actor Robert Davi is 70. Singer-musician Mick Jones is 66. Actor Gedde Watanabe (GEH'-dee wah-tah-NAH'-bee) is 66. Rock singer Chris Isaak is 65. Rock singer Patty Smyth is 64. Singer Terri Nunn (Berlin) is 62. U.S. Bicycling Hall of Famer Greg LeMond is 60. Rock singer Harriet Wheeler (The Sundays) is 58. Country musician Eddie Perez (The Mavericks) is 53. Rock musician Colin Greenwood (Radiohead) is 52. Writer-director Paul Thomas Anderson is 51. Actor Sean Hayes is 51. Actor Matt Letscher is 51. Actor Chris O'Donnell is 51. Actor Nick Offerman is 51. Actor Rebecca Budig is 48. Retired MLB All-Star Derek Jeter is 47. Contemporary Christian musician Jeff Frankenstein (Newsboys) is 47. Country singer Gretchen Wilson is 47. Rock musician Nathan Followill (Kings of Leon) is 42. Pop-rock singer-musician Ryan Tedder (OneRepublic) is 42. Actor-musician Jason Schwartzman is 41. Actor Aubrey Plaza is 37. Actor-singer Jennette McCurdy is 29. Actor-singer Ariana Grande is 28.