

# Groton Daily Independent

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"A thousand words will not leave so deep an impression as one deed."

-Henrik Ibsen



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assemblers!





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

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

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## "Tea - A Taste of Happiness"

Ladies' Luncheon & Program  
Wednesday, July 21st at Noon  
Bethesda Lutheran Church, Bristol  
Silent Auction at 10:30

Door Prizes

Skit by the WELCA members

Advance tickets required: \$10

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New Deal Tire Groton,  
SD.

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# HELP

# WANTED!

(0711.0808)

## State VFW Baseball Tournament

### Groton Grabs Lead In Eighth Inning To Defeat Clark

SDVFW 14U Groton ran off with the lead late in the game in a 7-6 victory over SDVFW 14U Clark on Tuesday. The game was tied at five with SDVFW 14U Clark batting in the top of the eighth when Gavin Englund induced Waylon Olson to hit into a fielder's choice, but one run scored.

There was plenty of action on the basepaths as SDVFW 14U Groton collected nine hits and SDVFW 14U Clark had six.

SDVFW 14U Clark got on the board in the first inning when Olson doubled on a 1-0 count, scoring two runs.

After SDVFW 14U Clark scored one run in the top of the third, SDVFW 14U Groton answered with one of their own. SDVFW 14U Clark scored when Lincoln Reidburn drew a walk, scoring one run. SDVFW 14U Groton then answered when Braxton Imrie singled on a 1-2 count, scoring one run.

Englund earned the victory on the mound for SDVFW 14U Groton. The ace lasted three and a third innings, allowing one hit and three runs while striking out two.

Cooper Pommer took the loss for SDVFW 14U Clark. The hurler allowed one hit and one run over one and two-thirds innings, striking out four and walking one.

Taylor Diegel started the game for SDVFW 14U Groton. The bulldog went four and two-thirds innings, allowing three runs on five hits and striking out eight. Dawson Lantgen started the game for SDVFW 14U Clark. The bulldog surrendered four runs on seven hits over four and a third innings, striking out three.

SDVFW 14U Groton totaled nine hits in the game. Carter Simon, Imrie, and Diegel all collected multiple hits for SDVFW 14U Groton. Diegel, Imrie, and Simon each collected two hits to lead SDVFW 14U Groton. Imrie led SDVFW 14U Groton with two stolen bases, as they ran wild on the base paths with five stolen bases.

Jakob Steen went 3-for-4 at the plate to lead SDVFW 14U Clark in hits.

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## Advance 2021 Child Tax Credits to begin tomorrow

You may begin receiving advanced monthly payments from the IRS starting on July 15. The advanced monthly payments will be sent to those who are eligible as part of the full amount of the 2021 Child Tax Credit.

Here is what you need to know:

There is nothing you need to do to receive these advanced monthly payments.

Payments will be sent by the IRS via direct deposit, paper check, or debit card around the 15th of each month July - December.

You should have received letters from the IRS with additional details about your monthly payments, but if you didn't you can get information [here](#).

You can also verify the details of your monthly payments through the IRS Child Tax Credit Update Portal.

These payments could impact your refund amount when you file your 2021 taxes in 2022.

If you would prefer to receive the full amount of the Child Tax Credit when you file your 2021 taxes in 2022 rather than advanced monthly payments, you can opt out of monthly payments [here](#).

Most people will receive about half of the Child Tax Credit as advanced monthly payments and the other half when they file their 2021 taxes in 2022. This could make your 2022 refund look smaller than what you typically receive.

There are certain situations where you might want to consider opting out of these payments to avoid needing to pay back these monthly payments on your 2021 tax return.

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## That's Life by Tony Bender

### Hey dad, the tigers lost today

"Dear Dad," I wrote 28 years ago to my recently-departed father, "the Tigers won today." My brother Scott and sister Sherry and I don't know why he loved the Tigers, but they were blue collar sons of a gritty city, an automobile Mecca like no others, so his love for them was fitting. Norm Cash, Al Kaline, Mickey Lolich...

We were in Minneapolis Thursday to see the Twins, and yes, the Tigers, play—my siblings and Scott's wife, Pam. Sherry knows Target Field like the back of her hand; she's got the dream retirement job as a fan services employee for the Twins, but on Thursday she was a chatterbox fan from our seats behind the Twins dugout.

Earlier that day, Scott let us choose from some of Dad's baseball memorabilia he had stashed away. I chose a Sports Illustrated collection of covers going back to the days of Mickey Mantle, whose autographed ball I once gave to my father only to get it back too soon. Sherry picked a yearbook spanning decades of Twins baseball with pictures of every player through the World Series years. She brought it along hoping to get it autographed. She snagged Tim Laudner right off the television stage before the game, a big man with a big World Series ring on his finger. She even got him to sign my program. "Will that do you, Ma'am?" he asked politely. Oh boy, would it. She was giddy.

She was a first-rate centerfielder. I taught her myself, burning fastballs to her in the backyard until she had to ice her hand, but she always came back for more. After playing baseball with me, softball was a snap. She holds the title of fastest centerfielder in the family, a contest decided after church and instigated by Gus Speidel, who took two bucks off me while Sherry stole my pride in a sprint from the centerfield fence, 385 feet from home plate. I passed her at the pitcher's mound but she refused to yield and had me by an inch at home.

Before the game, we had a snort at Gluek's Bar, established in 1934, the kind of rustic pub Dad would have felt at home in. Scott ordered the \$2 "mystery beer" which turned out to be Hamm's, great, sure, but Dad liked Grain Belt.

The crowd, some 19,000, still sparse after pandemic restrictions, was typical. A good-natured, knowledgeable, an everyone-is-your-friend kind of atmosphere that makes baseball attendance more like a picnic, and one of the reasons baseball will always be America's game. For 2 hours and 23 minutes we bonded, just as the game had bonded my father and me.

The Twins were held hitless by Tiger rookie Tarik Skubal for four innings. J.A. Happ was just as good for the Twins, eventually winning a game that saw the Twins battle back from a 3-1 deficit to win 5-3 with help from homers by Ryan Jeffers and Miguel Sano'. Jeffers, the catcher, was batting .193 and looked lost at the plate before launching one to centerfield. Former league MVP Josh Donaldson missed two pitches by six inches, going 0-3, but made a spectacular grab at third base and threw out the runner while sitting splay-legged on his rump! What an arm. Second-bagger Jorge Polanco made the play of the night though, snagging a grounder a foot in front of second base, flipping it to the shortstop Andrelton Simmons from his glove to start a double play. Two cellar-dwelling teams gave us great baseball.

On the way out, as Sherry led us to the parking garage, she spotted Twins TV broadcaster Dick Bremer and pitching great Jim Kaat in the hall. Before we could get their autograph, the elevator door opened, but Kaat invited us inside where Sherry got her autographs from the towering stars while I snapped a picture. She was beaming. Bremer, who seemed a bit put off at first, quickly recalibrated, because he could see how much this meant to the fastest centerfielder from Frederick, SD. Kaat was especially sweet. He didn't have his glasses, so Sherry helped him find his photo from 1974.

It was a wonderful way to cap a wonderful day. The elevator door opened, but before he stepped off, Bremer looked me in the eye with a grin and the enthusiasm of a true fan. "You saw a great game today, didn't you?"

It was a great game, Dad. The Tigers lost, but the Benders won, and somehow it feels like you were there.

© Tony Bender, 2021

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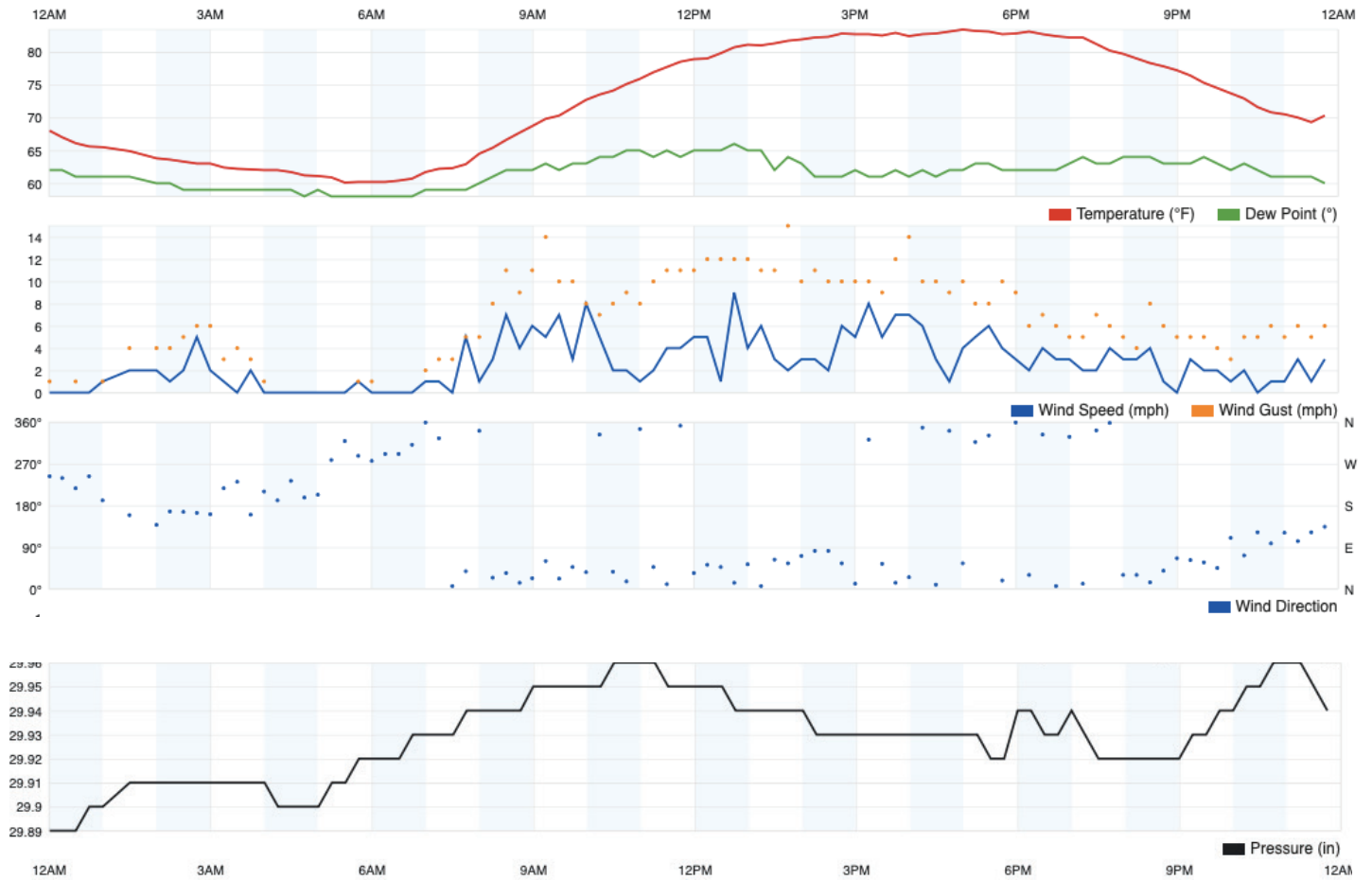
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Wednesday



Showers  
Likely then  
Chance  
Showers

High: 75 °F

Wednesday  
Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 55 °F

Thursday



Sunny

High: 84 °F

Thursday  
Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 59 °F

Friday



Sunny

High: 85 °F

## Cooler & Wet TODAY

### Warm & Dry again Thursday



TODAY

## 70s

**Morning Rain**, mostly south of highway 212. Isolated afternoon showers. A few thunderstorms possible. Decreasing clouds.



THURSDAY & FRIDAY

## 80s

Winds out of the south, becoming breezy over portions of central South Dakota Friday afternoon.

National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD

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



National Weather Service Aberdeen



@NWSAberdeen



Today will be cooler and wet, with highs in the 70s. The best chance of rain will remain south of highway 212 during the morning hours. Isolated showers will develop this afternoon. A few thunderstorms will remain possible, but severe weather is not expected at this time. Dry weather will take hold tonight. Temperatures will top out in the 80s Thursday and Friday.

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## Today in Weather History

July 14, 1970: A line of severe thunderstorms raced across southeast South Dakota into northwest Iowa causing extensive damage. The line of storms produced widespread high winds and large hail. The hail averaged quarter to hen egg size although some areas received stones the size of softballs and winds over 70 mph were not uncommon. The most extensive damage from the storms extended from Mitchell through Parker to near Beresford. Spotty areas reported 100% crop damage. In Lincoln County, the hail caused an estimated \$8 million in crop damage and \$2 million in property damage. In the town of Marion, the hail was so large that it punched holes in some roofs.

July 14, 2009: A line of storms moving across north-central South Dakota during the early morning hours on the 14th became heavy rainfall producing thunderstorms for northeastern South Dakota. Rainfall amounts of 2 to 5 inches caused mainly localized flooding. However in Grant County, a 20 foot wide by a 17-foot deep culvert on 468th Avenue in Twin Brooks was washed away by flash flooding. The Grant County Highway Department said fixing the channel would cost more than \$40,000.

1936 - Extreme heat prevailed across the central U.S. as severe drought raged from Texas to the Dakotas. Record high temperatures were established in sixteen states that summer, including readings as high as 120 degrees in the Great Plains Region. On this particular date, afternoon highs for 113 stations across the state of Iowa averaged 108.7 degrees. (David Ludlum)

1957 - Hail, with some stones up to an inch in diameter, covered the ground to a depth of three inches ruining crops in the Bath area of New Hampshire. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Severe thunderstorms in Iowa produced eight inches of golf ball size hail near Grafton, IA, completely stripping corn stalks in the area. Hail caused more than a million dollars damage to crops in Worth County and Mitchell County, and another million dollars damage in Ada County and Crawford County. Unseasonably cool weather prevailed in the Great Plains Region. Eight cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Duluth, MN, with a reading of 37 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Severe thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in the Northern Atlantic Coast Region during the afternoon and evening hours. Thunderstorms also spawned a rather strong tornado near Westtown, NY, and drenched Agawam, MA, with four inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather from eastern New Mexico to central Nebraska. One hundred soldiers were injured by flying debris and collapsing tents during a thunderstorm near Trinidad, CO. Thunderstorms in Colorado produced wind gusts to 77 mph at La Junta. Early morning thunderstorms produced torrential rains over parts of Louisiana, with 7.50 inches at Carencro, and 5.85 inches at Morgan City. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1995: On the evening of Friday, July 14th, thunderstorms producing severe weather were occurring over Upper Michigan and adjacent portions of Ontario near Sault Saint Marie. By late evening the storms had evolved into a bowing line just northwest of the Mackinac Bridge. At 10:17 PM EDT, the thunderstorm gust front hit the bridge, and a gust to 90 mph was measured. Sustained winds of 80 mph continued on the bridge for ten more minutes. Thus began the intense "Ontario-Adirondacks Derecho" that would cause hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of damage, several deaths, and many injuries as it raced southeast from the northern Great Lakes to the Atlantic coast.

2005 - Death Valley had 7 consecutive days (July 14-20) with high temperatures equal to or above 125 degrees.

2006: Tropical Storm Bilis tracks across northern Taiwan before making landfall in southeastern China's Fujian province with maximum sustained winds near 65 mph. The storm causes at least 575 deaths in Fujian, Guangdong, and Hunan provinces and direct economic losses near \$3.3 billion.



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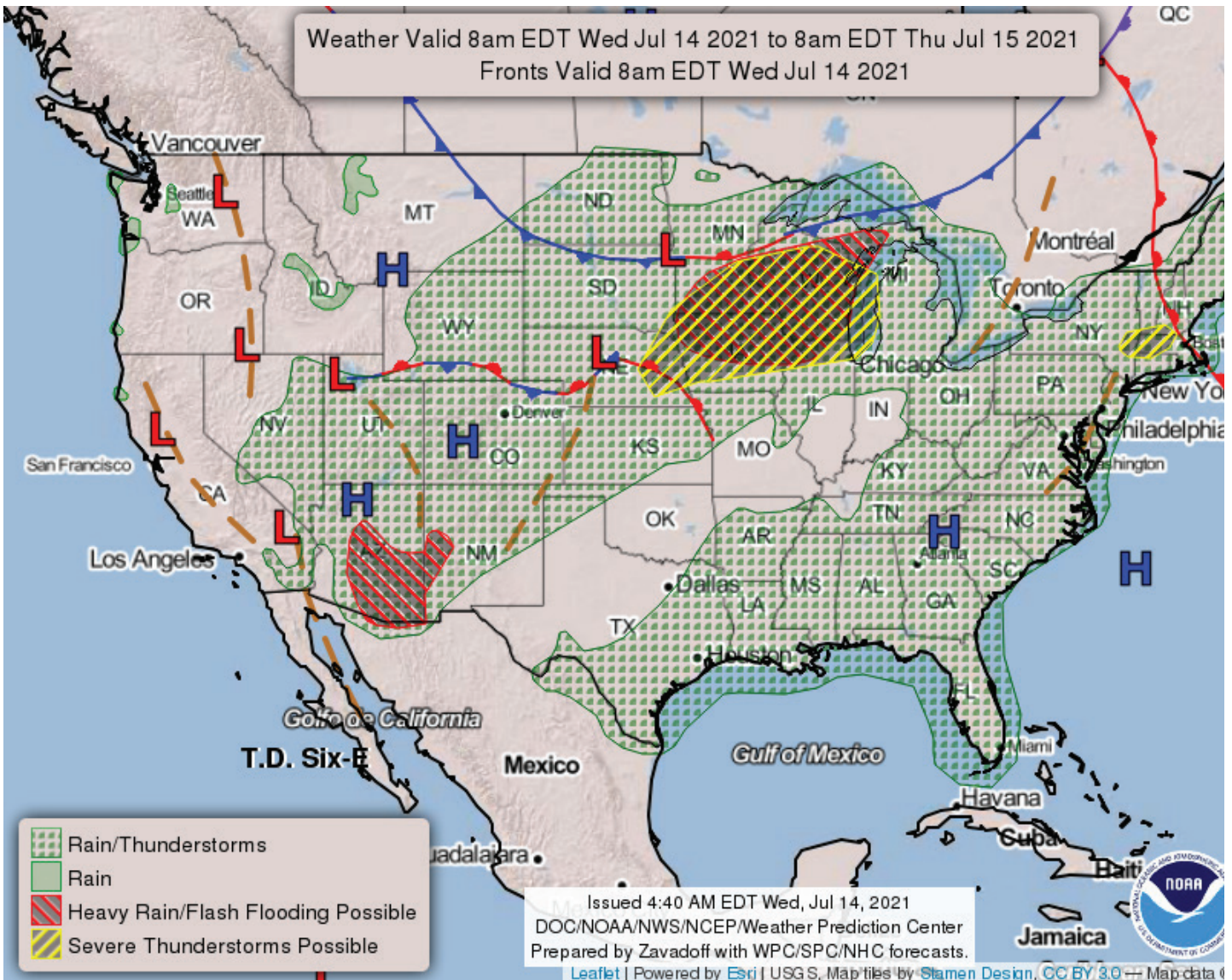
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 84 °F at 4:52 PM**  
**Low Temp: 60 °F at 6:06 AM**  
**Wind: 15 mph at 1:42 PM**  
**Precip: 0.00**

## Today's Info

**Record High:** 106° in 1901, 1931  
**Record Low:** 42° in 1967  
**Average High:** 85°F  
**Average Low:** 60°F  
**Average Precip in July.:** 1.48  
**Precip to date in July.:** 1.73  
**Average Precip to date:** 12.49  
**Precip Year to Date:** 6.48  
**Sunset Tonight:** 9:20 p.m.  
**Sunrise Tomorrow:** 6:00 a.m.



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## THE GOD OF MIRACLES

What is a miracle? And who decides what a miracle is? Is there some special committee that looks at various events in history and classifies them as being a miracle or an ordinary event? Or can two people look at the same event and one say, "This is indeed a miracle!" and the other say, "Nothing amazing here. It just happened to end up this way. That's the way life works."

Our Psalmist looked around and said, "You are the God who performs miracles; You display Your powers among the peoples."

There is a beautiful theme in this Psalm. In the first several verses, the writer seems to be having a difficult time seeing God. Then, suddenly, God's Spirit interrupted his thinking and brought God's grace to his attention. When he finally put things into context, he recalled that it was God who controls everything, and it was his God who was the One who parted the waters and led the Israelites to safety. Those who were drowned and destroyed by the "mighty waters" could not see their "misfortune" as God performing a miracle for those who were obedient to Him. But those whom He saved did!

And so it is today. Those who have been redeemed by the love, mercy, and grace of God see His miracles in their lives all day every day. When we pray, He answers. If we become sick, He heals. When we need forgiveness, He alone can remove our shame and guilt. When others abandon us, He is a friend who stands close beside us and behind us protecting us. When we grieve, He comforts us. When we are stressed, He calms our heart. When we have nothing, He meets our needs. Our God does performs miracles.

Prayer: Open our eyes, Heavenly Father, to see the many miracles You perform in our lives each and every day. Enable us to see Your greatness! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: You are the God who performs miracles; You display Your powers among the peoples. Psalm 77:14

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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  
08/13/2021 Groton Basketball Golf Tournament  
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

### **Noem suspends 2 prison heads following harassment complaint**

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem late Tuesday suspended her cabinet secretary overseeing state prisons and the warden of the state penitentiary in Sioux Falls, following an anonymous complaint that alleged supervising corrections officers regularly sexually harassed their fellow employees, employee morale is low and promotions are plagued by nepotism.

The governor said she was briefed around 7 p.m. on an internal review from the Bureau of Human Resources that was prompted by the anonymous complaint. Less than three hours later, Noem said she was putting Secretary of Corrections Mike Leidholt and State Penitentiary Warden Darin Young on administrative leave and commissioning an investigation into the allegations.

The two pages of the complaint released by Noem's office do not name either Leidholt or Young, but allege that supervising corrections officers at the prison were allowed to sexually harass employees and that attempts to report the harassment were ignored. The complaint states that schedules at the prison were adjusted so that the officers could "work in the same vicinities as their interest/victims." It also alleges that employees who did not give in to the harassment were made to "suffer by being placed in less desirable posts or something of the sort."

The complaint further alleges that employee morale was low amid wages that lagged behind other industries, corrections officers did not have body armor that was "up to standards," and that promotions were based on personal connections.

Requests for comment sent to the government-issued emails for Leidholt and Young were not immediately returned.

Noem said she has assigned two members of her cabinet to conduct an internal review of the prison, as well as commission a third-party investigation.

Noem also appointed Tim Reisch, who worked as corrections secretary from 2003 to 2011, as the interim head of the Department of Corrections. She temporarily appointed Doug Clark, the deputy secretary of corrections, as acting warden of the state penitentiary, but said she planned to find someone else to oversee the prison.

### **SD Lottery**

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

03-10-17-26-55, Mega Ball: 24, Megaplier: 2

(three, ten, seventeen, twenty-six, fifty-five; Mega Ball: twenty-four; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$104 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$137 million

### **US COVID-19 cases rising again, doubling over three weeks**

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH and JOSH FUNK Associated Press

The COVID-19 curve in the U.S. is rising again after months of decline, with the number of new cases per day doubling over the past three weeks, driven by the fast-spreading delta variant, lagging vaccination rates and Fourth of July gatherings.

Confirmed infections climbed to an average of about 23,600 a day on Monday, up from 11,300 on June 23, according to Johns Hopkins University data. And all but two states — Maine and South Dakota — re-

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ported that case numbers have gone up over the past two weeks.

"It is certainly no coincidence that we are looking at exactly the time that we would expect cases to be occurring after the July Fourth weekend," said Dr. Bill Powderly, co-director of the infectious-disease division at Washington University's School of Medicine in St. Louis.

At the same time, parts of the country are running up against deep vaccine resistance, while the highly contagious mutant version of the coronavirus that was first detected in India is accounting for an ever-larger share of infections.

Nationally, 55.6% of all Americans have received at least one COVID-19 shot, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The five states with the biggest two-week jump in cases per capita all had lower vaccination rates: Missouri, 45.9%; Arkansas, 43%; Nevada, 50.9%; Louisiana, 39.2%; and Utah, 49.5%.

Even with the latest surge, cases in the U.S. are nowhere near their peak of a quarter-million per day in January. And deaths are running at under 260 per day on average after topping out at more than 3,400 over the winter — a testament to how effectively the vaccine can prevent serious illness and death in those who happen to become infected.

Still, amid the rise, health authorities in places such as Los Angeles County and St. Louis are begging even immunized people to resume wearing masks in public. And Chicago officials announced Tuesday that unvaccinated travelers from Missouri and Arkansas must either quarantine for 10 days or have a negative COVID-19 test.

Meanwhile, the Health Department in Mississippi, which ranks dead last nationally for vaccinations, began blocking posts about COVID-19 on its Facebook page because of a "rise of misinformation" about the virus and the vaccine.

Mississippi officials are also recommending that people 65 and older and those with chronic underlying conditions stay away from large indoor gatherings because of a 150% rise in hospitalizations over the past three weeks.

In Louisiana, which also has one of the nation's lowest vaccination rates, officials in the city of New Orleans said Tuesday that they are likely to extend until fall virus-mitigation efforts currently in place at large sporting and entertainment gatherings, including mask mandates or requirements that attendees be vaccinated or have a negative COVID-19 test. State health officials said cases of the coronavirus are surging, largely among nonvaccinated people.

But the political will may not be there in many states fatigued by months of restrictions.

In Michigan, Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer is facing a drive to repeal a law that she used to set major restrictions during the early stages of the pandemic.

And Republican Gov. Kay Ivey of Alabama pushed back against the idea that the state might need to reimpose preventive measures as vaccinations lag and hospitalizations rise.

"Alabama is OPEN for business. Vaccines are readily available, and I encourage folks to get one. The state of emergency and health orders have expired. We are moving forward," she said on social media.

Dr. James Lawler, a leader of the Global Center for Health Security at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, said bringing back masks and limiting gatherings would help. But he acknowledged that most of the places seeing higher rates of the virus "are exactly the areas of the country that don't want to do any of these things."

Lawler warned that what is happening in Britain is a preview of what's to come in the U.S.

"The descriptions from regions of the world where the delta variant has taken hold and become the predominant virus are pictures of ICUs full of 30-year-olds. That's what the critical care doctors describe and that's what's coming to the U.S.," he said.

He added: "I think people have no clue what's about to hit us."

President Joe Biden is putting a dose of star power behind the administration's efforts to get young people vaccinated. Eighteen-year-old actress, singer and songwriter Olivia Rodrigo will meet with Biden and Dr. Anthony Fauci on Wednesday.

While the administration has had success vaccinating older Americans, young adults have shown less

urgency to get the shots.

Some, at least, are heeding the call in Missouri after weeks of begging, said Erik Frederick, chief administrative officer of Mercy Hospital Springfield. He tweeted that the number of people getting immunized at its vaccine clinic has jumped from 150 to 250 daily.

"That gives me hope," he said.

## Feds will keep definition of metro at 50,000-person minimum

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Facing criticism from small cities that feared losing status and funding, the federal government said Tuesday that it won't raise the population threshold for what qualifies as a metro area.

The Office of Budget and Management said it will keep the minimum population needed in a community's core city at 50,000 residents in order to be designated a "metropolitan statistical area," also known as an MSA.

The federal government had been considering doubling that threshold to 100,000 people. Under that earlier proposal, 144 cities with core populations of 50,000 to 99,000 were at risk of becoming "micropolitan statistical areas" instead. The proposal would have changed the designation of more than a third of the current 392 MSAs.

Leaders of metro areas like Bismarck, North Dakota; Cheyenne, Wyoming; and Auburn, Alabama, had worried the change would cause real harm, preventing urban areas from getting designated federal funding and making them less attractive for economic development.

"That is great news!" said Alex McElroy, executive director of the Southeast Metropolitan Planning Organization in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, when told of Tuesday's decision. "Overall, it's a great designation to have because you get a lot more attention from the federal government with that designation."

Sens. John Thune, a Republican from South Dakota, and Mark Kelly, a Democrat from Arizona, introduced legislation in June that would have stopped the Office of Budget and Management, also known as the OMB, from making the change.

"The fact that the OMB will not be pursuing the change at this time will ensure that essential community services, funded by various federal agencies which consider population size and MSA status, will continue into the foreseeable future," said Bismarck Mayor Steve Bakken. "We are very grateful the current threshold will remain in place at 50,000 people."

Federal statisticians who originally had recommended the change said it was long overdue, given that the U.S. population has more than doubled since the 50,000-person threshold was introduced in 1950. Back then, about half of U.S. residents lived in metros; now, 86% do.

The committee of federal statisticians that made the recommendation said Tuesday that it would now support putting it on hold pending additional research and outreach to municipalities and others.

Updates to these standards are considered every decade. Even though the proposal was made during the Trump administration, and put on hold in the Biden administration, statisticians say any changes to the standards aren't based on politics.

Of the 734 public comments the Office of Budget and Management received about the proposed change, 97% opposed it, the agency said Tuesday in a notice of its decision.

"Of the commenters who did cite a rationale for their opposition, almost all cited a non-statistical rationale, such as concerns about loss of federal or other funding; concerns about other programmatic consequences; and concerns about economic development for individual areas that would be reclassified from metropolitan to micropolitan," the notice said.

Officials in places like Corvallis, Oregon, need more resources, not fewer, as residents look to them to solve everyday problems, said Patrick Rollens, a spokesperson for the city that is home to Oregon State University.

"I think this is an acknowledgement that cities, particularly small to medium-sized metros, are punching above their weight in terms of the issues they tackle and the expectations of the communities they

serve," he said.

## **COVID-19, other diseases caused historic South Dakota deaths**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The COVID-19 pandemic pushed South Dakota's death rate to hit historic levels last year, according to a report from the state Department of Health.

The provisional report also found deaths from diabetes, liver diseases and unintentional injuries reached their highest levels in a decade. As the pandemic disrupted health care, doctors worried that people could see complications from other chronic diseases, particularly as patients avoided regular appointments or delayed elective procedures to avoid catching COVID-19.

A total of 9,857 South Dakotans died in 2020, which was the highest figure in at least a decade. Heart disease and cancer were the leading causes of death, followed by COVID-19, which killed 1,496 people, KELO-TV reported Tuesday. While the virus surged in South Dakota from last September through January, the state reported its highest monthly death rates in more than 50 years.

Last year's 329 deaths from diabetes and 235 deaths from chronic liver disease and cirrhosis were the most in a decade. Meanwhile, deaths from cerebrovascular disease — which refers to conditions that affect blood flow to the brain such as a stroke — reached their highest number since 2014.

Dr. Kara Dahl, the president of the South Dakota State Medical Association, said that in her work as an emergency room physician, she's observed increases in people needing treatment for mental health crises, alcohol abuse and undiagnosed cancer. She noted that increases in drinking alcohol could contribute to many health problems, including liver and heart diseases.

"Even during the pandemic, it's still important to take care of the other aspects of a person's health and wellness," she said.

The Department of Health also reported that unintentional injuries, which would cover events such as car accidents, reached a 10-year high, with 568 people killed. Dahl said there have been indications that even though fewer people took to the roads during the early months of the pandemic, they engaged in riskier behavior like speeding or driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Health officials noted that 176 people who tested positive for the virus died of causes other than COVID-19. Those deaths were not included in the COVID-19 tally.

South Dakota has seen COVID-19 cases tumble to new lows in recent months, but Secretary of Health Kim Malsam Rysdon warned that the state remains vulnerable to new outbreaks, especially as the more-contagious delta variant circulates among those who haven't been vaccinated against the virus.

"We know delta's here," she told South Dakota Public Broadcasting on Tuesday.

About 46% of the state's population has been fully vaccinated, which is lower than the national average, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

## **Pope Francis returns to Vatican 10 days after surgery**

By NICOLE WINFIELD, DOMENICO STINELLIS and GIANFRANCO STARA Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis was discharged from a Rome hospital and returned home to the Vatican on Wednesday, 10 days after undergoing surgery to remove half his colon.

Francis, 84, gave thanks for the success of the operation and offered prayers for others during a visit en route home to Rome's Santa Maria Maggiore basilica, the Vatican said. The pope always visits the basilica after returning from a foreign trip to pray before a beloved icon of the Virgin Mary.

Francis, 84, sat in the passenger seat of the Ford car, which left Rome's Gemelli Polyclinic around 10:45 a.m. (0845 GMT; 4:45 a.m. EDT).

The small motorcade approached a side entrance to the Vatican about an hour later, after the detour to the basilica. The Ford stopped before reaching the gate and Francis got out with the help of a bodyguard. He greeted some Italian security guards — two army soldiers standing guard and a handful of Italian police motorcycle escorts — and got back in the car, which then entered the Vatican through the Perugino gate.

Francis had half of his colon removed for a severe narrowing of his large intestine on July 4, his first

major surgery since he became pope in 2013. It was a planned procedure, scheduled for early July when the pope's audiences are suspended anyway and Francis would normally take some time off.

The Vatican spokesman, Matteo Bruni, confirmed Francis' return from the hospital and visit to the Rome basilica. Praying before the icon, Francis "expressed his gratitude for the success of his surgery and offered a prayer for all the sick, especially those he had met during his stay in hospital," Bruni said in the statement.

Francis will have several more weeks to recover before beginning to travel again in September. There are plans for him to visit Hungary and Slovakia in a Sept. 12-15 trip, and then make a quick stop in Glasgow, Scotland, in November to participate in the COP26 climate conference. Other possible trips are also under review.

The Vatican had originally said Francis could be discharged last weekend, but later said he would stay a few days extra for further recovery and rehabilitation therapy.

The pope appeared for the first time in public since the surgery on Sunday, looking in good form as he delivered his weekly prayer from the 10th floor hospital balcony, surrounded by young cancer patients. He used the occasion to call for free health care for all.

On Tuesday afternoon, the eve of his release, he visited the pediatric cancer ward, which is located on the same floor as the papal hospital suite.

The Argentine pope had part of one lung removed when he was a young man but has otherwise enjoyed relatively robust health.

## Senate Democrats' \$3.5T budget deal backs up Biden's goals

By ALAN FRAM and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Democrats say they have reached a budget agreement that envisions spending an enormous \$3.5 trillion over the coming decade, paving the way for their drive to pour federal resources into climate change, health care and family service programs sought by President Joe Biden.

The accord announced Tuesday night marks a major step in the party's push to meet Biden's goal of bolstering an economy that was ravaged by the coronavirus pandemic and setting it on course for long-term growth. It includes a Medicare expansion of vision, hearing and dental benefits for older Americans, a goal of progressives.

But Democrats behind the agreement face possible objections from rival moderate and progressive factions and will have to work hard to convert their plans into legislation they can push through the closely divided Congress over what could be unanimous Republican opposition.

"We are very proud of this plan," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., told reporters. "We know we have a long road to go. We're going to get this done for the sake of making average Americans' lives a whole lot better."

Biden will attend a closed-door lunch at the Capitol on Wednesday with Senate Democrats to focus on "getting this wonderful plan" enacted, Schumer said.

All told, the ambitious proposal reflects Biden's vision for making the most substantive potential investments in the nation in years, some say on par with the New Deal of the 1930s. Together with a slimmer, \$1 trillion bipartisan effort of traditional road, highway and public works also being negotiated, they represent close to the president's initial \$4 trillion-plus effort that could reach almost every corner of the country.

The Democrats' goal is to push a budget resolution reflecting Tuesday's agreement through the House and the Senate before lawmakers leave for their August recess. The resolution sets only broad spending and revenue parameters, leaving the actual funding and specific decisions about which programs are affected — and by how much — for later legislation.

Nonetheless, approving a budget will be a major boon for the Democrats' effort to enact their subsequent funding bill. That's because the budget contains language that would let Democrats move the follow-up spending measure through the 50-50 Senate with just a simple majority, not the 60 votes Republicans could demand by using a bill-killing filibuster.

The actual spending legislation will likely not start moving through Congress until the fall.



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Separately, a bipartisan group of senators is working to flesh out a measure that would spend around \$1 trillion on roads, water systems and other infrastructure projects, another Biden priority. Biden and that group had agreed to an outline of that measure last month.

On Wednesday, Biden will push for public support of that infrastructure proposal by hosting a bipartisan group of governors and mayors at the White House. He plans to emphasize the bipartisan aspects of the proposal, as senators work to finalize details for a Thursday deadline.

He'll highlight some of the areas where Democrats and Republicans agreed, including investments in removing lead pipes, expanding access to high-speed internet, transit and rebuilding roads and bridges. Biden will also speak about the impact his policies would have on local communities, according to an administration official who shared details with the AP on condition of anonymity.

In discussing the budget agreement, Schumer and other lawmakers did not respond when asked if they had the support of all 50 Democratic senators, which they will need to succeed. They also have virtually no margin for error in the House, where they can lose no more than three Democratic votes and still prevail.

Moderates like Sens. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., and Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., might still demand further changes to reduce the plan's price tag and impact on already huge federal deficits. Progressives in both chambers might insist on beefing it up or other changes.

Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., the Budget Committee chairman, and other progressives pushed initially for a \$6 trillion budget top line, while party moderates insisted on a far lower price tag. Biden had proposed around \$4.5 trillion.

The Democrats' announcement Tuesday left many questions about their budget accord unanswered. These included how much it would raise through tax increases on the wealthy and corporations and other revenue to pay for its costs; how much would be spent on specific programs; and how Biden's proposals would be curtailed or eliminated to fit into the legislation.

Schumer said the proposal would call for financing Biden's budget priorities "in a robust way." He also said it would include a priority of Sanders and other progressives: an expansion of Medicare, the federal health insurance program for older people, to cover dental, vision and hearing services.

Sanders said the agreement would end an era in which rich people and big companies weren't bearing enough of the burden of financing government programs.

"Those days are gone," he said. "The wealthy and large corporations are going to start paying their fair share of taxes, so that we can protect the working families of this country."

Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va., a leading moderate who helped shape the budget package, said the measure would be fully paid for with offsetting revenue, but he provided no details. Biden has proposed financing the measure with higher taxes on the wealthy and corporations and beefing up the IRS' budget so it can collect more revenue from scofflaws.

The budget will include language calling for no tax increases on people making less than \$400,000 a year, a Biden demand, or on small businesses. The provision was described by a Democratic aide who insisted on anonymity to discuss the negotiations.

On infrastructure, lawmakers are aiming to wrap up the details by Thursday despite opposition from business leaders, outside activists and some GOP senators over how to pay for the \$1 trillion plan, which includes about \$579 billion in new spending beyond regular expenditures already funded by gas taxes and other sources.

Senators exiting a meeting Tuesday suggested they hadn't so much resolved the questions over how to pay for the package but moved past them — apparently accepting that some of the proposed revenue streams may not pass muster in formal assessments by the Congressional Budget Office, the lawmakers' nonpartisan fiscal scorekeeper.

Manchin said he hoped that the CBO's score, as it is called, would show that "everything's paid for." "If not," he said, "we'll have to make some adjustments."

**Cuba, Haiti stir fresh political pressures for US president**

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By AMER MADHANI and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — They are two tiny Caribbean states whose intractable problems have vexed U.S. presidents for decades. Now, Haiti and Cuba are suddenly posing a growing challenge for President Joe Biden that could have political ramifications for him in the battleground state of Florida.

Cuban demonstrators have taken to the country's streets in recent days to lash out at the communist government and protest food shortages and high prices amid the coronavirus pandemic. In Haiti, officials are asking the U.S. to intercede in a roiling political crisis after last week's assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in a nation where military and humanitarian interventions by U.S. presidents from Woodrow Wilson to Barack Obama have proved to be politically harrowing.

Biden is facing increased pressure from Republican lawmakers for his administration to step up support of Cuban demonstrators. And his aides have demonstrated determined caution in response to requests for more U.S. involvement in Haiti.

The administration has come under fire from both sides of the political spectrum for its responses to each of the crises, both unfolding less than two hours' flying time from Miami. The troubled U.S. history in both countries has hardened positions, making virtually any policy decision politically unpalatable for a president seeking to toe a middle line.

In the background: How the Biden administration handles the crises looms large in electorally rich Florida.

Biden lost the state in 2020 to Donald Trump, as Republicans improved their performance while paying special attention to courting the state's large Cuban American population and other immigrant voters, noted Susan MacManus, a Florida political analyst and professor emerita at the University of South Florida.

"The caution Biden is showing reflects the poor showing in 2020 and a desire not to repeat it," said MacManus, who added that Haitian Americans are becoming a growing political force in South Florida. "Democrats learned in 2020 that country of origin is a much more powerful voting cue in Florida than historical voting affiliation, and Trump's hammering on socialism proved to be an effective message."

Indeed, as the situations play out in Cuba and Haiti, Biden administration officials have responded cautiously.

The White House on Sunday dispatched representatives from the Justice Department, the Department of Homeland Security and the White House National Security Council to meet with Haiti's interim Prime Minister Claude Joseph, designated Prime Minister Ariel Henry and Joseph Lambert, the head of its dismantled Senate, whom supporters have named as provisional president in a challenge to Joseph.

White House officials said Haiti's request for the U.S. to deploy troops was under review. At the State Department, spokesman Ned Price said Tuesday he was not aware that the administration had rejected any request from Haitian officials but said the focus was on supporting the investigation into the assassination rather than providing military assistance.

U.S. officials have also made clear that the administration remains concerned about the infighting over who is rightfully Moïse's successor in Haiti.

The White House is coordinating with Joseph in his capacity as acting prime minister, but is urging Haitian officials to work together to hold legislative and presidential elections as soon as feasibly possible.

Meanwhile, the White House said a review of its Cuba policy remains underway.

To be sure, U.S. efforts to press for regime change have had their fair share of failures over the years: the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, CIA-backed assassination attempts on Cuban leader Fidel Castro, and sanctions that inflicted pain but never produced the ultimate goal of ending communist rule.

"We're going to be taking a close look at what has and has not worked in the past, and unfortunately in the case of Cuba, there may be more that has not worked than what has worked," Price said.

This week, Cuban police have been out in force as President Miguel Díaz-Canel has accused Cuban Americans of using social media to spur a rare outpouring of weekend protests. The demonstrations in several cities and towns were some of the biggest displays of antigovernment sentiment seen in years in tightly controlled Cuba, which is facing a surge of coronavirus cases as it struggles with its worst economic crisis in decades.

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There are political crosscurrents for Biden as he addresses both situations.

On Cuba, the political right in the U.S. has accused Biden — who said as a presidential candidate that he would revert to Obama-era policies that loosened decades of embargo restrictions on Havana — of not being supportive enough of Cuban dissidents.

Democrats, meanwhile, are unhappy that Biden has yet to reverse Trump's hard-line approach to the island's communist government as his administration carries out its review of Cuban policy.

Trump in a statement criticized Biden's past promises to loosen restrictions on Cuba.

"Don't forget that Biden and the Democrats campaigned on reversing my very tough stance on Cuba," Trump said.

Florida Republicans Sen. Marco Rubio and Rep. Carlos Gimenez, a freshman lawmaker who represents a Miami district that Democrats are hoping to flip in next year's midterm election, were among elected officials this week who called on the administration to maintain Trump's Cuba policy.

They also called on Biden to aid the protesters, including by making free satellite internet access available on the island to subvert the Cuban government's effort to stop activists from broadcasting their messages on social media to the world.

Gimenez said in an interview that simply maintaining the status quo is not enough at a moment when the island is seeing some of the most intense protests in more than 60 years — what Biden himself referred to as a "clarion call for freedom."

Biden lost Florida by about double the margin by which Trump beat Democrat Hillary Clinton there in 2016.

Trump was helped in part by narrowing the Democrats' margin of victory in population-rich Miami-Dade County by nearly 13 percentage points. Gimenez and another freshman lawmaker of Cuban descent, Maria Elvira Salazar, picked up Democratic-held seats as Trump and Republicans focused on courting Cuban Americans, an important voting bloc in the state.

The majority of Cubans in Florida supported Trump over Biden, 58% to 41%, according to AP VoteCast. The margin was nearly reversed among other Hispanic voters in the state, who were more likely to support Biden than Trump, 59% to 40%.

"Biden is no fool," said Gimenez. "It's not just the Cuba issue, it's the whole issue of socialism and communism and censorship that's shifted the people of Miami-Dade over to the right. The problem that the president has is the extreme parts of his own party seem to be driving the agenda, and that he just can't escape right now."

White House spokesman Chris Meagher said Biden, dating back to his days in the Senate, has been a fierce critic of the Castro regime and is committed to Cuban human rights.

"He's committed to forming his policies toward Cuba based on two principles: that standing up for democracy and human rights is paramount, and that Americans — especially Cuban Americans — are the best ambassadors for freedom and prosperity in Cuba," Meagher said.

Carlos Diaz-Rosillo, who served as a director of policy and interagency coordination in the Trump White House, said the situations in Cuba and Haiti offer Biden a chance to demonstrate his oft-repeated dictum that democracies can better service their people than autocracies as well as his preference for multilateral efforts to address big global problems.

"This is an administration that says that they believe in international organizations and that they believe in these multilateral bodies. If that's the case, get our allies in the hemisphere together ... and see how they can rally others can help out," Diaz-Rosillo said.

## **Bush criticizes Afghanistan withdrawal, fears for women**

BERLIN (AP) — Former President George W. Bush criticized the Western withdrawal from Afghanistan in an interview with a German broadcaster released Wednesday, saying he fears that Afghan women and girls will "suffer unspeakable harm."

Asked in an interview with German international broadcaster Deutsche Welle whether the withdrawal is a mistake, Bush replied: "You know, I think it is, yeah, because I think the consequences are going to

be unbelievably bad.”

The war in Afghanistan began under Bush after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the United States. Washington gave Taliban leader Mullah Omar an ultimatum: hand over al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden and dismantle militant training camps or prepare to be attacked. Omar refused, and a U.S.-led coalition launched an invasion in October.

The withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops set in motion earlier this year by current President Joe Biden is now nearing completion. Taliban fighters have been surging through district after district, taking control of large swaths of the country.

In the DW interview, which marked outgoing German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s final official visit to the U.S., Bush said Merkel had supported the deployment in Afghanistan in part “because she saw the progress that could be made for young girls and women in Afghanistan.”

“It’s unbelievable how that society changed from the brutality of the Taliban, and all of a sudden — sadly — I’m afraid Afghan women and girls are going to suffer unspeakable harm,” Bush said.

During the Taliban’s rule in the late 1990s, women were largely confined to their homes, and girls had no access to education. Despite protestations from the U.S. and Europe, the Taliban enforced its extreme version of Islamic Shariah law. However, there was no mass violence against girls and women.

“I’m sad,” Bush said. “Laura (Bush) and I spent a lot of time with Afghan women, and they’re scared. And I think about all the interpreters and people that helped not only U.S. troops but NATO troops, and it seems like they’re just going to be left behind to be slaughtered by these very brutal people. And it breaks my heart.”

## House Republicans post record fundraising ahead of 2022 race

By JILL COLVIN and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The committee charged with helping Republicans wrest control of the House in 2022 raised \$45.4 million over the last three months, a record quarterly haul during a year without a national election.

That total was bolstered by \$20.1 million raised in June, the highest ever monthly off-year total, according to numbers shared with The Associated Press before a public filing deadline.

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee last week announced that it had raised \$14.4 million in June, bringing its second-quarter total to about \$36.5 million — its best ever for that stretch.

The large sums signal that excitement is high among donors to both parties as they prepare for what is expected to be a contentious midterm election season. Democrats hold a razor-thin majority in the House, but Republicans have history on their side: The party that occupies the White House typically sees large losses in both the House and the Senate.

GOP fundraising has also been bolstered by former President Donald Trump, whose name continues to dominate fundraising pleas for small-dollar contributions, even as he continues to spread lies about the 2020 election, which he lost to Democrat Joe Biden.

In its next filing, the National Republican Congressional Committee will report that it raised \$79.2 million during the first half of the year, besting the \$44.5 million raised in 2019 and marking the most ever raised for that period in the committee’s history. The committee now has \$55 million cash on hand, versus more than \$44 million for the DCCC.

But this year’s numbers were also bolstered by major contributions from Republican leadership accounts. House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy has transferred \$12.76 million to the NRCC’s coffers this year, while House Republican Whip Steve Scalise has sent \$8.39 million.

“We will take back the majority next fall and voters are doing everything they can to help us accomplish that goal,” NRCC Chairman Tom Emmer said in a statement. “Every vulnerable House Democrat should be eyeing the exits because if they choose to run, they will lose.”

While the DCCC has lagged behind, it, too, has broken records, including logging its best second quarter

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in committee history, with almost \$36.5 million raised, including nearly \$14.4 million in June.

"Our strong fundraising success shows American voters are rejecting Republican extremism and know just how critical a Democratic House Majority is to protecting our democracy and delivering for American families," DCCC Chairman Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney said in a statement announcing the numbers.

The Democratic fundraising totals also benefited from transfers from party leadership, though they were not as hefty as those from top Republicans. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's campaign fund contributed a bit more than \$2 million during the past three months, while Maloney's provided just shy of \$155,000 over the same period. Another \$283,000 came during the quarter from the campaign coffers of New York Rep. Hakeem Jeffries.

## France cautiously celebrates Bastille Day, clouded by virus

By ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Bastille Day is back, sort of.

France celebrated its national holiday Wednesday with thousands of troops marching in a Paris parade, warplanes roaring overhead and traditional parties around the country, after last year's events were scaled back because of virus fears.

This year those fears are still lurking, but the government decided to go ahead with the parade on the Champs-Élysées anyway, as part of a broader effort to return to pre-pandemic activity.

The number of onlookers was limited, and they were restricted to a small section of the parade. In addition, each person attending had to show a special pass proving they have been fully vaccinated, had recently recovered from the virus or a had negative virus test. Similar restrictions will be in place for those gathering to watch an elaborate fireworks show at the Eiffel Tower on Wednesday evening.

Spectators converged on Paris from around France, glad to be able to see the show in person even if frustrated with the restrictions and long lines for virus security checks.

"I came especially for my son who is marching today," said Gaelle Henry from the northern city of Lille. "It's nice to be able to get out a little bit and finally get some fresh air and think that all the people are here, and that we are getting back to normal a little bit."

Masks were ubiquitous among the smaller-than-usual crowds along the avenue, and de rigueur for the dignitaries watching the show under a red-white-and-blue awning emulating the French flag. The marching soldiers were unmasked — the French military said they have all been fully vaccinated or freshly tested for the virus.

Some cheers rose up as President Emmanuel Macron rode atop a military reconnaissance vehicle along the cobblestoned Champs-Élysées, past restaurants, luxury boutiques and movie theaters that were shuttered for much of the pandemic. The clatter of hundreds of horseshoes accompanied military music as uniformed guards on horseback escorted the president.

Organizers of this year's event dubbed it an "optimistic Bastille Day" aimed at "winning the future" and "celebrating a France standing together behind the tricolor (flag) to emerge from the pandemic." While that optimism was widely felt in France a few weeks ago, clouds have returned to the national mood as the delta variant fuels new infections and prompted Macron to announce new vaccine rules this week.

Leading the parade were members of a French-driven European force fighting extremists in Mali and the surrounding Sahel region. Macron announced last week that France is pulling at least 2,000 troops from the region because of evolving threats, and focusing more efforts on the multi-national Takuba force instead.

Among others honored at the parade were military medics who have shuttled vaccines to France's overseas territories, treated virus patients or otherwise helped fight the pandemic.

A total of 73 warplanes, medical helicopters and other aircraft traversed the skies over the Paris region.

"This moment of conviviality, of reunion, on the eve of our National Day, is first and foremost for us the opportunity to address our brothers in arms and their families, and give them a message of gratitude," Macron said in a speech to the French military on Tuesday.

Last year's parade was canceled and replaced by a static ceremony honoring health care workers who

died fighting COVID-19.

France has lost more than 111,000 lives to the pandemic, and the government is pushing hard to get more people vaccinated to fight resurgent infections driven by the delta variant.

Bastille Day marks the storming of the Bastille prison in eastern Paris on July 14, 1789, commemorated as the birth of the French Revolution.

## **In Seoul center, N Korean defectors find solace with locals**

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — A small group of North Korean defectors gather at a sleek seven-story building in Seoul. Together with South Korean residents, they play the accordion, make ornaments and learn how to grow plants. Later, some go out for coffee.

"South and North Koreans gather here, smile and talk to each other. They ask each other about their pasts. Some (South Koreans) say their parents also originally came from North Korea," said Ko Jeong Hee, 60, a defector who teaches accordion at the Inter-Korean Cultural Integration Center. "The atmosphere is really good here."

The center, which opened last year, is South Korea's first government-run facility to bring together North Korean defectors and local residents to get to know each other through cultural activities and fun. It's meant to support defectors' often difficult resettlement in the South, but also aims at studying the possible blending of the rivals' cultures should they unify.

Unification is a cherished part of the political rhetoric of both Koreas, but the difficulties of creating a single Korea comprised of the fantastically rich and successful South and the poor, authoritarian North make the reality of such a plan deeply complicated.

A Korean unification in the near future seems highly unlikely. The North, despite decades of poverty and mistrust of the outside world, is not politically unstable, and there have been no meaningful recent talks on unification between the Koreas.

Exchange programs between the Koreas — singers, art troupes and basketball matches — are frozen in the midst of a dispute over North Korea's continued accumulation of nuclear weapons. There are also questions over just how useful the center will be, and whether many defectors, suffering economic hardship, will join in events that offer no chance of profit.

About 34,000 North Koreans have resettled in South Korea after fleeing poverty and political oppression at home, mostly in the last 20 years or so. That's about 0.06% of South Korea's 52 million people. Upon their arrival in South Korea, defectors are given citizenship, apartments, resettlement money, three months of social orientation courses and other benefits.

But they come from an extremely repressive, nominally socialist country whose estimated nominal gross domestic product was only one-54th of South Korea's in 2019. Many are often discriminated against in the South and struggle to adjust to their new brutally competitive, capitalistic lives.

Last year, official data showed defectors' monthly average wage was about 80% of South Koreans'. They stuck with a job for 31.6 months on average, less than half the time spent by South Koreans; and their school dropout rate was nearly three times higher. A 2019 survey showed only 9.4% of South Korean respondents would accept defectors marrying into their families.

The plight of defectors in the South raises questions about what would happen if South Korea had to handle a sudden influx of North Korea's 26 million people in the event of a unification on South Korean terms.

"This country has been unable to embrace those who voluntarily flee North Korea, but many are shouting for an integration of South and North Koreans and a unification," said defector Son Jung Hoon, who worked as a human rights activist in South Korea for years. "That's hypocrisy."

Even the center's establishment has been contentious. Its opening was delayed for several years because of protests by local residents, who worried it would tarnish their neighborhood's image and lower housing prices. Center officials say there are no such complaints any longer.

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Churches and civic groups have previously offered activities involving defectors, often enticing them with cash. They included a chorus, camping trips and soccer games with South Korea-born residents. But Kang Woo-jun, a university professor who is in charge some programs at the government center, said that facility doesn't offer money but is pushing to give defectors high-quality classes.

"Cultural integration is much more difficult and requires a longer time than a political and institutional unification," Unification Minister Lee In-young said recently. "Even though South and North Korea, living separated for about 70 years, becoming one is a long, treacherous journey, we must not stop it. It's a journey that we have to go on together. That's the reason why the Inter-Korean Cultural Integration Center exists."

Built in a quiet residential neighborhood in western Seoul, the center isn't well-known to the general public. COVID 19-related restrictions have largely forced it to offer more than half of its programs online and limit the number of in-person participants to less than 10. On Monday, its in-person programs were suspended or switched online amid a viral resurgence in Seoul.

During a recent visit to the center by Associated Press journalists, four female defectors and a South Korean man, all wearing masks, played the accordion, with Ko, the instructor, helping them.

Yu Hwa-suk, 57, fled to the South in 2015, and said she wants to achieve her childhood dream of becoming an accordionist.

"(South Korean) participants have a huge interest in North Koreans so we felt an intimacy with them," Yu said, adding that she and others often dine out after their class.

In a craft class, four defectors and three South Koreans, all women, appeared a bit uncomfortable with each other, saying they haven't had any meaningful conversations.

Song Hyo Eun, a 39-year-old South Korean, said she wouldn't ask defectors about their lives in North Korea because it might involve a sore subject like their relatives left behind. Two defectors in their 70s said they worry South Koreans might have negative views about defectors.

Authorities should use various local facilities to integrate defectors living around South Korea, rather than establishing one big center in a certain area, said Kim Whasoon, an expert at a research institute at Seoul's Sungkonghoe University.

Many defectors eke out a living and have been paid for attending cultural events in the past, said Kim Jong Kun, a professor at Seoul's Kunkuk University. Because of this, Kim said, "I don't think they want to gather with South Koreans just to learn calligraphy and musical instruments or sing a song."

Some defectors and South Koreans also view unification differently.

Park Seong Hee, 50, a South Korean instructor in the craft class, said she hopes for a gradual process. "If we are unified, I think North Koreans would all come down to South Korea and disrupt the order that we've established," she said.

Yu, the defector, wept as she spoke of unification as a way to rejoin her relatives and teach them what she's learned in South Korea.

"Frankly speaking, I sometimes want to go back home," Yu said. "When I lived in North Korea, I thought I would be happy if I was well-off. But after coming here, I've realized that being happy means being with the people I miss."

## Neck rubs, tapped phones: Merkel has history with US leaders

By GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Neck rubs, pricy dinners, allegations of phone tapping, awkward handshake moments. Angela Merkel has just about seen it all when it comes to U.S. presidents.

The German chancellor is making her 19th and likely final official visit to the U.S. on Thursday for a meeting with President Joe Biden — her fourth American president — as she nears the end of her 16-year tenure.

Merkel, who turns 67 on Saturday, will be heading into political retirement soon after deciding long ago not to seek a fifth term in Germany's Sept. 26 election.

One of the longest-serving leaders of one of the closest U.S. allies, Merkel is set for a warm welcome

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when she meets Biden during her first visit to Washington since he took office in January.

Still, contentious issues are on the table — notably the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline running from Russia to Germany, which the U.S. has long opposed, and Biden's efforts to convince European allies to drop objections to intellectual property waivers for sharing COVID-19 vaccines with the developing world.

It's a fitting coda for Merkel's dealings with American leaders. A look at some of the highs and lows over the years:

## GEORGE W. BUSH

Merkel came to power early in Bush's second term and set about repairing relations chilled by predecessor Gerhard Schroeder's vocal opposition to the war in Iraq.

She quickly became a close ally, perhaps finding that the way to the president's heart was through his stomach. During a visit to Merkel's parliamentary constituency in northeastern Germany in July 2006, Bush couldn't stop talking about a wild boar roast the chancellor laid on for him.

At a Group of Eight summit in St. Petersburg, Russia, a few days later, Bush gave Merkel an impromptu neck-and-shoulder rub that quickly spread across the internet. Merkel hunched her shoulders in surprise, threw her arms up and grimaced, but appeared to smile as Bush walked away. When Merkel visited the White House the following January, Bush promised: "No back rubs."

In November 2007, Bush welcomed Merkel to his Crawford, Texas ranch. "In Texas, when you invite somebody to your home, it's an expression of warmth and respect and that's how I feel about Chancellor Merkel," a jeans-clad Bush said as he greeted Merkel at the property's helipad and drove her in his pickup to his home.

## BARACK OBAMA

Merkel's relationship with Obama didn't have the greatest start. In July 2008, the chancellor squashed the idea of candidate Obama delivering a speech at Berlin's signature Brandenburg Gate, saying it was a backdrop for speeches by presidents. Obama switched to another Berlin landmark, the Victory Column.

Still, the chancellor — who shared Obama's businesslike manner but, unlike the new president, never had much time for soaring political rhetoric — forged a strong working relationship with him. It appeared to gain personal warmth over time.

During Merkel's 2011 visit to Washington, the two leaders caught dinner at a high-end restaurant, an unusual overture by Obama. A few days later, he hosted Merkel at the White House for a formal state dinner, where he awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest U.S. honor bestowed upon civilians.

Obama got his chance to speak at the Brandenburg Gate in June 2013. Merkel was there to introduce him.

A tough test followed with reports later that year that the U.S. National Security Agency had listened in on German government phones, including Merkel's. Merkel declared that "spying among friends" was unacceptable. But she didn't let it cast a lasting shadow over trans-Atlantic ties.

Obama made a last visit as president in November 2016, dining with Merkel at his Berlin hotel. He was back as ex-president a few months later, participating in a public discussion with Merkel and calling her "one of my favorite partners throughout my presidency."

## DONALD TRUMP

Merkel's congratulations to Trump after his 2016 election set the tone for much that followed. In a pointed message, she offered "close cooperation" on the basis of shared trans-Atlantic values that she said include respect for human dignity regardless of people's origin, gender or religion.

The former physicist and the former reality TV star were never an obvious personal match but generally kept up appearances when in public together.

Merkel's first visit to the Trump White House in March 2017 produced a famously awkward moment in the Oval Office. Photographers shouted "handshake!" and Merkel quietly asked Trump "do you want to have a handshake?" There was no response from the president, who looked ahead with his hands clasped.

Trump never made a bilateral visit to Germany in four years in office, though he did come for the Merkel-hosted Group of 20 summit in Hamburg in 2017.



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At the 2018 Group of Seven summit in Canada, Merkel's office released a photo of her leaning on a table in front of Trump, surrounded by other apparently frustrated allied leaders.

Merkel's Germany was a favorite target of Trump's ire. The president called the NATO ally "delinquent" for failing to spend enough on defense and announced that he was going to pull out about 9,500 of the roughly 34,500 U.S. troops stationed in Germany.

Merkel suggested in 2017 that Europe could no longer entirely rely on the U.S. And, speaking at Harvard University in 2019, she said a new generation of leaders must "tear down walls of ignorance" and reject isolationism to overcome global problems.

JOE BIDEN

Merkel greeted Biden's 2020 election with barely disguised relief, saying he brought decades of experience to the job, that "he knows Germany and Europe well" and citing good memories of previous meetings.

In February, she welcomed his first address to a global audience effusively.

"Things are looking a great deal better for multilateralism this year than two years ago, and that has a lot to do with Joe Biden having become the president of the United States," Merkel said.

As vice president, Biden had a rapport with Merkel during the Obama presidency, but the two were never particularly close.

Seeking to strengthen ties, Biden made a priority of engaging with Merkel in several early videoconference meetings shortly after taking office. He also waived sanctions on the company behind the controversial Nord Stream 2 pipeline, even as he reiterated his preference that Germany abandon the project.

Since Biden's Jan. 20 inauguration, there hasn't been much opportunity for in-person interaction. Both attended last month's G-7 summit in England and NATO summit in Brussels, but Thursday will be their first significant bilateral meeting.

Merkel will be the first European leader to visit the White House in the Biden administration.

## Lithuania struggles with migrant flood opened by Belarus

By LIUDAS DAPKUS and MSTYSLAV CHERNOV Associated Press

VEREBIEJAI, Lithuania (AP) — Mustafa Hussein Hamad kicked a dirty ball between two old tires in the schoolyard where he spends most of his time. He and dozens of other migrants are fenced in at an old school after walking at night through the thick woods into Lithuania from neighboring Belarus.

"I paid 1,400 bucks after a friend pointed out this new way to Europe," said the 20-year-old from Baghdad as he waited at the shabby two-story school housing 160 people. Recounting his journey from Iraq for a better life in the European Union, he added: "They said it is a nice shortcut by plane to Minsk."

The building is one of many facilities that Lithuania quickly converted to hold hundreds of people from the Middle East and Africa — a flood that officials in the Baltic country say was unleashed by Belarusian authorities in a "hybrid war" against the EU.

Daily arrivals sometimes reach triple digits as migrants cross the frontier and appear in the woods in front of Lithuanian border guards, encounter locals picking mushrooms, or simply walk into towns. More than 1,700 have arrived in recent weeks, compared with only 80 for all of 2020.

Lithuania says the influx is an act of retaliation by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. Since the authoritarian leader's reelection to a sixth term in an August 2020 vote that the West denounced as rigged, he has cracked down on opposition protests in his country.

In May, Belarus diverted a passenger jet to Minsk to arrest a dissident journalist, and the EU responded to what it deemed an act of air piracy with tough sanctions. Lukashenko, in turn, ordered a halt to cooperation with the EU on stemming illegal migration.

"If some think that we will close our borders with Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Ukraine and become a camp for people fleeing Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya and Tunisia, they are mistaken," he said last week. "We won't hold anyone. They are coming not to us but to enlightened, warm and cozy Europe."

At the same time, authorities in Minsk have barred most Belarusian citizens from leaving the country.

The migrants at the school in Verebiejai, a village about 140 kilometers (85 miles) west of Vilnius, are

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under police surveillance and aren't allowed to leave. Some tested positive for COVID-19 and have been isolating inside.

On Tuesday, six migrants fled a compound in the nearby Lazdijai district, triggering a search by police with dogs and helicopters.

Like other Iraqis, Hamad used an agency that arranged direct flights to Minsk.

"The plane was full," he said.

Iraqi Airways has two flights a week to Minsk on Boeing 747s that can hold up to 500 passengers. Its website showed that a flight Wednesday is full, as are the next two.

Once in Minsk, Hamad said he and others were taken to a hotel where their passports were seized. Four days later, cars picked them up in groups of three.

"The driver spoke Kurdish. He dropped us at dusk in the middle of the forest and pointed in the direction towards the European Union," Hamad said.

Another Iraqi, Haidar al-Garawg, said he paid \$1,500 to reach Minsk and had hiked with others through a forest and even a swamp, "but we kept walking through the water."

"We faced wild animals and all other things. I thought we are going to die in that forest. But thanks to God! He saved us and made it possible for us to arrive here," al-Garawg said.

None of the 160 housed at the Verebiejai school has a passport. Some say they lost their documents on their trek, while others say they were confiscated in Belarus.

Lithuanian authorities are using the migrants' phones to identify them while overwhelmed regional courts process their asylum applications.

On Tuesday, Lithuania's parliament passed legislation to speed up deportations of those crossing the border illegally. Critics say this might violate their human rights, but the government and lawmakers dismiss that.

"This is an extreme situation," Interior Minister Agne Bilotaite said. "This is not a normal migration, it is not a normal migration path. It is a hybrid war against us, so the response must be adequate."

Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis will visit Turkey and Iraq this week to try to open repatriation channels for those denied asylum in Lithuania.

Frontex, the EU's border agency, has pledged to bolster its support "due to the growing migratory pressure at the border with Belarus." New sections of barbed wire fence were erected this month, with plans to invest 41 million euros (\$48 million) to reinforce the entire 678-kilometer (421-mile) border with Belarus.

Lithuanian Prime Minister Ingrida Simonyte said that by encouraging the flow of migrants, Lukashenko is seeking to pressure her country's infrastructure and politics.

"The organized mass immigration is revenge," she told The Associated Press.

"Immigrants are being used not only by criminals but also by regimes," Simonyte said. "This is a great pity that I feel for them because they are instrumentalized for the sake of those who do not care about people."

Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who ran against Lukashenko and fled to Lithuania under official pressure in Minsk, shares Simonyte's view.

"It's obviously an attempt of revenge by (Lukashenko's) regime to Lithuania and the whole European Union for their support of the civil society in Belarus," she said.

Simonyte charged that Russian President Vladimir Putin used similar tactics in 2016, encouraging migrants to cross into Norway and Finland. Russia denied the allegations at the time.

"Putin and Lukashenko really do not care about people from Iraq or African countries. They just want to use them as a tool to increase pressure on the EU and potentially inspire unhealthy political debates," she said.

Belarusian opposition activist Pavel Latushka alleged that a recent Lukashenko decree offering visa-free entry to Belarus for nationals from 73 countries to get vaccinated against COVID-19 was aimed at increasing the migrant flood. He said a special unit of the Belarusian border agency was taking migrants to the Lithuanian border and helping them cross in lightly guarded areas.

Belarus' Border Guard Committee wouldn't comment.

Simonyte said the migrant influx "easily triggers some people" in Europe, especially those on the far right. "Even if there are no strong such parties in the country, there are movements and some of them are financially linked to the sources from the same regime," she said.

Verebiejai residents expressed worry over the migrants.

"We know very well what will follow these first birds," farmer Jonas Bredikis said. "We do not want to see terrible things here that are happening in France, Spain and elsewhere."

An anti-migrant group of more than 50 vehicles organized last weekend in the Raigardas border district was turned away by police. More actions are planned, and social media was buzzing with warnings of "possible threats." In the port of Klaipeda, tenants in one apartment building organized a rally after rumors spread that hundreds of migrants would be housed in their neighborhood — a claim that proved false.

As he passed the time by watching a family of storks nesting on a pole at the school in Verebiejai, Hamad said the birds reminded him of those he used to see near his home in Iraq, "but now they are gone." Of his own journey, he said: "I left because this is a chance for a new life."

## 'I came here to fight': Rare footage of Ethiopia's Tigray

MEKELE, Ethiopia (AP) — The 16-year-old girl hoped to go to war. Inspired by the sight of resurgent local forces marching in to retake the capital of Ethiopia's Tigray region six months after being forced to flee, Meron Mezgeb waited in a crowd seeking to get a gun and join them.

"I came here because I saw girls like me being raped" by combatants, she said. "I actually wanted to go (fight) at the beginning but I was told I was too young. But because I saw my comrades come, I came here to fight alongside them."

The scenes of jubilation and determination in the city of Mekele, in video obtained by The Associated Press and smuggled out of Tigray days later, are a rare look at the dramatic turn in a conflict that has threatened to destabilize one of Africa's most populous and powerful countries.

After months of fear in a city occupied by Ethiopian soldiers and forces from neighboring Eritrea who pursued the Tigray regional leaders, crowds of Mekele residents rushed to the local security bureau to sign up to fight.

They were buoyed by the striking sight of a long parade of thousands of Ethiopian soldiers now held as prisoners of war, and by Tigray leaders walking openly in the city again. Residents lining the streets jeered the prisoners, and cheered their leaders.

The Tigray leaders have rejected a unilateral cease-fire that Ethiopia's government announced as its soldiers retreated from Mekele, and they have vowed to chase "enemies" out of the rest of the Tigray region. With the retreat of Ethiopian and Eritrean forces, that means fighting against forces from the neighboring Amhara region who seized large parts of western and southern Tigray during the eight-month war.

"The fighting will not be limited simply to the Tigray borders" if needed, the Tigray president, Debretsion Gebremichael, said in an interview. "We have to have some guarantee that they will not come back again."

While the Tigray forces now control large areas, the region has remained largely cut off from the world, with transport and communications links severed or blocked. After months of looting and destruction that witnesses have blamed on Ethiopian and allied forces, the United Nations is still highly concerned about the fate of millions of civilians as food runs short amid famine conditions.

Only on Monday, days after Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed told the U.N. secretary-general that Tigray would be open to "immediate" aid, did the U.N. World Food Program announce that 50 trucks of badly needed supplies had rolled into Mekele. Two weeks had passed since such aid last arrived, and the WFP warned that "double this number of trucks needs to be moving in every day to meet the vast humanitarian needs in the region."

For residents, the U.N. convoy was a welcome sight. But the months of conflict mean a return to normal is still far away.

"I am a driver," said Hiluf Abrha, another resident hoping to join the Tigray forces. "Because the Amhara

forces committed a lot of atrocities, because they killed my uncle, I parked my truck and came here to register so that I can join the struggle.”

For the prisoners of war, many of whom the Tigray leaders have said will be released, conditions are challenging because of the destruction that Ethiopian and allied forces waged for months against almost all health centers across Tigray.

At a camp for the prisoners, soldiers lay on the ground, some trying to nurse injuries with little care available. “This is more than our capacity,” said Yusuf Ibrahim, medical coordinator for the Tigray forces. He called for more international aid.

“They can only do for us when they have something for themselves first. It is difficult for me to say they haven’t helped us, they have helped us as much as they can,” said one prisoner, Menor Arrarso, who said there was nothing to eat or wear.

He showed his wounded hand and said he had walked more than 100 kilometers (60 miles) in that condition.

“They couldn’t provide us with transportation when we came here,” he said. “Two or three people died right here among us who could have been saved had we gone to our homes and gotten treatment. This is because here there is a lack of treatment.”

Another prisoner, Sewareg Bireda, agreed. Aside from the lack of food, “they don’t give us the necessary additional medicine, like painkillers. Apart from that, they are helping us as much as they can.”

More than 6,000 Ethiopian soldiers and officers had been detained, the Tigray president said.

“We are committed to keep them well as long as they are with us,” he said. “And after a while, yes, our plan is ... they have to be free, wherever they want.”

But if evidence emerges that any prisoner had committed an atrocity in the war, he added, “we will keep them because they have to go to court.”

## Spears hearing to deal with turmoil from her dramatic speech

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Three weeks after Britney Spears’ dramatic comments in court condemning the conservatorship that has controlled her life for 13 years, a Los Angeles judge and others with legal power over the pop star will convene for a hearing Wednesday to deal with the aftermath.

Spears’ remarks led to the resignation of her court-appointed lawyer, the withdrawal of an estate-management company that was supposed to oversee her finances, and a volley of accusations between her father and a professional conservator over who’s to blame for the legal circumstances Spears said are “abusive” and need to end.

Spears is not expected to speak again at the afternoon hearing, in which all the parties are expected to take part remotely, but she may weigh in as she seeks to hire a lawyer of her choice.

At the June 23 hearing, her first public words in court on the matter, Spears said she was being forced to take medication and use an intrauterine device for birth control, said she was not allowed to marry her boyfriend, and said she wanted to own her own money.

“I just want my life back,” Spears said.

She was harshly critical of her father, who serves as conservator of her finances, and had more measured criticism for Jodi Montgomery, the court-appointed professional who serves as conservator of her person, overseeing her life choices.

James Spears said in a legal filing that the court needs to investigate the allegations and Montgomery’s role, pointing out that his daughter’s personal life has been beyond his control since he resigned as conservator of her person in 2019, a role he played for 11 years. He opposed Montgomery’s request for money to hire security because of recent death threats, saying he has been subjected to similar threats for years.

Montgomery denied that Britney Spears was prevented from marrying or forced to use birth control. She lashed back at James Spears, saying that Britney Spears has expressed no desire to oust her as she has with her father.

Montgomery said she is committed to staying on the job and is putting a care plan in place to help end the conservatorship, something she said James Spears has expressed no desire to do.

"Mr. Spears, as the Conservator of the Estate, and Ms. Montgomery, as the Conservator of the Person, should be working as a team to ensure that Ms. Spears' best interest are being met, that she is on a path to recovery and termination of her conservatorship, and that she is living her best life possible," Montgomery said in a court filing. "Instead, Mr. Spears has decided it is time to start the finger-pointing and media attacks ... The mud-slinging by Mr. Spears and his new 'It wasn't me!' strategy — after being her sole or co-conservator for more than 13 years — leaves Ms. Montgomery no other choice but to defend herself."

Despite nearly two years on the job, Montgomery's status is still technically temporary. She appeared to be on track for permanent appointment before recent events.

Britney Spears will still be represented at Wednesday's hearing by her longtime court-appointed lawyer, Samuel Ingham III, who filed documents last week saying he resigned, effective as soon as she got a new attorney, which at the June hearing she said she wanted.

The Bessemer Trust, a financial company that Spears had sought as a replacement for her father last year but was instead appointed to work alongside him, also withdrew from the conservatorship last week, saying it no longer wanted to take part in a legal arrangement that she didn't want.

## Sho-case: Shohei Ohtani gets All-Star win for AL, bats, too

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

DENVER (AP) — A Sho-case for Shohei Ohtani became a grand stage for Vladimir Guerrero Jr., too.

Ohtani unleashed his 100 mph heat while pitching a perfect inning for the win in becoming baseball's first two-way All-Star, Guerrero rocked Coors Field with a 468-foot home run and the American League breezed 5-2 Tuesday night for its eighth straight victory.

Near and far, the sport's entire focus was on Ohtani from the very start in this All-Star Game.

Players on both sides climbed to the dugout rails to watch him, and the Japanese sensation went 0 for 2, grounding out twice as the AL's leadoff man and designated hitter.

Jared Walsh, Ohtani's teammate on the Los Angeles Angels, got a save -- with his glove. He made a sliding catch in left field on Kris Bryant's tricky liner with the bases loaded to end the eighth inning.

So even with the teams decked out in new uniforms that social media deemed a strikeout instead of a home run, it was a familiar result. Mike Zunino also connected for the AL as it improved to 46-43-2 overall in the series.

Guerrero, at 22, became the youngest MVP in All-Star Game history.

J.T. Realmuto homered for the National League on a mile-high night at Coors, baseball's ultimate launching pad.

A 27-year-old right-hander in his fourth big league season, Ohtani has dazzled. He leads the major leagues with 33 homers and is 4-1 in 13 starts as a pitcher, a two-way performance not seen since Babe Ruth in 1919 and '20, before the Bambino largely gave up the mound for slugging.

"This has been the best experience, most memorable," Ohtani said through translator Ipppei Mizuhara. "Obviously, I've never played in the playoffs or World Series, so once I do that, that's probably going to surpass it. But this has been the most memorable."

Ohtani was a double triple-digit threat in Denver, hitting a 513-foot drive during Monday night's Home Run Derby and throwing a 100.2 mph pitch to Nolan Arenado.

"He was as good as advertised," Arenado said. "His fastball had a little cut and he's a really good player. Just incredible."

Following a full day, Ohtani slept until 10:30 a.m.

"It was a lot more tiring compared to the regular season, but if everyone had fun I'm good with it," he said.

Ohtani retired Fernando Tatis Jr., Max Muncy and Arenado, a Colorado fan favorite, in order in the bottom half of the first, throwing 10 of 14 pitches for strikes.

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Major League Baseball even made a special rules tweak for Ohtani, allowing him to be replaced as a pitcher and to remain in the game as the DH after he was done pitching. He grounded out twice — Pittsburgh second baseman Adam Frazier ranged to make a nice backhanded pickup that prevented a hit against Max Scherzer starting the night.

Ohtani was pulled for a pinch-hitter in the fifth. Shohei's shoes, meanwhile, were headed to the Hall of Fame, which collected his cleats, hand guard and foot guard for display in Cooperstown.

Ohtani combined with Lance Lynn, Kyle Gibson, Nathan Eovaldi, Gregory Soto, Chris Bassitt, Andrew Kittredge, Matt Barnes and Liam Hendriks on an eight-hitter.

A win started by a Japanese pitcher ended with a save by an Australian and an MVP for a Dominican. Hendriks was helped by a lucky bounce off the backstop that turned what would've have been a wild pitch into an out at second.

"It's a world game now," Hendriks said. "There's a lot of us over here and hopefully there's more to come with the exposure that Shohei and guys from the DR and Venezuela can bring to this game."

Hendriks wore a microphone on the mound for the television broadcast and heard cursing loudly after an errant slider to Omar Narváez.

In another another season of record strikeouts that have alarmed baseball's leadership, AL batters whiffed 12 times while NL hitters fanned just three strikeouts.

The AL has now won 20 of the last 23 All-Star Games with one tie thrown in.

While everything is measured with precision these days, Guerrero's third-inning drive against Milwaukee's Corbin Burnes was jaw-dropping even before Statcast revealed it went 468 feet, the longest since All-Star Games were wired in 2015.

As the ball landed at the top of the left-field seats under the huge video board, Tatis — the NL shortstop and another of the "juniors" among a record 42 first-time All-Stars — turned slowly and put both hands over his head.

"It was a moonshot," he said. "He's been doing it all year. Why not show it off here?"

Guerrero and Tatis are tied for second in the majors with 28 homers behind Ohtani — by the way, Ohtani also is tied for the AL lead in triples with four.

Guerrero's homer was the 200th in All-Star history and he followed in the bat path of his father, Vladimir Guerrero, who homered off Brad Penny in the 2006 game at Pittsburgh. They joined Bobby Bonds (1973) and Barry Bonds (1998 at Coors) and Ken Griffey Sr. (1980) and Ken Griffey Jr. (1992) as the only father-son duos with All-Star homers.

"Dreams do come true," Vlad Jr. said through a translator. "Ever since I was a kid I've been thinking about this moment."

His helmet and batting gloves are going to Cooperstown.

Guerrero added an RBI grounder in the fifth against Miami's Trevor Rogers, and Boston's Xander Bogaerts followed with an RBI single for a 4-0 lead. Both runs were unearned after shortstop Brandon Crawford misplayed Teoscar Hernández's grounder for an error.

Toronto's Marcus Semien had put the AL ahead with an RBI single in the second off Burnes, who took the loss.

Realmuto homered in the fifth off Soto, a more pedestrian 430-foot drive that was the first by a Philadelphia All-Star since Mike Schmidt in 1981.

Zunino cracked a 433-foot shot in the sixth against Taijuan Walker and allowed a run-scoring passed ball in the bottom half.

A crowd of 49,184 filled Coors Field, a stark contrast to the 2020 regular season played in empty ballparks because of the pandemic and many games with limited fans in the first half of this season while vaccinations became more prevalent.

Ohtani became the second straight Japanese pitcher to win the All-Star Game after the Yankees' Masahiro Tanaka two years ago. Last year's game was canceled when the season's start was delayed by the pandemic to late July.

The AL's winning streak is its longest, three shy of the record set by the NL from 1972-82. "Unfortunately, I'm a part of three of them," NL manager Dave Roberts said. "Not the thing I'm most proud of."

## Western wildfires threatening American Indian tribal lands

By NATHAN HOWARD and SARA CLINE undefined

BLY, Ore. (AP) — Fierce wildfires in the northwest are threatening American Indian tribal lands that already are struggling to conserve water and preserve traditional hunting grounds in the face of a Western drought.

Blazes in Oregon and Washington were among some 60 large, active wildfires that have destroyed homes and burned through close to a million acres (1,562 square miles, 4,047 square kilometers) in a dozen mostly Western states, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

In north-central Washington, hundreds of people in the town of Nespalem on the Colville Indian Agency were ordered to leave because of "imminent and life-threatening" danger as the largest of five wildfires caused by dozens of Monday night lightning strikes tore through grass, sagebrush and timber.

Seven homes burned but four were vacant and the entire town evacuated safely before the fire arrived, said Andrew Joseph Jr., chairman of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation that includes more than 9,000 descendants of a dozen tribes.

Monte Piatote and his wife grabbed their pets and managed to flee but watched the fire burn the home where he'd lived since he was a child.

"I told my wife, I told her, 'Watch.' Then boom, there it was," Piatote told KREM-TV.

The confederation declared a state of emergency Tuesday and said the reservation was closed to the public and to industrial activity. The declaration said weather forecasts called for possible triple-digit temperatures and 25-mph (40-kph) winds on Wednesday into Thursday that could drive the flames.

In Oregon, the lightning-sparked Bootleg Fire that had destroyed at least 20 homes was raging through lands near the California border on Wednesday. At least 2,000 homes were threatened by the fire.

Mark Enty, a spokesman for the Northwest Incident Management Team 10 that is working to contain the fire, said that since he arrived to the area last week the Bootleg Fire has doubled in size each day.

"That's sort of like having a new fire every day," Enty said.

The blaze had spread over 315 square miles (816 square kilometers), an area larger than New York City. Firefighters for the third day in a row had to back off occasionally for their safety and "weather isn't going to change for the foreseeable future," said Rob Allen, an incident commander.

Crews were facing above-normal temperatures and bone-dry humidity coupled with afternoon gusts that were expected to create dangerous fire conditions through Wednesday, officials said. Members of the Oregon National Guard were expected to be deployed to help with road closures and traffic control in fire-affected areas.

The fire disrupted three transmission lines that provide electricity to California and the state's power grid operator asked for voluntary power conservation Monday. The California Independent System Operator said Tuesday that the grid was stable and with the forecast for cooler temperatures another call for conservation was not expected.

The fire in the Fremont-Winema National Forest was burning through a region where the Klamath Tribes — comprised of three distinct indigenous peoples — have lived for millennia.

"There is definitely extensive damage to the forest where we have our treaty rights," said Don Gentry, the chairman of the Klamath Tribal Council in Chiloquin, Oregon, which is located about 25 miles (40 kilometers) west of the Bootleg Fire.

"I am sure we have lost a number of deer to the fire," he said. "We are definitely concerned. I know there are cultural resource areas and sensitive areas that are likely the fire is going through."

The Klamath Tribes have been impacted by wildfires before, including one that burned 23 square miles (60 square kilometers) in southern Oregon last September. That fire damaged land where many of the

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Klamath tribal members hunt, fish and gather. The fire also burned the tribes' cemetery and at least one tribal member's house, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported in September.

The tribes are struggling with drought-caused problems. In past decades, they have fought to preserve minimum water levels in Upper Klamath Lake to preserve two species of federally endangered sucker fish that are central to their culture and heritage. Farmers draw much of their irrigation water from the same lake that's critical to the fish. Even before the fire erupted, extreme drought in southern Oregon had reduced water flows to historic lows.

In California, progress was reported on the state's largest fire so far this year. The Beckwourth Complex, a combined pair of lightning-ignited blazes, was almost 50% contained after blackening more than 145 square miles (375 square kilometers) near the Nevada state line.

Damage was still being tallied in the small rural community of Doyle, California, where flames swept in during the weekend and destroyed several homes, including Beverly Houdyshell's.

The 79-year-old said Tuesday that she's too old and too poor to rebuild and isn't sure what her future holds.

"What chance do I have to build another house, to have another home?" Houdyshell said. "No chance at all."

"I can't just buy another house, boom like that. I had insurance. I haven't heard from them yet. I called them but I haven't heard nothing."

A fire that began Sunday in the Sierra Nevada south of Yosemite National Park grew to nearly 15 square miles (39 square kilometers) but containment increased to 15%. Four unspecified buildings were destroyed.

Scientists say climate change has made the West much warmer and drier, and they warn that weather will get wilder as the world warms. They say extreme conditions are often from a combination of unusually random, short-term and natural weather patterns heightened by long-term, human-caused climate change. However, special studies are needed to determine how much global warming is to blame, if at all, for a single extreme weather event.

## Feds charge 4 in Iran plot to kidnap activist in US, others

By DEEPTI HAJELA and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — An Iranian intelligence officer and three alleged members of an Iranian intelligence network have been charged in Manhattan with plotting to kidnap a prominent Iranian opposition activist and writer in exile and take her back to Tehran, authorities said Tuesday.

An indictment in Manhattan federal court alleges that the plot was part of a wider plan to lure three individuals in Canada and a fifth person in the United Kingdom to Iran. Victims were also targeted in the United Arab Emirates, authorities said.

The identities of the alleged victims were not released but Brooklyn-based Masih Alinejad confirmed that authorities had told her she was among the targeted victims.

"I knew that this is the nature of the Islamic Republic, you know, kidnapping people, arresting people, torturing people, killing people. But I couldn't believe it that this is going to happen to me in United States of America," Alinejad told The Associated Press.

Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment. State media in Tehran did not immediately acknowledge the alleged plot, though Iran has become more aggressive in recent years about seizing opposition journalists and dissidents abroad amid tensions over its tattered nuclear deal.

The indictment acknowledges that, naming an exiled Paris-based journalist later seized by Iran and executed. Also named was a California-based member of an Iranian militant opposition group in exile whose family says he was abducted by Iran while staying in Dubai in 2020. Prosecutors alleged the Iranian intelligence officer had an electronic device containing a graphic of Alinejad alongside those two men, prosecutors said.

Alinejad, who worked for years as a journalist in Iran, long has been targeted by its theocracy after



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fleeing the country following its disputed 2009 presidential election and crackdown.

She is a prominent figure on Farsi-language satellite channels abroad that critically view Iran and has worked as a contractor for U.S.-funded Voice of America's Farsi-language network since 2015. She became a U.S. citizen in October 2019.

Her "White Wednesday" and "My Stealthy Freedom" campaigns have seen women film themselves without head coverings, or hijabs, in public in Iran, which can bring arrests and fines. Details in the indictment also correspond to Alinejad's biography.

Alinejad said authorities had come to her last year and told her she was being watched, including photos being taken of her home. She said she had been living under U.S. government protection since then, including time spent in various safe houses. She also said the FBI at one point asked her to conduct a live video online to see if Iranian intelligence could track her.

Although not charged in the kidnapping plot, Niloufar Bahadorifar, also known as Nellie, was arrested July 1 in California on charges that she has provided U.S. financial and other services to Iranian residents and entities and some financial services supported the plot and violated sanctions against Iran, according to prosecutors.

The indictment said Bahadorifar, 46, originally from Iran, works at a California department store. Bahadorifar's lawyer, Assistant Federal Defender Martin Cohen, declined to comment.

Bahadorifar has pleaded not guilty to charges lodged at the time of her arrest and been released on bail, authorities said. She still faces arraignment on charges in Tuesday's superseding indictment.

The rest of the defendants are fugitives believed to be based in Iran, authorities said.

"Among this country's most cherished freedoms is the right to speak one's mind without fear of government reprisal," U.S. Attorney Audrey Strauss said. "A U.S. citizen living in the United States must be able to advocate for human rights without being targeted by foreign intelligence operatives."

"Every person in the United States must be free from harassment, threats and physical harm by foreign powers," Acting U.S. Assistant Attorney General Mark J. Lesko added. "Through this indictment, we bring to light one such pernicious plot to harm an American citizen who was exercising their First Amendment rights."

William F. Sweeney Jr., the head of New York's FBI office, noted that the indictment sounded a bit like "some far-fetched movie plot."

"We allege a group, backed by the Iranian government, conspired to kidnap a U.S. based journalist here on our soil and forcibly return her to Iran. Not on our watch," he said.

The Iranian intelligence officer, who remains a fugitive, was identified as Alireza Shahvaroghi Farahani.

According to the indictment, Farahani, 50, and three other defendants tried since at least June 2020 to kidnap Alinejad. If caught and convicted, the four could face life in prison.

Farahani and the network he led on multiple occasions in 2020 and 2021 lied about his intentions as he hired private investigators to surveil, photograph and video record Alinejad and her household members, the indictment alleged. It said the surveillance included a live high-definition video feed of the activist's home.

The indictment alleged that the government of Iran in 2018 tried to lure her to a third country so a capture would be possible, even offering money to her relatives to try to make it possible. The relatives, the indictment said, refused the offer. Alinejad's family has been targeted for harassment by the Iranian government, a separate lawsuit filed by the activist in the U.S. alleges.

The others charged in the kidnapping plot were identified as Mahmoud Khazein, 42, Kiya Sadeghi, 35, and Omid Noori, 45, all from Iran.

According to the indictment, Sadeghi researched a service offering military-style speedboats that could perform a maritime evacuation out of New York City that would ultimately reach Venezuela, whose government has friendly relations with Iran.

Khazein, it said, researched travel routes from Alinejad's home to a waterfront neighborhood in Brooklyn and the location of her residence relative to Venezuela and Tehran.

Alinejad said the plot wouldn't stop her from her activism.

"I have only one life and I'm not going to live in paranoia. I'm not going to live in fear," she said. "I have two options — feel miserable, make my oppressors feel miserable, so I choose the second one."

## Feeling seen: Mj Rodriguez on historic Emmy nod for 'Pose'

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

Learning of her historic Emmy nomination, Mj Rodriguez of "Pose" had one overwhelming feeling: "I felt so seen."

"I felt represented and I felt seen," said Rodriguez, who scored the first major acting Emmy nod for a trans performer. "And ... more accepted than I have felt in a long time. I felt like my colleagues now see me, my acting colleagues see me, and the people who are surrounded by the arts see me, and how much I want to give the world the love to my craft and my art."

The nom for Rodriguez, who plays house mother and nurse Blanca in the FX show about ballroom culture in the 1980s and '90s that recently ended its third and final season, was one of several nods for the show, including best actor for Billy Porter and best drama. The series from Steven Canals and Ryan Murphy broke ground with the casting of transgender actors as trans characters.

Rodriguez, 30, spoke in an interview on Zoom Tuesday from Cannes, France, where she's attending the film festival. It had been a long night: She hadn't been able to sleep, in anticipation. "I had a lot looming through my mind," she said. "I was up until 8 o'clock in the morning."

When the news came, "My mom and my godmother (were) sitting at the dining table. And the moment my name was announced, I just screamed and I broke. And my mom grabbed me. She kind of like flung me around. I gave her a hug. She swung me around a little bit. And I just remember falling into my boyfriend's arms and just crying. Tears of joy, tears of happiness."

Rodriguez and her family were not alone in their joy or recognition of the enormity of the moment. Sarah Kate Ellis of GLAAD, the LGBTQ+ organization, called her nomination "a breakthrough for transgender women in Hollywood, and a long-overdue recognition for her groundbreaking performance over the past three seasons of 'Pose'" — a show that, Ellis said, "undoubtedly raised the bar for trans representation on television and changed the way viewers around the world understand the trans community."

The group had joined with dozens of other organizations in an open letter urging Emmy voters to show their support for the show and especially for its transgender and nonbinary actors.

Rodriguez said she was grateful to know "that we are finally being seen the way we need to be seen, and that our stories can now be seen as human stories. It just opens the diaspora, opens everything even more. There are limitless amounts of stories that can now be told, simply because of this happening."

She said she was specifically thinking of young people, "who can look to us and see that we are human and that we have so much to offer and that we can be looked up to and that there are dreams that are obtainable, because we can make them happen."

Of her fellow castmates and crew members, she said, "We gave as a team. I always say teamwork makes the dream work, and that is exactly what we did. The family on that show is what we built."

Rodriguez is working on her next project, a comedy for Apple TV+ with Maya Rudolph, with a working title of "Loot."

"I just feel like the sky is limitless," she said of her professional future. "I feel like there's so much more opportunity out there. The world — it's opened, and I can't even express how happy I am to know that I'll be able to be a part of more amazing pieces of work ... and just put out good products. I know that's what the future looks like."

## Senate Democrats reach \$3.5 trillion budget agreement

By ALAN FRAM and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Democrats announced late Tuesday that they'd reached a budget agreement envisioning spending an enormous \$3.5 trillion over the coming decade, paving the way for their drive to pour federal resources into climate change, health care and family-service programs sought by

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President Joe Biden.

The accord marks a major step in the party's push to meet Biden's goal of bolstering an economy that was ravaged by the pandemic and setting it on course for long-term growth — and includes a Medicare expansion of vision, hearing and dental benefits for older Americans, a goal of progressives.

But Democrats behind the agreement face possible objections from their rival moderate and progressive factions, and will have to work hard to convert their plans into legislation they can push through the closely divided Congress over what could be unanimous Republican opposition.

"We are very proud of this plan," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., told reporters. "We know we have a long road to go. We're going to get this done for the sake of making average Americans' lives a whole lot better."

Biden was set to attend a closed-door lunch at the Capitol on Wednesday with all Senate Democrats "to lead us on to getting this wonderful plan" enacted, Schumer said.

All told, the ambitious proposal reflects Biden's vision for making the most substantive potential investments in the nation in years, some say on par with the New Deal of the 1930s. Together with a slimmer, \$1 trillion bipartisan effort of traditional road, highway and public works also being negotiated, they represent close to the president's initial \$4 trillion-plus effort that could reach almost every corner of the country.

The Democrats' goal is to push a budget resolution reflecting Tuesday's agreement through the House and Senate before lawmakers leave for their August recess. The resolution sets only broad spending and revenue parameters, leaving the actual funding and specific decisions about which programs are affected — and by exactly how much — for later legislation.

Nonetheless, approving a budget will be a major boon for the Democrats' effort to enact their subsequent funding bill. That's because the budget contains language that would let Democrats move the follow-up spending measure through the 50-50 Senate with just a simple majority, not the 60 votes Republicans could demand by using a bill-killing filibuster.

The later spending legislation will likely not start moving through Congress until the fall.

Separately Tuesday, a bipartisan group of senators continued working on a third measure that would spend around \$1 trillion on roads, water systems and other infrastructure projects, another Biden priority. Biden and 10 senators — five from each party — had agreed to an outline of that compromise measure last month, and bargainers have worked ever since to flesh it out.

In discussing the budget agreement, Schumer and other lawmakers did not respond when asked if they had the support of all 50 Democratic senators, which they will need to succeed. They also have virtually no margin for error in the House, where they will be able to lose no more than three Democratic votes and still prevail.

Moderates like Sens. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., and Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., might still demand further changes to reduce the plan's price tag and impact on already huge federal deficits. Progressives in both chambers might insist on beefing it up or other changes.

Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., the Budget Committee chairman, and other progressives pushed initially for a \$6 trillion budget top line while party moderates insisted on a far lower price tag. Biden had proposed around \$4.5 trillion.

The Democrats' announcement Tuesday left many questions about their budget accord unanswered. These included how much it would raise through tax increases on the wealthy and corporations and other revenue to pay for its costs; how much would be spent on specific programs; and how Biden's proposals would be curtailed or eliminated to fit into the legislation.

Schumer said the proposal would call for financing Biden's budget priorities "in a robust way." He also said it would include a priority of Sanders and other progressives: an expansion of Medicare, the federal health insurance program for older people, to cover dental, vision and hearing services.

Sanders said the agreement would end an era in which, he said, rich people and big companies weren't bearing enough of the burden of financing government programs.

"Those days are gone," he said. "The wealthy and large corporations are going to start paying their fair share of taxes, so that we can protect the working families of this country."

Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va., a leading moderate who helped shape the budget package, said the measure would be fully paid for with offsetting revenue but provided no detail. Biden has proposed financing the measure with higher taxes on the wealthy and corporations and beefing up the IRS's budget so it can collect more revenue from scofflaws.

The budget will include language calling for no tax increases on people making less than \$400,000 a year, a Biden demand, or on small businesses. The provision was described by a Democratic aide who requested anonymity to discuss the negotiations.

On infrastructure, senators from both parties met Tuesday evening and their bipartisan deal appeared back on track, after days of disputes. Lawmakers said they were aiming for a new Thursday deadline to wrap up the details despite opposition from business leaders, outside activists and some GOP senators over how to pay for it.

The bipartisan infrastructure effort was thrown into doubt earlier Tuesday when Republicans said it was unlikely it would be ready for a vote next week, as hoped.

But senators exiting the meeting suggested they hadn't so much resolved the questions over how to pay for the package but moved past them — apparently accepting that some of the proposed revenue streams may not pass muster in formal assessments by the Congressional Budget Office, the lawmakers' nonpartisan fiscal scorekeeper.

Manchin said he hoped that the CBO's score, as it is called, would show that "everything's paid for. If not, we'll have to make some adjustments."

Even if the bipartisan group can meet its new deadline for agreement, it's still a long shot the bill would be ready for a vote next week.

Senators have struggled to agree to revenue streams to fund the \$1 trillion plan, which includes about \$579 billion in new spending beyond regular expenditures already funded by gas taxes and other sources.

At least 10 Republican senators would be needed to back the infrastructure bill, joining with all 50 Democrats to reach the 60-vote threshold because it would still be vulnerable to a filibuster.

## Search ends in Chinese hotel collapse that killed 17 people

BEIJING (AP) — The death toll in the collapse of a hotel in eastern China was raised to 17 Wednesday as authorities ended the search and rescue mission.

The city of Suzhou said on its social media feed that 23 people had been pulled from from the rubble of the Siji Kaiyuan Hotel, which collapsed on Monday afternoon. One of those freed was uninjured and five others were sent to a hospital for treatment.

Rescuers used cranes, ladders, metal cutters and search dogs to look for survivors. Most of those killed were hotel guests.

More than 600 people including earthquake rescue teams and 120 vehicles were mobilized for the operation. Suzhou city is in Jiangsu province near Shanghai.

Jiangsu's highest official, Communist Party Secretary, Lou Qinjian, visited with rescuers and victims on Tuesday, the city said.

Investigators would look into the cause of the collapse and police have subpoenaed the hotel's legal representatives, managers and those who worked on the design and construction of the building, the posting said. Some had been placed under "criminal control measures," it said, indicating they were under some form of detention or supervision. No numbers or names were given for those under such measures.

The three-floor, 54-room Siji Kaiyuan Hotel opened in 2018, according to Ctrip, a Chinese online booking app.

Suzhou is a popular tourist destination known for its historic canals and traditional Chinese gardens, as well as a major business center.

## Biden blasts 'un-American' voting limits; Texas Dems act

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, BRIAN SLODYSKO and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

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PHILADELPHIA (AP) — President Joe Biden declared preserving voting rights an urgent national “test of our time” on Tuesday but offered few concrete proposals to meet it. Texas Democrats took their own dramatic action to stymie Republican efforts to tighten ballot restrictions in their state.

Biden, who has proclaimed protecting ballot access the central cause of his presidency, has faced sharp criticism from allies for not doing more, though political headwinds and stubborn Senate math have limited his ability to act. Despite his ringing words Tuesday, he avoided any mention of trying to alter the Senate filibuster rule that stands in the path of federal legislation.

Speaking at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, Biden called state efforts to curtail voting accessibility “un-American” and “un-democratic” and launched a broadside against his predecessor, Donald Trump, who baselessly alleged misconduct in the 2020 election after his defeat. Biden called passage of congressional proposals to override new state voting restrictions and to restore parts of the Voting Rights Act that were curbed in recent years by the Supreme Court “a national imperative.”

Yet, instead of raising the possibility of fighting the filibuster, he appeared to tacitly acknowledge the fading hopes for the bills, saying he would launch a nationwide campaign to arm voters with information on rule changes and restrictions ahead of the 2022 midterm elections.

“We have to prepare now,” the president said.

Biden’s sharp rhetoric drew praise from progressive groups in his party but did little to assuage the mounting pressure on him to throw his weight behind replacing the filibuster. “The president believes that we have to make the filibuster work the way it used to,” said White House deputy press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, who added Biden has not changed his opposition to eliminating it altogether.

Biden’s remarks came a day after Texas Democrats decamped for Washington in an effort to deny their GOP-controlled Legislature the necessary quorum to pass a bill placing new restrictions on voting in the state.

The lawmakers, who arrived in the nation’s capital Monday night, said they were prepared to stay in Washington — out of the reach of Texas law enforcement — until a special legislative session concludes early next month. Their action marks a dramatic new showdown over voting in America.

Standing near the steps of the U.S. Capitol for a news conference ahead of a meeting with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, the Democrats promised to “stay out and kill this bill.”

However, state Rep. Chris Turner, the leader of the Texas Legislature’s House Democrats, said their efforts would ultimately be futile unless congressional Democrats take bolder action to overcome a Senate Republican blockade of the sweeping federal voting bill. The legislation, known as the For the People Act, would create national standards for voting that could roll back some of the restrictions that have been approved or are advancing in Republican-led states, including Texas.

“We can’t hold this tide back forever. We’re buying some time. We need Congress and all of our federal leaders to use that time wisely,” Turner said.

Several states have enacted new voting restrictions, and others are debating them, as the GOP has seized on Trump’s false claim of massive voter fraud in the 2020 election as a rationale for curtailing ballot access.

“No other election has ever been held under such scrutiny, such high standards,” Biden said of the 2020 race.

Some GOP-led states have worked to roll back the vote-by-mail expansion that was put in place in the past presidential election due to COVID-19 fears. Others have tried to strengthen voter identification requirements and curtail hours and locations for early voting and ballot drop-offs.

Texas Republican Gov. Greg Abbott said he would keep calling special sessions through next year if necessary to pass his state’s legislation, and raised the possibility of Democrats facing arrest upon returning home.

Asked whether Biden thinks the Texas legislators are doing the right thing by leaving the state, Jean-Pierre said “he applauds their courage.” She said that in the administration’s view, the Texas bill is an “assault on democracy.”

Vice President Kamala Harris, who is leading the administration’s efforts on voting rights, praised the

Texas legislators during a meeting with them in Washington.

"Defending the right of the American people to vote is as American as apple pie," she told the lawmakers, comparing their actions to women's suffrage and civil rights marches.

Democrats on Capitol Hill have tried to respond with a sweeping federal voting and elections bill that Senate Republicans have united to block. Most Republicans have similarly dismissed a separate bill, the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, which would restore sections of the Voting Rights Act that the Supreme Court has weakened.

Those roadblocks have increased focus on Senate filibuster rules, which, if left in place, would seem to provide an insurmountable roadblock, requiring 60 votes in the evenly split, 100-member chamber to even bring up controversial legislation.

Moderate Democrats including Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona also have so far expressed reluctance to changing the Senate rules.

Many Democrats have expressed frustration with the lack of a greater White House push to change the filibuster, with civil rights activists stressing that Biden was elected with broad support from Black people whose votes are often put at risk by voting restrictions.

The Rev. Al Sharpton, who attended Biden's address, called it a "good speech," but also said, "I told him that I was going to stay on him about the filibuster." He described Biden as noncommittal on the issue.

Biden, himself a veteran of the Senate, has offered some support for filibuster changes. But he has not put his full political weight behind the issue, believing it counterproductive in both the legislative and political fights over voting. He and Harris met last week with some of the civil rights leaders, who made clear that they expected a legislative solution.

"Our backs are against the wall. This is the moment. We have no more time," said Sherrilyn Ifill, president of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, after the meeting. "I told the president: We will not be able to litigate our way out of this threat to Black citizenship."

"Administrative action, litigation, and organizing are critical to combat this, but these tactics are not a substitute for congressional action on the For the People Act and John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act," Karen Hobert Flynn, president of the group Common Cause, said Tuesday. "As the president ramps up his use of the bully pulpit and engages with senators, we urge him to make clear that the Senate minority's use of the filibuster—a Jim Crow relic, in the words of former President Obama—must never stand in the way of the freedom to vote."

Although not abandoning hope of legislative action, the West Wing has been shifting focus to other measures to protect voting, including legal remedies pursued by the Justice Department and action in individual states, according to officials. There also will be an emphasis on boosting voter turnout, with aides pointing to success Democrats had in getting out votes last year during the height of the pandemic.

Officials concede, though, that turning out voters is always harder in a nonpresidential election year.

## Cuba confirms 1 man dead during antigovernment protests

By ANDREA RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Cuban authorities confirmed Tuesday that one person has died during demonstrations that have shaken the island in recent days by protesting over food shortages, high prices and other grievances against the government.

The Interior Ministry said in a statement that Diubis Laurencio Tejeda, 36, died Monday during a clash between protesters and police in the Arroyo Naranjo municipality on the outskirts of Havana. It said an unspecified number of people were arrested and there were some people injured, including some officers.

The statement accused demonstrators of vandalizing houses, setting fires and damaging power lines. It also alleged they attacked police and civilians with knives, stones and other objects.

Demonstrations that erupted Sunday have seen thousands of Cubans in the streets voicing grievances against shortages of goods, rising prices and power cuts, and some protesters have called for a change of government.

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Havana still had a heavy police presence Tuesday, with officers particularly guarding key points such as the Malecon coastal promenade and the Capitol. Internet and cellphone data service continued to be disrupted.

There were no reports of new protests, which the government has sought to blame on Cuban Americans using social media to instigate unrest in Cuba.

The demonstrations in several cities and towns were some of the biggest displays of antigovernment sentiment seen in years in tightly controlled Cuba, which is facing a surge of coronavirus cases as it struggles with its worst economic crisis in decades as a consequence of U.S. sanctions imposed by President Donald Trump's administration.

The rare outpouring of dissent led former President Raul Castro to join with other top leaders Monday to discuss the situation.

"On July 11, there were riots, there were disorders on a very limited scale, opportunistically taking advantage of the difficult conditions in which we Cubans are living today," Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez said Tuesday, adding that government experts had found evidence of outsiders using sophisticated equipment to widely broadcast alarmist and inciting messages over social media.

But, Rodriguez said, "On July 11, there was no social explosion in Cuba. There was not because of the will of our people and because of the support of our people for the revolution and its government."

Cuba's Roman Catholic bishops issued a call to avoid violence.

"We understand that the government has responsibilities and has tried to take measures to alleviate the aforementioned difficulties, but we also understand that the people have the right to express their needs, desires and hopes," they said in a statement.

The demonstrations were extremely unusual on an island where little dissent against the government is tolerated. The last major public demonstration of discontent, over economic hardship, took place nearly 30 years ago in 1994. Last year, there were small demonstrations by artists and other groups, but nothing as big or widespread as what erupted this past weekend.

The U.S. has, so far at least, not detected any surge of migrants from Cuba, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas told reporters in Washington on Tuesday.

He also cautioned Cubans that any migrants intercepted at sea are returned to their homelands or sent to other countries under long-standing agreements intended to discourage people from trying to make the dangerous crossing.

"The humanitarian message to the people of Cuba is do not take to the seas," Mayorkas said. "People die when they try to migrate in the maritime channel irregularly."

The issue of Cuban migration in opposition to the government resonates with Mayorkas, whose family fled the Cuban revolution in the 1960s.

"I understood what it meant for my father to lose everything that he had built for his young family," he said. "We stand with the people of Cuba."

## Texas Democrats dig in after exodus; GOP threatens arrest

By PAUL J. WEBER, ACACIA CORONADO and BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas Democrats who hurriedly took off to Washington to block sweeping new election laws urged Congress on Tuesday to quickly pass legislation protecting voting rights, while Republican Gov. Greg Abbott threatened them with arrest the moment they return.

Speaking to reporters outside the Capitol, the Democrats were realistic about the limits of their gambit, noting they can hold up the GOP-backed proposals at home for only so long and arguing that only federal legislation would prevent some of the new restrictions from becoming law. In Austin, House Republicans authorized state troopers to find and corral missing legislators, while a depleted but still-working state Senate passed new voting restrictions in a show of GOP resolve.

"We can't hold this tide back forever. We're buying some time. We need Congress and all of our federal leaders to use that time wisely," Democratic state Rep. Chris Turner said, gathered with his fellow quorum-

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breakers outside the U.S. Capitol.

The Democrats' dramatic exodus was in part aimed at rallying their voters on what they see as a priority issue ahead of the 2022 midterms, and at pressuring President Joe Biden to act as federal voting legislation has stalled for months in the Senate. But just as they began getting settled in Washington, Biden appeared to tacitly acknowledge the fading hopes for the bills during a speech in Philadelphia.

Biden called efforts to curtail voting accessibility "un-American" and "un-democratic" and launched a broadside against his predecessor, Donald Trump, who baselessly alleged misconduct in the 2020 election after his defeat. More than a dozen states this year have already passed tougher election laws, but only in Texas have Democrats put up this kind of fight.

Back in Texas, Republicans in the unusually skeletal state Capitol authorized finding and bringing back more than 50 lawmakers "under warrant of arrest if necessary." However, because state troopers have no jurisdiction beyond Texas, the move has little practical effect in the short term.

Abbott has already threatened Democrats with arrest once they come back home, which may not be until the current 30-day special session ends in August. Though that would successfully stymie the GOP's current effort, Abbott has vowed to keep trying until the 2022 elections if necessary.

"We think things have been delayed, not denied," said state Rep. Jim Murphy, the House GOP caucus leader.

In the state Senate, where nine Democrats didn't show up — not enough to also deny quorum — Republicans passed their version of a voting bill even though that is now as far as it can go.

After House Republicans authorized sending out troopers, a sergeant-at-arms locked the chamber doors. Four Democrats who did not go to Washington were among the lawmakers still inside, while the voting mechanisms on the desks of absent Democrats were locked. A spokesman for the Texas Department of Public Safety, which oversees state troopers and the Texas Rangers, did not comment about what measures might be taken.

The move was expected after Democrats boarded private planes Monday to deny them the quorum necessary to conduct business — namely, passing one of America's most restrictive voting measures. Other lightning-rod conservative issues that Abbott put on the agenda — including how race is taught in schools and new abortion restrictions — also were shelved with the Legislature now at a standstill.

State Rep. Eddie Morales, one of the Democrats who stayed behind, said it was his understanding that troopers would not leave Texas.

"I was told they will go to your home back in your district, they will go to your place of work, they will go to your apartment in Austin or wherever you live close by when you're in session. And also family and friends that they may know of," he said.

Abbott has said Republicans will not be deterred.

"As soon as they come back in the state of Texas, they will be arrested, they will be cabined inside the Texas Capitol until they get their job done," Abbott told Austin television station KVUE.

It was the second time that Democratic lawmakers have staged a walkout over the voting overhaul, which they say will make it harder for young people, people of color and people with disabilities to vote. The legislation would outlaw 24-hour polling places, ban drop boxes for mail ballots and empower partisan poll watchers. Republicans say the measures are needed to fight fraud. Democrats counter that fraud is very rare and the bills target their supporters.

Texas has a history of attention-getting political tactics. Democrats, shut out of power in the Texas Capitol for decades, last left the state in 2003 in an ultimately failed effort to thwart a redistricting plan. That year, troopers went to Ardmore, Oklahoma, and asked them to come home. But they were unable to arrest the lawmakers without a warrant issued by Oklahoma authorities, and the lawmakers refused the troopers' request.

One of the first meetings Texas Democrats had on their first full day in Washington was with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer. For Democrats, the Senate filibuster rule stands in the path of sweeping federal legislation that would create national standards for voting and could roll back some restrictions



that have been approved or are advancing in Republican-led states.

"These folks are going to be remembered on the right side of history," the New York Democrat told reporters. "The governor and the Republican legislators will be remembered on the dark and wrong side of history."

## Emmy surprises: 'Pose,' 'I May Destroy You' and 'Hamilton'

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Emmy Award nominations announced Tuesday included some snubs and surprises. STRIKE A POSE

"Pose" left the ballroom with a clutch of Emmy nominations. The groundbreaking FX show about ballroom culture in the 1980s and '90s ended its third and final season with nods for Billy Porter and Mj Rodriguez — the first trans performer up for a major acting Emmy — and a best drama series nomination, its second. The series from creators Steven Canals and Ryan Murphy made history with its historic casting of transgender actors to play trans characters. The series took on transphobia, racism and the AIDS epidemic. GLAAD and a number of LGBTQ+ organizations pressed for recognition from Emmy voters this year in an open letter, saying "if there was any moment to show solidarity and support for the performers and characters who are leading the change, now would be that time."

"I MAY DESTROY YOU"

Critically adored but ignored by the Golden Globe voters, "I May Destroy You" roared back to earn nine Emmy nominations. Michaela Coel's exploration of rape and its aftermath earned her a lead actor nod and the show a best limited or anthology series nomination. The series, which is made up of 12 half-hour episodes, explores the question of sexual consent in contemporary life. Coel plays Arabella Essiedu, a care-free Londoner whose life changes after her drink is spiked with a date-rape drug. The co-production between the BBC and HBO won best mini-series and leading actress for Coel at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts awards. After it failed to get a Golden Globe nod, a writer for the Netflix series "Emily In Paris" publicly said that "I May Destroy You" deserved a Golden Globe nomination over her own show.

WAIT, KARATE KID?

"Cobra Kai," which started life on YouTube Red, has become a popular option on Netflix and just nabbed four Emmy nominations, including a shock best comedy nod. The show follows former "Karate Kid" rivals Johnny Lawrence and Daniel LaRusso almost 30 years after the events of the film. Now, they're all grown up with kids of their own, but their rivalry reignites when Johnny reopens the Cobra Kai dojo and begins teaching the next generation of new karate students. Netflix acquired the third season and viewership exploded.

'RATCHED' SLICED

"Ratched," led by Sarah Paulson, was largely ignored at the Emmy nominations. The Ryan Murphy series — a prequel exploring the origins of Nurse Ratched from 1975's "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" — got lukewarm or worse reviews. The first series saw the nurse at its heart stirring up trouble in the lobotomy-friendly Lucia State Hospital in Northern California. At the Golden Globes, "Ratched" earned three nominations, including a top nomination for TV drama series, Paulson got a nod as lead TV drama actress and Cynthia Nixon was up for supporting actress honors. But it went home empty-handed that night. At the Emmy nods on Tuesday, Paulson and Nixon were given the brush off and the show only earned nominations for guest star Sophie Okonedo, as well as costumes, makeup and hairstyling.

LOVE FOR LOVECRAFT

HBO's "Lovecraft Country" took pop culture by storm in August and helped advance the social conversation ignited by the death of George Floyd. It earned a whopping 18 Emmy nominations. The series starred Jurnee Smollett and Jonathan Majors and centered on a Black man's journey across Jim Crow America to find his father and discover the truth about his family. It had a unique blend of horror, fictional period drama, real historical figures, fantasy, sci-fi and social commentary. Jordan Peele of "Get Out" and "Us" fame and J.J. Abrams of "Lost" and "Westworld" served as executive producers. The first season was

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based on the 2016 book by Matt Ruff. A decision was made not to proceed with a second season.

## SHINING FOUNDING FATHER

The gift of "Hamilton" continues. Lin-Manuel Miranda's stage bio of Alexander Hamilton has won multiple Tonys, a Grammy, a Pulitzer, a Kennedy Center Honor — and now is poised to deliver Emmys. The 2016 filmed version of the Broadway musical appeared on Disney+ last year and on Tuesday nabbed a dozen Emmy nods, mostly in the limited, anthology series or movie category. Seven of the original stars were nominated: Miranda, Leslie Odom Jr., Renée Elise Goldsberry, Phillipa Soo, Daveed Diggs, Jonathan Groff and Anthony Ramos. Interestingly, the motion picture academy deemed it ineligible for the Oscars.

## STEAMY LONDON

Shonda Rhimes' first scripted series for Netflix was "Bridgerton" and was described as if "Downton Abbey" was mixed with "Gossip Girl." It became a huge hit and nabbed a dozen Emmy nominations Tuesday, including best drama series. Based on Julia Quinn's romance novel series, it centers on the romantic entanglements of English society's upper crust and had a multiethnic cast and an anonymous gossip columnist — voiced by none other than Julie Andrews. The series, which takes place in the 1800s, follows the Bridgerton family and their love interests. The eight-episode series made a star of Regé-Jean Page (who earned an actor nod Tuesday) and was anything but G-rated, becoming gently mocked on late night TV for its sex scenes and on "Saturday Night Live" with a sketch starring sketchy intimacy coaches. The series was snubbed at the Golden Globes.

## FOR EVA?

"Girls5eva," the Peacock series about a '90s one-hit-wonder pop group who reunite as adult women to mount a comeback, got little love at the Emmy nomination, scoring only one nod for writing. Busy Philipps, Sara Bareilles, Renée Elise Goldsberry and Paula Pell play former members of the girl group Girls5eva, now in their 40s. It's the brainchild of Emmy Award-winning writer Meredith Scardino, whose credits include "The Colbert Report" and "Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt," and Tina Fey is an executive producer. It's been renewed for another season. "I wanted to write a show about women in my age group and be able to talk about all the things that you go through as being a woman in your forties," Scardino told critics.

## PARISIAN CHIC

"Emily in Paris," Darren Star's cliché-filled view of the French capital, scored an Emmy nomination for best comedy and production design. The show stars Lily Collins as a naïve American social media guru relocating to the city of lights despite being utterly clueless about the language and culture. At the Golden Globes, Collins was nominated as best actor in a comedy and the show got a nod as best comedy series. In Season One, Emily stumbled into a romance with her chef neighbor and made friends, including a wannabe professional singer. The show has also garnered a wave of criticism for its portrayal of French people and negative stereotypes of Paris. Even so, a second season has been green-lit.

## SMART CHOICE

Jean Smart is having a moment and the Emmy nominations proved it. She nabbed two nods Tuesday — a supporting one for the crime drama "Mare of Easttown" and as the star of HBO Max's new comedy "Hacks," playing a Joan Rivers-esque Vegas comic. Smart has lately been in buzzy shows like " Fargo," "Legion," "Dirty John" and "Watchmen." Able to do drama and comedy, Smart, 69, has shone in small roles, in supporting roles and as a member of ensemble casts, including "Designing Women," "24" and "Frasier," where she won back-to-back Emmys in 2000 and 2001 for her recurring guest-star role as Frasier's old girlfriend. In "Hacks," Smart plays successful comedian Deborah Vance, who's been cashing in on the same routine for years and finally hires a young comedy writer to spice up her sets. On "Mare of Easttown," she played the grumpy mother of the detective character played by Kate Winslet.

## Deaths climb to 72 in South Africa riots after Zuma jailed

By MOGOMOTSI MAGOME and ANDREW MELDRUM Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — The death toll climbed to 72 from rioting in South Africa on Tuesday, with many people trampled to death during looting at stores, as police and the military fired stun grenades

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and rubber bullets to try to halt the unrest set off by the imprisonment of former President Jacob Zuma.

More than 1,200 people have been arrested in the lawlessness that has raged in poor areas of two provinces, where a community radio station was ransacked and forced off the air Tuesday and some COVID-19 vaccination centers were closed, disrupting urgently needed inoculations.

Many of the deaths in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal provinces occurred in chaotic stampedes as thousands of people stole food, electric appliances, liquor and clothing from stores, police Maj. Gen. Mathapelo Peters said in a statement Tuesday night.

He said 27 deaths were being investigated in KwaZulu-Natal province and 45 in Gauteng province. In addition to the people crushed, he said police were investigating deaths caused by explosions when people tried to break into ATM machines, as well as other fatalities caused by shootings.

The violence broke out after Zuma began serving a 15-month sentence for contempt of court on Thursday. He had refused to comply with a court order to testify at a state-backed inquiry investigating allegations of corruption while he was president from 2009 to 2018.

The unrest spiraled into a spree of looting in township areas of the two provinces, although it has not spread to South Africa's other seven provinces, where police are on alert.

"The criminal element has hijacked this situation," said Premier David Makhura of Gauteng province, which includes Johannesburg.

More than half of South Africa's 60 million people are living in poverty, with an unemployment rate of 32%, according to official statistics. The pandemic, with job layoffs and an economic downturn, has increased the hunger and desperation that helped propel the protests triggered by Zuma's arrest into wider rioting.

"We understand that those unemployed have inadequate food. We understand that the situation has been made worse by the pandemic," an emotional Makhura said on the state South African Broadcasting Corp. "But this looting is undermining our businesses here (in Soweto). It is undermining our economy, our community. It is undermining everything."

As he spoke, the broadcast showed police trying to bring order to the Ndofaya shopping mall, where 10 people were crushed to death in a looting stampede. Gunshots could be heard in the background.

Makhura appealed for leaders of political, religious and community organizations to urge people to halt the unrest.

The deployment of 2,500 soldiers to support the South African police has so far failed to stop the rampant looting, although arrests were being made in some areas in Johannesburg, including Vosloorus in the eastern part of the city.

At least 1,234 people were arrested in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, authorities said, but the situation was far from under control.

Looting continued Tuesday in shopping malls in Johannesburg township areas, including Jabulani Mall and Dobsonville Mall in Soweto. There also were reports of looting in KwaZulu-Natal.

In Daveyton township, east of Johannesburg, more than 100 people, including women, children and older citizens, were arrested for stealing from shops inside the Mayfair Square mall.

Some of those arrested were bleeding from shattered glass on floors slippery from spilled milk, liquor, yogurt and cleaning liquids that had been stolen from shops.

Running battles carried on as security and the police fired stun grenades and rubber bullets to push back rioters, who were entering the shops by going through delivery entrances, emergency exits and climbing on roofs.

Bongani Mokoena, an employee at an auto supply store, said the rioters had taken everything from the shop, including batteries and shock absorbers.

By late afternoon the police managed to secure the mall, but rioters remained outside, throwing stones at the police and shouting for the release of those arrested. As evening fell, more rioters gathered around the mall and police set up barricades to try to keep them away.

In Soweto, the Chris Hani Baragwanath hospital reported that the number of injured people coming to the emergency ward had tripled from the daily average. The unrest forced the government to close some

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COVID-19 vaccination centers, disrupting urgently needed efforts to inoculate thousands of those aged 50 and older per day.

In Johannesburg's Alexandra township, the Pan Africa shopping center continued to be ransacked and was set on fire on Tuesday.

The Alex FM radio station, which has served the Alexandra community for 27 years, was broken into at 2 a.m. Tuesday and thieves stole equipment worth 5 million rand (\$350,000), forcing the station off the air, station manager Takalane Nemangowe said.

"Our on-air presenter and security guards got out safely through the back door," Nemangowe told The Associated Press. "But the looters cleaned out our offices. They took all our broadcasting equipment, computers, laptops, microphones, everything."

Nemangowe said that no police or army had been patrolling the area. The Alex FM station is community-funded and runs a training program for young residents, he said. "We were the voice of the voiceless here in Alexandra. And now we are silent. It is really sad."

But Nemangowe had not given up hope. By Tuesday afternoon he and other staff had been offered facilities at a radio station in the nearby affluent Sandton suburb where they were trying to start beaming back to the Alexandra community.

Authorities have repeatedly warned people, including Zuma supporters and relatives, against using social media to encourage the riots. Police minister Bheki Cele said Tuesday that about a dozen people have been identified as having instigated the riots.

The Constitutional Court, the country's highest, heard Zuma's application to have his sentence rescinded on Monday. Zuma's lawyer argued that the top court made errors when sentencing Zuma to prison. After 10 hours of testimony, the judges said they would announce their decision at a later date.

## Musk clashes again with opposing lawyer in SolarCity lawsuit

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Business Writer

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — Testifying for a second day, CEO Elon Musk pushed back again Tuesday against a lawsuit that blames him for engineering Tesla's 2016 acquisition of a financially precarious company called SolarCity that was marred by conflicts of interest and never generated the profits Musk insisted it would.

And for a second day, a pugnacious Musk sparred with Randall Baron, the plaintiffs' attorney who has been grilling him about his role in orchestrating the SolarCity deal.

"Your questions," the billionaire CEO complained from the witness stand, "are so deceptive."

Witness and lawyer clashed down to the meaning of the word "cabal," which Baron invoked to characterize the Tesla team that was updating Musk daily in July 2016 in the progress toward a SolarCity deal. When Musk objected that "cabal" sounded sinister, Baron countered that it typically meant a group of people working together toward a common purpose.

"Usually not in a good way," Musk muttered.

Rejecting any notion that he pressed Tesla's board to pursue a takeover of SolarCity, Musk, who is well-known for his commanding management style, insisted he had "no material role" in Tesla's board discussions about the deal.

Under questioning by Baron, Musk acknowledged that he had recommended an acquisition price of \$28.50 a share. But he said this figure merely reflected what he called a standard practice of offering a 30% premium on a target company's average stock price over the previous four weeks.

The board ultimately decided to offer \$26.50 to \$28.50 a share. Musk observed that his suggestion was "discarded by the board in favor of a lower price" and quipped, "They don't listen to me, obviously."

The long-running shareholder lawsuit asserts that Musk, who was SolarCity's largest stakeholder and its chairman, and other Tesla directors breached their fiduciary duties in bowing to Musk's wishes and agreeing to buy the company. In what the plaintiffs call a clear conflict of interest, SolarCity had been founded by Musk and two of his cousins, Lyndon and Peter Rive.

Baron has sought to establish that Musk wanted to run Tesla without interference and therefore bears

responsibility for any failures. When he asserted that Musk had expressed excessive optimism over SolarCity's prospects before the acquisition, the CEO countered that he was a natural optimist. Otherwise, he said, he never would have risked establishing both an electric-car manufacturer and a rocket company, SpaceX.

In defending the SolarCity acquisition, Musk argued that cash flow from the company's previous solar installations alone justified the decision.

"This was a no-brainer," he insisted.

The trial, which began Monday, marks the culmination of seven shareholder lawsuits, consolidated into one, that alleged that Tesla directors breached their fiduciary duties in bowing to Musk's wishes and agreeing to buy SolarCity. Last August, a judge approved a \$60 million settlement that resolved claims made against all the directors on Tesla's board except Musk without any admission of fault.

That left Musk, who refused to settle, as the sole remaining defendant. The trial is expected to last about two weeks, after which the Delaware chancery court judge, Joseph Slight III, will issue a verdict.

Even if the trial ends with Musk having to pay personally for the whole SolarCity deal, \$2.5 billion won't much hurt the world's third-wealthiest person. Forbes magazine has estimated that Musk is worth roughly \$163 billion.

## 'Scary': Fuel shortage could ground firefighting aircraft

By KEITH RIDLER Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Airport officials facing jet fuel shortages are concerned they'll have to wave off planes and helicopters that drop fire retardants during what could be a ferocious wildfire season, potentially endangering surrounding communities.

Sporadic shortages at some tanker bases in Oregon and Utah have already been reported. The worry is that multiple bases go dry simultaneously during what is shaping up to be a very busy wildfire season in the U.S. West. Tanker bases in Arizona, where many large fires are burning, have also had jet fuel supply issues in the last month.

"We haven't run into that before," said Jessica Gardetto, a National Interagency Fire Center spokeswoman in Boise, Idaho, and a former wildland firefighter. "It's a scary thought, with all the shortages going on right now."

It's not clear if jet fuel supplies and delivery systems can be bolstered in time for this wildfire season to avoid potential problems keeping firefighting aircraft aloft if multiple large fires break out around the West.

Airport officials, aviation supply companies and jet fuel transport companies said jet fuel demand declined sharply and supply chains atrophied during the coronavirus pandemic. They have yet to bounce back in the Western U.S. even as the economy zooms ahead and more passengers flock to airports for long-delayed trips.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, jet fuel supplied in the U.S. in 2020 fell 38% compared to 2019 pre-pandemic levels. Jet fuel demand has increased about 26% since the start of this year, though it hasn't reached 2019 levels. The administration's Weekly Petroleum Status Report for July 2 shows demand at 78% of 2019 levels. That's up from 44% of 2019 levels for the same time period in 2020 when the pandemic had taken hold.

Overall, the administration said, jet fuel inventories in the U.S. are at or above the five-year average, except in the Rocky Mountains, where they are 1% below. That appears to point to the supply chain as the potential problem, various industry officials said.

"COVID, it lulled everybody to sleep," said Mark Haynes, vice president of sales for Ann Arbor, Michigan-based Avfuel Corporation, which supplies jet fuel across the U.S., including to about half of the nation's 44 air tanker bases operated by the U.S. Forest Service or U.S. Bureau of Land Management in western states. Some states also maintain tanker bases.

"Our business went to about zero," Haynes said. "A lot of trucking companies had to lay off (jet fuel) drivers. What happened with the opening up of the U.S., demand for leisure travel has boomed."

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Chris Kunkle is vice president of operations for the Central Coast Jet Center in Santa Maria, California. It's a private airport known as a fixed based operator that provides services for private jets, such as refueling. It also serves as a Forest Service air tanker base, and is large enough for DC-10 air tankers.

"In the blink of an eye, we can have a fire here within our response area that can bring in one to three DC-10s and a bunch of variable-sized air tankers," he said. "We can go from a couple thousand gallons (3,800 liters) a day to 50,000 (190,000 liters) to 60,000 gallons (227,000 liters)"

He said he likes to keep 60,000 gallons (227,000 liters) at the airport, but is having trouble with limited deliveries. He fears running out if a large fire breaks out in the area.

Decisions on where the fuel goes can be difficult. Commercial jet travel can be a huge economic driver in many communities. Air ambulances also need fuel. Industry officials said problems at large commercial carriers this year appear to have more to do with worker and pilot shortages than lack of jet fuel.

Jeff Cyphers of Stockton, California-based Humboldt Pacific LCC, said he's expanding the company's fleet of 20 jet fuel tanker trucks to transport fuel to West Coast states and, during the wildfire season, Idaho, Montana and Utah. He said there's currently both a shortage of drivers as well as jet fuel to deliver.

"The supply chain right now is probably the most fragile I've ever seen in my years of experience," said Cyphers, who has been in the industry since 1986.

Most larger airports such as those in Denver, Seattle and Boise are supplied by pipeline. But many smaller, outlying airports such as those in Aspen, Colorado, and Jackson, Wyoming, and Hailey, Idaho, near the resort town of Sun Valley, rely on jet fuel delivery by truck. So do many of the airports with tanker bases, some of them hundreds of miles away from jet fuel refineries or pipelines.

Cyphers said his company has even been trucking jet fuel to airports supplied by pipeline because they hadn't received their full allocation of jet fuel.

Hundreds of aircraft are used to fight wildfires each year. Most of the nation's large retardant bombers are jets. Turboprop retardant bombers also use jet fuel. They lay down strips of red fire retardant ahead of approaching flames in support of ground crews who are more likely to hold a fire line after a retardant bomber has made a drop.

Most firefighting helicopters also use the jet fuel that authorities worry could be in short supply for aerial wildfire operations going forward.

"I could be wrong, but I don't foresee them being able to bridge that gap," predicted Cyphers, from the trucking company.

## Death toll rises to 92 in blaze at coronavirus ward in Iraq

By ABDULRAHMAN ZEYAD and SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

NASIRIYAH, Iraq (AP) — The death toll from a fire that swept through a hospital coronavirus ward climbed to 92 on Tuesday, Iraq's state news agency reported, as anguished relatives buried their loved ones and lashed out at the government over the country's second such disaster in less than three months.

Health officials said scores of others were injured in the blaze that erupted Monday at al-Hussein Teaching Hospital in Nasiriyah.

The tragedy cast a spotlight on what many have decried as widespread negligence and mismanagement in Iraq's hospitals after decades of war and sanctions.

Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi convened an emergency meeting and ordered the suspension and arrest of the health director in Dhi Qar province, the hospital director and the city's civil defense chief. The government also launched an investigation.

The prime minister called the catastrophe "a deep wound in the consciousness of all Iraqis."

Two Iraqi health officials, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, disputed the reported death toll, saying 88 had been killed.

Authorities at one point said the fire was caused by a short circuit. Another official said the blaze erupted when an oxygen cylinder exploded. The officials were not authorized to talk to the news media and spoke on condition of anonymity.

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In April, at least 82 people — many of them coronavirus patients or their relatives — were killed in a fire at a Baghdad hospital that broke out when an oxygen tank exploded. Iraq's health minister resigned over the disaster.

In the holy city of Najaf, the dead from Nasiriyah were laid to rest. Mourning families stood over the coffins at a mosque to say one last prayer.

Their tears were tinged with anger, with some saying the disaster could have been prevented. They blamed both the provincial government and the central government in Baghdad.

Ahmed Resan, who witnessed the blaze, said it began with smoke. "But everyone ran away — the workers and even the police. A few minutes later there was an explosion," he said. He said firefighters arrived an hour later.

"The whole state system has collapsed, and who paid the price? The people inside here. These people have paid the price," Haidar al-Askari seethed at the scene.

Overnight, firefighters and rescuers — many holding flashlights and using blankets to smother small fires — searched through the ward. As dawn broke, bodies covered with sheets could be seen laid out on the ground outside the hospital. Distraught relatives searched for traces of their loved ones amid charred blankets and belongings.

Ali Khalid, 20, a volunteer who dashed to the scene, said he found the bodies of two young girls locked in embrace.

"How terrified they must have been, they died hugging each other," he said.

The ward, opened three months ago, contained 70 beds in three large halls. Maj. Gen. Khalid Bohan, head of Iraq's civil defense, said the building was constructed from cheap, flammable materials.

Ali Karar, a cleaner at the hospital, said the ward had only four fire extinguishers and no fire alarm system. Firetrucks ran out of water quickly, he said.

Doctors have long complained of lax safety at Iraq's hospitals, especially around oxygen cylinders, and have described the institutions as ticking bombs.

Mac Skelton, a medical sociologist focused on Iraq, said chaos and neglect in Iraq's public hospitals since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003 have given rise to "toxic" distrust between patients and doctors.

Doctors in COVID-19 wards often say they avoid confronting patients' families who are mishandling oxygen tanks, for fear they will react violently, he said. "But families say that they have legitimate fears about leaving the lives of their vulnerable loved ones up to medical staff that they regard as under-resourced, overburdened and disinterested."

Iraq is in the midst of another severe COVID-19 surge. New cases per day peaked last week at 9,000. Iraq's war-crippled health system has struggled to contain the virus. The country has recorded over 17,000 deaths and 1.4 million confirmed cases.

Fear and widespread mistrust of the public health sector have kept many from seeking hospital care.

Ali Abbas Salman, who rushed to evacuate his COVID-19-stricken father from the building after the fire broke out, swore he wouldn't take the older man back to a hospital.

"He wants me to take him home. He said, 'It's better to die of coronavirus than being burned alive,'" Salman said.

The disaster is likely to stoke public discontent toward Iraq's political establishment ahead of October elections, said Marsin Alshammari, an Iraq specialist at the Brookings Institution. Nasiriyah has been at the heart of past revolutions in Iraq.

"Given this entire atmosphere built around the city," she said, "you can imagine that something as tragic as this event, where people who were already vulnerable were killed in a needless accident, will create more public anger."

## Mural in soccer star's hometown becomes anti-racism symbol

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Through the pens and pencils of children, England is fighting back against racism.

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After Marcus Rashford and two other Black players missed penalty kicks in the final moments of the national soccer team's European Championship loss to Italy, bigots defaced a mural of the Manchester United star and hurled racist abuse at the three on social media. Children in Manchester rose to Rashford's defense, filling spaces on the wall with messages of support, encouragement and consolation.

"I hope you won't be sad for to (sic) long because you are such a good person," 9-year-old Dexter Rosier wrote. "I'm proud of you. You will always be a hero."

The mural, which occupies a brick wall not far from where Rashford grew up, has become a symbol of England's fight against the bigotry that has blighted the sport loved by people of all backgrounds. The struggle is playing out across the country as politicians and pundits, athletes and activists, react to the racist comments that surfaced post-defeat and undermined the sense of national unity created by England's uplifting run to its first major soccer championship final since 1966.

The online abuse of the Black players underscores the problems created by one vision of what it means to be English, which is rooted in visions of the past glories of empire and colonialism and often surfaces during international sporting events, said Professor Bridget Byrne, director of the Center on the Dynamics of Ethnicity at Manchester University.

"The work of achieving racial justice in the U.K. is far from over, and that's what this has revealed," she said. "Whilst racism has become less socially acceptable to express openly, it is still very much a strand in British culture."

Prime Minister Boris Johnson was quick to condemn racism and blamed social media companies for not doing enough to stop the spread of hate on their platforms. He said he would use a meeting with company leaders Tuesday to reiterate the urgent need for action.

Critics said that Johnson and his government failed to tackle the issue at the start of the Euro 2020 tournament, when some fans booed the England team for kneeling symbolically at the start of games to highlight the problem of racism.

Home Secretary Priti Patel, whose department oversees police and domestic affairs, has come under particular scrutiny after she opposed what she called "gesture politics" and said fans had the right to boo. In an interview last month, Patel also criticized protests last summer by the U.K.'s Black Lives Matter movement, including one where a statue of a 17th century slave trader was toppled, as efforts to rewrite history.

On Monday, England player Tyrone Mings chastised Patel for playing politics after she called on the police to take action against those who subjected the soccer players to "vile racist abuse."

"You don't get to stoke the fire at the beginning of the tournament by labelling our anti-racism message as 'Gesture Politics' & then pretend to be disgusted when the very thing we're campaigning against, happens," Mings wrote on Twitter.

Marvin Sordell, a former professional soccer player who advises England's Football Association on diversity, said the outpouring of disgust from politicians and pundits was depressingly familiar.

"We always see condemnation," Sordell told the BBC. "It's the same for a few days, then we kind of get back to normal and then another incident happens...We kind of live in this cycle that continuously goes on. At some point, we have to break the cycle. At some point, it isn't enough to just be outraged. We have to do something."

Rashford, who grew up a few miles from Manchester United's historic Old Trafford stadium, joined England's national team at the age of 18 after scoring a barrage of goals for his hometown club. The son of a single mother who sometimes skipped meals to ensure her five children didn't have to, he became a national icon last year when he led a campaign that forced the government to feed children who were missing out on free school meals while the pandemic closed schools.

In response to the abuse he received Sunday night and the outpouring of support from fans, Rashford, now 23, spoke of his teammates and the "brotherhood" created by their successes and failures this summer.

"I can take critique of my performance all day long, my penalty was not good enough, it should have gone in," he wrote in a Twitter message that has been liked almost 1 million times. "But I will never apologise for who I am and where I came from."

That is Manchester's Withington neighborhood, where local artists painted a two-story, black-and-white mural of Rashford after the success of his school meals campaign.



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Abi Lee, assistant head teacher of the nearby St. Paul's Church of England Primary School, said students were upset by the way Rashford and his teammates were treated, so she took them to the mural to show them how people are fighting racism.

"We wanted them to see that nothing can knock you if you keep fighting," Lee said.

Nicola Wellard said her children went to bed crying after England's loss dashed hopes of a European championship this year. But they were more upset when they found out that racists had targeted local hero Rashford.

On Tuesday afternoon her son, 11-year-old Dougie, proudly pasted his own message on the mural.

"He only missed a penalty," Dougie wrote. "He doesn't deserve this."

## Five years on, Rio de Janeiro chases elusive Olympics legacy

By DAVID BILLER and MAURICIO SAVARESE Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — With the Olympics about to kick off in Tokyo, the prior host is struggling to make good on legacy promises.

Brazil's government is providing assurances that Rio de Janeiro's Olympic Park venues won't be abandoned, while City Hall rebuilds a beleaguered bus system and is again pledging to create schools from the dismantled Arena of the Future.

Recreational spaces in areas that previously had none were welcome, as was Rio's revamped port area with new tunnels and museums, even if it didn't lure hoped-for residents or companies. And demolition of an elevated highway allowed for sweeping views of the Guanabara Bay where sailing competitions took place, but its waters weren't cleaned of sewage, as had been promised. There are fresh commitments to finally do so.

The postcard city's bid for the Olympics drew inspiration from Barcelona's urban renewal with the 1992 games. There are reasons Rio's golden dream didn't fully pan out, some justifiable: the nation suffered its worst recession in a century.

Others are indefensible. Prosecutors found corruption in subway works; the Olympics-era governor is in jail for that and other offenses. An incomplete station is a pit containing millions of gallons of water.

Even if Rio resuscitates its legacy, it will be too late to convince the International Olympic Committee to return to a model in which the games drive development.

### TRANSPORT

Of all promises, public transport was billed as potentially most transformative for the city's 6.5 million residents. Rio proposed a "High Performance Transport Ring" that would extend the limited subway and create dedicated bus-rapid transit (BRT) lanes.

Five new stations linked the subway with the BRT system, which soon had hundreds of thousands of daily passengers. But the upside of the new infrastructure was more than offset by elimination and rerouting of dozens of standard bus lines; by 2017, average access to jobs and schools by public transport dipped from three years earlier, according to a University of Oxford team led by Brazilian researcher Rafael Pereira.

Public transport has only deteriorated since, and the BRT's recovery and expansion are "much needed," said Pereira, a data scientist at the government's economic research institute. As of April, less than half the nearly 300 BRT buses were operational and one-third its 134 stations shuttered, according to City Hall.

To hear Mayor Eduardo Paes tell it, the BRT was "destroyed by the incompetence" of his predecessor, who let it come undone. Paes was mayor when Rio bid to host in 2009 and during the games in 2016, his final year in office. He said in an interview with The Associated Press that voters returned him to City Hall this year because of his pledge to revive the BRT. He carried all electoral districts.

"The BRT is one of the big successes, of course as long as it functions adequately," said Paes, whose administration has assumed control of the BRT. "With the abandonment the city suffered in recent years, there's work to be done to rebuild that and make it work again."

Former Mayor Marcelo Crivella's press office said in a response to questions that multiple construction errors caused early decay of buses and lanes.

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Paes insists the Olympics' urban legacy is top-notch, given the low expense relative to other hosts and the fact more was delivered than pledged.

Rio's Olympics cost \$13.5 billion, according to the government's accounting watchdog and using a 2016 exchange rate. A study by Oxford scholars published in September found average sports-related hosting costs are \$12 billion, with non-sports costs typically several times more. Japan expects the Tokyo games to cost at least \$15 billion without building nearly as much as Rio.

But some academics argue authorities didn't consider the best means to better the lives of Rio's long-suffering residents. There are no reliable opinion polls on satisfaction with having hosted.

"If you have to go only by what they were promising, they've already captured the entire conversation," said Christopher Gaffney, a New York University professor who researches urban studies and mega-events and lived in Rio during the Olympics build-out. "But there was no conversation about the planning process. The Olympics becomes the plan and so you can only measure it against itself."

Office secretary Nadima Santos, 54, lives outside Rio, but uses the BRT twice a week. Like many others, she doesn't see why it was only built because of the Olympics.

"Maybe it would be a train or a subway line if they hadn't spent so much on the sports side," she said as she ran at the often crowded Terminal Alvorada. "Very few used this BRT for a while, it seems now people are rediscovering. But no doubt I would have chosen a subway line here instead of spending on Olympic venues."

## SPORTS

Mayara da Cruz is from Taquara, a neighborhood from which ordinary buses used to depart in all directions. She complains their substitution for jam-packed BRTs means she has to make connections that increase transit time to everywhere in the city -- except Barra da Tijuca, home of the Olympic Park.

Da Cruz has been coming to the Olympic Park twice a week for her daughter's gymnastics classes since the city-run arena reopened this year. On June 29, she watched her child tumbling while dozens of others played volleyball and learned jiu-jitsu. Enrollment in the arena's activities has surpassed 800 kids and teens.

"She's loving it," said da Cruz, 32. "Tuesdays and Thursdays are the days she's most excited, because she has these classes."

Paes said City Hall will launch a tender before Tokyo for the long-overdue dismantling of two temporary arenas, including the handball stadium that will be transformed into four public schools, which he said his predecessor neglected to do.

Crivella's press office said Paes hadn't earmarked any money for the works nor was any available during the multi-year recession.

The four park venues administered by Brazil's Citizenship Ministry host occasional competitions, like the Pan American Gymnastics Championship last month. The next major event is the Brazilian School Games, in October, with 6,200 athletes. Few cyclists use the velodrome's Siberian pinewood floor to train and Brazil didn't field a single competitor for Tokyo, despite promises the facility would be an incubator.

The Citizenship Ministry's press office said in an emailed response to questions that it has established partnerships with several Brazilian sports bodies to host events, and that it is crafting a plan to better use the venues. It will be published "as soon as it is finished."

"Rio's Olympic Park pains my heart. Sometimes a thing or two happens there, but it's very bad, there wasn't a realistic plan for it," Andrew Parsons, president of the International Paralympic Committee, told the AP. "I think cities need to go through profound transformations, but the moment in which sporting venues led those changes is now over."

In June 2019, the IOC approved proposals to change the bidding process, including creation of commissions with the power to control host selection. Several cities from developing countries contemplating bids for the 2032 Olympics didn't present bids, and Australia's Brisbane jumped ahead with the blessing of many IOC members.

At Rio's Radical Park, 40 minutes north by car (or triple that via public transport), there are signs of life, notwithstanding the decrepit Olympic BMX course. Hundreds of joggers, dog walkers, skateboarders and

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picnicking families come each day. The mountain bike course was recently excavated from head-high grass. "We didn't have anything on this side of the city to exercise," said Adriella Rosa, 47, who does Pilates and weight training classes at its free gym. "It's good for us who can't pay."

The park's centerpiece, a reservoir feeding a rapids course, is used by the Brazilian canoeing confederation to train. And the confederation provides equipment for city-run classes that started this year, with some 50 kids and teens.

Parsons, of the Paralympics, said many Brazilian confederations slipped financially after the games. Some "nearly collapsed" as sponsorship dried up in the recession.

State development bank BNDES withdrew support for canoeing and state-run oil company Petrobras did the same for boxing, fencing, weightlifting, taekwondo and judo. Both companies' headquarters are in Rio. State bank Caixa Economica Federal recently restored funding for track & field, gymnastics and the Paralympics after contracts lapsed last year, and started sponsoring skateboarding. But three of those four contracts are just one-year deals.

"The Brazilian Olympic Committee failed at projecting beyond 2016," said Parsons, adding the same isn't true for Paralympics, which benefited from greater awareness.

## ENVIRONMENT

Rio's top environmental pledge was to treat 80% of sewage flowing into the Guanabara Bay.

The plan was to construct relatively cheap treatment units on rivers feeding the bay, according to Márcio Santa Rosa, who coordinated the Olympic bid's environmental management and sustainability plan. It would've worked, Santa Rosa said, but only one facility materialized -- and remains inoperative to this day.

Rio state in 2012 also signed a deal with the Inter-American Development Bank for \$452 million to build on unfinished sewage infrastructure. A quasi-public agency, PSAM, oversaw planning, the start of some major works and connection of 131,000 homes to the network, according to progress reports on the IDB's website.

But Rio state's government raided funds earmarked for sewage works when the recession drained its coffers of money for expenses, said Santa Rosa, who by then was working at PSAM as a planning coordinator. Less than a year after the Olympics, the IDB halted funding, having disbursed less than 1/4 the planned total.

"For sanitation, almost nothing happened. That was, in fact, a very large frustration," he said. "It's not that PSAM wasn't a good project, but we couldn't do it because the money was taken."

The IDB confirmed in an email that financing was canceled, without responding to detailed questions about when or why.

Some works by the state's utility have resumed, partly forced by public prosecutors. Treatment of sewage generated in Rio's metropolitan region hovered around 35% between 2012 and 2018, according to official data compiled by Trata Brasil Institute, an organization that researches the sector. That surged to 47% in 2019, though the institute isn't aware of works that could explain the jump.

After years of broken promises, Rio state in April split water distribution and sewage treatment operations off from its utility and auctioned 35-year concessions.

Companies must invest \$5.4 billion, including \$520 million within five years for depolluting the bay. And they can lose their concessions for failing to meet the contractually stipulated goal of boosting sewage collection and treatment to 90% by 2033. That means "great improvement" in service is finally ahead, according to Edison Carlos, Trata Brasil's executive president.

## OLYMPICS VESTIGE

Mayor Paes says he has no regrets about hosting the games. Given the enormous pressure and workload, however, he wouldn't welcome an encore.

"My advice to mayors is just do the Olympics once, never twice," he said. "I'll never do it again."

At the Olympic Park's broad, striped outdoor walkway -- where in 2016 tens of thousands of fans cheered -- today there's silence, and no shade from the scathing sun. There are no bathrooms, drinking fountains nor food providers outside, either, making it inhospitable to visitors, according to Audrei Pereira, 42, who lives within walking distance. It's an example of promises to locals falling by the wayside.

"There's still a vestige of Olympics here," Pereira said after watching her sons' volleyball and gymnastics sessions inside the arena. "But had it continued, had it been open since the Olympics ended and not opened so long afterward, there could've been a much more expressive legacy."

## US consumer prices surge in June by the most since 2008

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Prices for U.S. consumers jumped in June by the most in 13 years, evidence that a swift rebound in spending has run up against widespread supply shortages that have escalated the costs of many goods and services.

Tuesday's report from the Labor Department showed that consumer prices in June rose 0.9% from May and 5.4% over the past year — the sharpest 12-month inflation spike since August 2008. Excluding volatile oil and gas prices, so-called core inflation rose 4.5% in the past year, the largest increase since November 1991.

The pickup in inflation, which has coincided with the economy's rapid recovery from the pandemic recession, will likely intensify a debate at the Federal Reserve and between the Biden administration and congressional Republicans about how persistent the accelerating price increases will prove to be.

The Fed and the White House have made clear their belief that the current bout of inflation will prove temporary. As supply chain bottlenecks are resolved and the economy returns to normal, they suggest, the price spikes for such items as used cars, hotel rooms and clothing will fade. Some economists, along with Wall Street investors, have indicated that they agree.

"The headline inflation numbers have been eye-popping in recent months, but underlying inflation remains under control," said Gus Faucher, an economist at PNC Financial Services. "Once again a few categories — used vehicles, airfares, rental cars, hotels — are experiencing huge price gains because of the recovery from the pandemic."

Still, continued higher inflation does raise the prospect that the Fed could decide to act earlier than expected to pull back on its ultra-low interest rate policies, which have been intended to support more borrowing and spending. If so, that would risk weakening the economy and potentially derailing the recovery.

For now, price increases are running ahead of the wage gains that have kicked in this year, which means the financial burdens on millions of households have grown more difficult. Average hourly earnings increased 3.6% in June compared with a year earlier, normally a solid gain, but far less than current inflation.

Lower-income workers are also hardest hit by rising food prices, which rose 0.8% in June, and gas costs, which rose 2.5% last month and 45% from a year ago.

One reason why year-over-year inflation readings are now so high is that the most recent prices are being measured against the sharp price declines that followed the eruption of the pandemic in March of last year. That statistical distortion began to fade in June and will no longer be a factor when July's year-over-year inflation figures are released next month.

Looking past those distortions, prices are rising faster than they did before the pandemic but not as much as the recent monthly numbers suggest. Greg McBride, chief financial analyst at Bankrate, noted that compared with June 2019, inflation has risen at about a 3% annual pace over the past two years. That is up from a 2.6% annual inflation pace from May 2019 to May 2021.

In addition, some ongoing price spikes could fade soon. Hotel room prices surged 7% in June alone and 15.1% in the past year, the most on records dating to the 1950s. But that surge has merely returned hotel prices to pre-pandemic levels and so may not persist.

Airline fares, which jumped 2.7% last month, have skyrocketed nearly 25% compared with a year ago. Yet airline ticket prices are still below pre-COVID levels.

Prices for used cars are far above where they were before the pandemic and soared 10.5% last month alone — the largest such monthly increase on record. That spike accounted for about one-third of the monthly increase in consumer prices for a third straight month.

Used cars have become vastly more expensive largely because semiconductor shortages have cut pro-

duction of new cars, thereby leading more buyers to the used car lots. And many rental car companies sold portions of their fleets during the pandemic to raise cash and are now desperately buying up used cars to replenish their supply.

The shortage of rental cars combined with greater demand has elevated vehicle rental prices by an astounding 90% in the past year.

The surge in used car prices, though, isn't likely to last. Prices are starting to drop at wholesale auctions where dealers buy vehicles, and used vehicle demand may be slowing.

David Kelleher, who runs a Stellantis (formerly Fiat Chrysler) dealership in Glen Mills, Pennsylvania near Philadelphia, has observed that fewer of his customers are seeking used vehicles.

"I think the word got out that it was a tough time to buy a used car," Kelleher said.

Kelleher, who has now cut prices on the roughly 150 used vehicles he has in stock, says other dealers are reporting the same conditions, and he expects customers to return once the price declines take full effect. Still, supplies of new vehicles remain tight and prices high, a trend that could sustain customer demand for used vehicles.

More broadly, other trends are keeping consumer prices high: Restaurant prices rose 0.7% last month and 4.2% over the past year, a sign that many companies are raising prices to offset higher labor costs.

The cost of household furniture increased 0.7% from May to June and 8.6% compared with a year ago, as more Americans have upgraded their homes after spending more time there during the pandemic. Mohawk Industries, which makes carpets and tiles, has said it will raise prices 6% to 10% — its third price hike of the year — to cover higher costs for raw material, labor and shipping.

The spice maker McCormick & Co. said it plans to raise prices to offset higher raw materials costs. Likewise, Conagra has said inflationary pressures have reduced its profits. The company, which makes everything from Duncan Hines to Pam cooking spray, has said it will raise prices to offset some of those costs. PepsiCo, too, said it will likely raise prices for its drinks and Frito-Lay snacks after Labor Day.

So far, investors have largely accepted the Fed's belief that higher inflation will be short-lived, with bond yields signaling that inflation concerns on Wall Street are fading. Bond investors now expect inflation to average 2.4% over the next five years, down from 2.7% in mid-May.

## AP Interview: EPA water chief on clean water protections

By SUMAN NAISHADHAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — To finally determine a lasting definition of waterways that qualify for federal protection under the Clean Water Act, the Environmental Protection Agency's new water director says everyone with a stake in the issue will need to be engaged.

Radhika Fox recently spoke to The Associated Press about the Biden administration's plan to rewrite the regulation, also called Waters of the United States. The contentious rule was scaled back by the Trump administration after being expanded under President Barack Obama.

Fox joins the EPA as water issues have become a priority under President Joe Biden. She was previously CEO of the conservation advocacy group U.S. Water Alliance and policy director at the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission.

Fox also spoke about the infrastructure plan's goal of eliminating the country's remaining lead pipes and service lines, which pose a risk for contaminated water in homes and schools. And she spoke about the importance of diversifying water sources in dry regions, such as by recycling wastewater and capturing stormwater.

The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Q: Regarding the Clean Water Act, how does the administration seek to balance the interests of farmers, ranchers, developers and environmentalists?

A: If we look back 50 years ago, what really prompted us to create the Clean Water Act is that literally rivers were on fire because pollution was so bad. To your question about how we intend to get to a durable definition, it's really to do it in partnership. The one thing about Waters of the U.S. is nearly every water

stakeholder has a stake in that definition. If we don't reflect on that, and really understand the on-the-ground implementation challenges, I don't think we can get to a durable definition.

Q: Who is the administration talking to before changes to the rule are made?

A: We are going to have public meetings that will be happening later this summer, where any interested stakeholder can share their views. We're going to be doing regional roundtables in different parts of the country so we can understand the regional variation. When we do those, we're going to try to bring all sides together in one discussion.

Q: How do you see the twin challenges of promoting growth in arid places while drought conditions and water scarcity worsen?

A: It's using every tool in our toolbox when it comes to meeting the water needs for all communities, particularly in the West. There's incredible innovation that has been happening around diversifying local water supplies and reuse. We need to really double down on a lot of those types of projects.

Q: Is it wise to encourage millions of people to live in places facing aridification and annual wildfires?

A: The reality is we have millions of people living in the West. It is a critical economic center for America. So we really need to invest in those things that are going to promote diversification of water supplies. When I worked at the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, we were in a drought at the time. A lot of the success that we had is that, as a local water utility, we tried to steward every drop as carefully as we could.

Q: Who isn't currently served by clean water in the U.S.?

A: If you look at the water access gap in this country, it impacts both urban and rural America. In rural communities, we have places like McDowell County, West Virginia, where communities never got centralized drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. In many urban communities, it's low-income people and communities of color, particularly African Americans and Latino communities that face many of the contamination issues and aging water infrastructure issues. There's millions of people who don't have access to clean, safe, reliable, and increasingly, affordable water service.

Q: How does the infrastructure plan intend to map out where lead pipes and service lines are?

A: There's a real unevenness around the country in knowing where these lead service lines are. There's also a lot of new technologies that are emerging that can help the water utility map these things more quickly and more efficiently. In places that have that, they'd be able to move forward with those removal projects. For communities that don't, we really would like to see some of the resources going to doing that inventory. We are also developing guidance and technical assistance to help states and localities on that inventory. There's a number of water associations that are also working with their member utilities.

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## Searchers recover personal possessions from collapse rubble

By TERRY SPENCER and KELLI KENNEDY Associated Press

SURFSIDE, Fla. (AP) — When the body of 4-year-old Emma Guara was pulled from the rubble of last month's Florida condominium collapse, she was wearing the silver necklace her mother recently gave her, the pendant shaped like half a heart and inscribed "Little Sis."

When firefighters found her 11-year-old sister, Lucia Guara, she was not wearing her near-matching necklace, the pendant shaped like the other half of the heart and inscribed "Big Sis." Lucia had developed an allergic reaction and had temporarily stopped wearing hers, said their aunt, Digna Rodriguez.

"We would like to get that necklace back," Rodriguez said. "They loved those necklaces."

The girls' parents, Anaely Rodriguez and Marcus Guara, also died in the June 24 collapse of the Champlain Towers South that killed at least 95 people and left 14 unaccounted for. They were among the first recovered from the rubble. The girls were buried in the same coffin last week, Emma wearing her necklace.

As they search through tons of broken concrete and twisted rebar for more remains, authorities are also trying to recover keepsakes for families that have lost relatives and for surviving residents of the building. They have set up a database for people to upload information about missing property.

Each time crews find personal possessions, they take photos and log the location using GPS. They have made a grid of the pile, knowing approximately where each family's condo unit should be. Detectives place the objects into a bin. They are taken to an area to be cataloged and sealed in bags. Then they are placed in a locked and guarded cargo container for later shipment to a warehouse.

For the possessions of the deceased, there will be an "estate process" to claim items to make sure they get to the proper heir, Miami-Dade Police Director Freddy Ramirez said.

Miami-Dade police Sgt. Danny Murillo, a leader of the operation, said the process had to be designed through "trial and error" because the collapse of a residential tower "is not your everyday event." He said it can be emotional when an item like a child's toy is found.

"We are all human," he said.

Rachel Spiegel, who lost her 66-year-old mother, Judy Spiegel, in the collapse, hopes the crews will find her family's mementos. Her mother's remains were recovered Friday.

"All my parents' stuff over a lifetime is gone," Rachel Spiegel said. "Their wedding album is gone. My dad's wine collection is gone, all my mom's jewelry, all my mom's clothes, the dress she wore at my wedding that I wanted to wear one day. All of their belongings are gone. We have nothing."

Surfside Mayor Charles Burkett, who has visited the site repeatedly since the collapse, said crews are finding items as small as rings and jewelry in the rubble.

"The work is so delicate that we're even finding unbroken wine bottles," Burkett said. He said because of the information families have provided, search teams often know what to look for in specific parts of the pile. He held up a photo of a ring that was found in the wreckage where searchers believed it would be.

"They're expecting to find these things. And in this case, they did," Burkett said.

Ramirez said special consideration is being taken for religious property. Rabbis have toured the processing area to ensure that religious artifacts are properly stored and handled with care. He said some of the items have enormous significance.

"It could be the smallest little thing that to a common person it just looks like a little container. It really means generations. It's very spiritual, and I'm just so impressed. Our officers are learning so much about culture," he said. "There are just so many dynamics with the sadness and the sorrow."

## **EXPLAINER: Why are Texas Democrats camped out in Washington?**

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

Texas statehouse Democrats are camping out in Washington to try and block the GOP's sweeping elections overhaul bill that makes it harder to vote in the state. A similar move successfully killed an earlier version of the bill on the last day of the legislative session in late May, and lawmakers are hoping for a repeat during the 30-day special session called by the state's Republican governor, Greg Abbott.

Here's an explanation of what the Democrats are trying to do, and how likely it is to work.

### **WHAT'S THE GOAL?**

Democrats have two main objectives. First, they hope to deprive the Legislature of a quorum — the minimum number of representatives who have to be present for the body to operate. Without a quorum, the Legislature can't vote on the voting proposal — or other GOP-backed bills on abortion, transgender athletes and teaching about racism in U.S. history — and nothing will pass.

The second goal has probably already been achieved — drawing attention to the Republican push to tighten Texas voting laws. Many Democrats in Congress have hoped their own sweeping elections bill making it easier to register and vote nationwide could counter pushes in the opposite direction in Texas and several GOP-controlled states. Texas state Democratic lawmakers have been pleading for that bill's passage in Washington for weeks. But congressional Democrats so far have been reluctant to change Senate filibuster rules to overcome GOP opposition in that chamber and allow it to pass with a simple majority.

### **HAS THIS HAPPENED BEFORE?**

A minority party walking out of state legislatures to block a bill's passage is rare, but has plenty of

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precedent.

One of the more dramatic instances occurred in Texas in 2003, when 50 Democratic state lawmakers bolted to Oklahoma to block a Republican redistricting proposal that would cost Democrats five seats in the House of Representatives. That move inspired Wisconsin Democrats eight years later to go to Illinois to stop a Republican bill targeting government workers' unions. Indiana Democrats followed the same playbook that year to try to stop a right-to-work bill there. Republicans have tried it, too. In 2019, 11 GOP legislators in Oregon left for Idaho, blocking a Democratic bill fighting climate change.

DOES THIS EVER WORK?

Not often. In 2003, Texas' then-Republican governor, Rick Perry, called a special session. Democrats fled again, this time to New Mexico, but eventually came back and the redistricting plan passed. Wisconsin Democrats were also unable to stop the GOP bill stripping public sector unions of collective bargaining rights — the Republicans amended the measure so it didn't need a quorum to pass — and the fugitive lawmakers returned after three weeks in Illinois. In Indiana, Republicans eventually withdrew the right-to-work bills. But they passed them the following year, with no walkout.

Oregon is one exception: Democrats eventually withdrew their climate bill, but it was not guaranteed passage even before the GOP flight to Idaho.

In Texas, you could say Democrats won the first round with their walkout last month. When Republicans who control the legislature tried to rush a revised elections bill through at the final hour, Democrats walked out and the session ended and the bill died. But Abbott called them back last week for a special session and this one lasts a month. It will be much harder to run out the clock.

That's in part because lawmakers are people, too — with families to feed and mortgages to pay. Extended stays in other states tend to drain household budgets, not to mention political goodwill with voters. In some cases, they can be threatened with losing their state legislative pay or even potentially be sued, as Oregon's Democratic governor threatened to do to the absent GOP lawmakers. Abbott has already docked lawmakers' pay.

Abbott has other cards to play. He said Monday he would continue to call special sessions, until Democrats relent. He also threatened to arrest the lawmakers once they return.

WHY GO TO WASHINGTON?

Generally, state lawmakers head to neighboring states to avoid the police at home. Home-state police can be empowered to round up the AWOL lawmakers and force them to fulfill their legal duty to be present for the legislative session. In Texas, for example, House rules say that any members absent during a quorum call can "be sent for and arrested" by a simple majority vote of those present. The House sergeant-at-arms is empowered to carry this out.

In May, the Texas Democrats didn't have to travel out of state because they only needed to gum up the statehouse floor for a couple of hours to kill the bill before the midnight deadline. They will need to stay off the floor for far longer this time.

The decision to fly to Washington highlights Democrats' secondary goal of winning attention for their cause. The move will put them in front of the national media and Democratic powerbrokers so they can intensify their push for federal action on voting.

HOW IS THIS LEGAL?

It really isn't — state lawmakers are generally required to attend their legislative sessions. But walkouts have been used almost like the filibuster in the U.S. Senate — as a way for a minority to grind things to a halt.

Ironically, the Texas Democrats will be agitating for Democrats in Washington to end the filibuster, at least for election bills.

## Year since Washington change, Native sports imagery evolving

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Sports Writer

Washington will not have any kind of Native American imagery as part of its next name, and the subject is still evolving across sports in the year since the storied NFL franchise dropped arguably the most polar-



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izing moniker left in the pros.

Tuesday marks the one-year anniversary since Washington dropped the name Redskins and the accompanying Indian head logo after 87 years amid pressure from sponsors and decades of criticism that both are offensive to Native Americans. The Washington Football Team will be around for one more season, with a new name set to be revealed in early 2022.

With Major League Baseball's Cleveland Indians set to adopt a new name at some point and the Atlanta Braves, the NFL's Kansas City Chiefs, the NHL's Chicago Blackhawks and the NCAA's Florida State Seminoles holding onto theirs for now, Washington's process is the furthest along and bears watching as the possibilities get narrowed down.

"The Washington Football Team's announcement that they will not be using Native American imagery is a major step towards reconciliation, justice and equality, but there's still more work to be done," said Crystal Echo Hawk, founder and executive director of Native American-led nonprofit IllumiNative. "This is a step in the right direction, we ask that the NFL, MLB and NHL urge the Kansas City Chiefs, Atlanta Braves and Chicago Blackhawks to follow Washington Football Team president Jason Wright's lead in order to stand on the right side of history."

Wright, who was named Washington's team president in August, ruled out Warriors in a lengthy post on the team's website Monday, saying feedback from Native American communities showed "deep-seated discomfort" about that name.

"Failing to acknowledge our past use of Native imagery in the consideration of the new name wouldn't be mindful of the individuals and communities that were hurt by the previous name," Wright said. "We will choose an identity that unequivocally departs from any use of or approximate linkage to Native American imagery."

Wright said Washington is "down to a short list" of names. After several months of chatter about "R" options such as Redwolves, Redtails/Red Tails or Redhawks, it's possible "Red" is taken out of the equation entirely.

That would distance Washington from the old name more than changes at the college level in the 1990s: St. John's going from Redmen to Red Storm and Miami of Ohio dropping Redskins to become the RedHawks.

Wright said team officials are "confident that our new brand identity will honor our legacy and lead us into our future as a franchise."

As the latest reckoning over racial injustice, iconography and racism continues in the U.S., Washington is far from the only franchise considering a change, while others defend the status quo.

## FOOTBALL

Protests have followed the Chiefs on two Super Bowl trips, and last fall they barred headdresses and war paint for fans at Arrowhead Stadium. They're still facing calls to abandon a tradition of fans breaking into a "war chant" while making a chopping hand motion designed to mimic the Native American tomahawk — which is not unique to Kansas City.

A coalition of Native American groups put up billboards in the Kansas City area to protest the tomahawk chop and Chiefs' name.

North of the border, Edmonton of the Canadian Football League reversed course last summer by dropping the name Eskimos in the aftermath of Washington's decision, temporarily becoming the EE Football Team. On June 1, Elks was announced as Edmonton's new name.

## BASEBALL

Cleveland and Atlanta appear to be at opposite ends of the spectrum.

Cleveland announced in December it was dropping Indians and, like Washington, is vetting a final list of possibilities. While Cleveland has not given a firm timetable on a new name, owner Paul Dolan told The Associated Press in December it will not have any association with anything Native American.

The Braves have resisted calls for a name change. The team has not waived from a firm statement in a letter to season-ticket holders in 2020 that said: "We will always be the Atlanta Braves."

Even the "tomahawk chop" has returned along with fans this season after a Cardinals pitcher said during the 2019 playoffs that it was disrespectful, and the team stopped encouraging the chant. The death

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of Hall of Famer Hank Aaron in January led some fans to propose a switch to Atlanta Hammers to honor "Hammerin' Hank."

## HOCKEY

The Chicago Blackhawks have shown no signs of considering a name change any time soon, with the club contending it honors Black Hawk, a Native American leader from Illinois' Sac & Fox Nation. CEO Danny Wirtz said in December that the Blackhawks "continue to deepen our commitment to upholding our namesake and our brand."

Like the Chiefs, the Blackhawks banned headdresses at home games as part of their pledge to honor the Native American community, with which the team has tried to strengthen ties over the past year.

## COLLEGE

After Miami of Ohio, St. John's, Syracuse, North Dakota and others made changes, a handful of U.S. colleges and universities maintained Native American nicknames for sports teams and received waivers from the NCAA because of support from local tribes. Those includes the Florida State Seminoles, Utah Utes and Central Michigan Chippewas.

Illinois retired the Chief Illiniwek mascot in 2007 but has kept the Fighting Illini name.

## K-12 SCHOOLS

The National Congress of American Indians reports 29 schools in the U.S. have moved away from a Native American name or imagery so far in 2021. It's not clear how many more changes happened in the immediate aftermath of Washington's decision from July 13-Dec. 31, 2020.

The NCAI's National School Mascot Tracking Database lists 1,890 schools with Native American mascots. "True respect for Native people and other people of color requires our country to rid itself of the symbols of racism and intolerance that have far too long been embedded in popular culture and which have marginalized and dehumanized us," NCAI president Fawn Sharp said. "NCAI will not rest until all offensive Native-themed mascots and associated imagery are removed from popular culture."

## Immunized but banned: EU says not all COVID vaccines equal

By MARIA CHENG AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — After Dr. Ifeanyi Nsofor and his wife received two doses of AstraZeneca's coronavirus vaccine in Nigeria, they assumed they would be free to travel this summer to a European destination of their choice. They were wrong.

The couple — and millions of other people vaccinated through a U.N.-backed effort — could find themselves barred from entering many European and other countries because those nations don't recognize the Indian-made version of the vaccine for travel.

Although AstraZeneca vaccine produced in Europe has been authorized by the continent's drug regulatory agency, the same shot manufactured in India hasn't been given the green light.

EU regulators said AstraZeneca hasn't completed the necessary paperwork on the Indian factory, including details on its production practices and quality control standards.

But some experts describe the EU move as discriminatory and unscientific, pointing out that the World Health Organization has inspected and approved the factory. Health officials say the situation will not only complicate travel and frustrate fragile economies but also undermine vaccine confidence by appearing to label some shots substandard.

As vaccination coverage rises across Europe and other rich countries, authorities anxious to salvage the summer tourism season are increasingly relaxing coronavirus border restrictions.

Earlier this month, the European Union introduced its digital COVID-19 certificate, which allows EU residents to move freely in the 27-nation bloc as long as they have been vaccinated with one of the four shots authorized by the European Medicines Agency, have a fresh negative test, or have proof they recently recovered from the virus.

While the U.S. and Britain remain largely closed to outside visitors, the EU certificate is seen as a potential model for travel in the COVID-19 era and a way to boost economies.

The officially EU-endorsed vaccines also include those made by Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & John-

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son. They don't include the AstraZeneca shot made in India or many other vaccines used in developing countries, including those manufactured in China and Russia.

Individual EU countries are free to apply their own rules for travelers from inside and outside the bloc, and their rules vary widely, creating further confusion for tourists. Several EU countries, including Belgium, Germany and Switzerland, allow people to enter if they have had non-EU-endorsed vaccines; several others, including France and Italy, don't.

For Nsofor, the realization he could be barred was "a rude awakening." After a tough year of working during the pandemic in Abuja, Nsofor and his wife were looking forward to a European vacation with their two young daughters, perhaps admiring the Eiffel Tower in Paris or touring Salzburg in Austria.

Nsofor noted that the Indian-made vaccine he received had been authorized by WHO for emergency use and had been supplied through COVAX, the U.N.-backed program to provide shots to poor corners of the world. WHO's approval included a visit to the Serum Institute of India factory to ensure that it had good manufacturing practices and that quality control standards were met.

"We're grateful to the EU that they funded COVAX, but now they are essentially discriminating against a vaccine that they actively funded and promoted," Nsofor said. "This will just give room to all kinds of conspiracy theories that the vaccines we're getting in Africa are not as good as the ones they have for themselves in the West."

Ivo Vlaev, a professor at Britain's University of Warwick who advises the government on behavioral science during COVID-19, agreed that Western countries' refusal to recognize vaccines used in poor countries could fuel mistrust.

"People who were already suspicious of vaccines will become even more suspicious," Vlaev said. "They could also lose trust in public health messages from governments and be less willing to comply with COVID rules."

Dr. Mesfin Teklu Tessema, director of health for the International Rescue Committee, said countries that have declined to recognize vaccines cleared by WHO are acting against the scientific evidence.

"Vaccines that have met WHO's threshold should be accepted. Otherwise it looks like there's an element of racism here," he said.

WHO urged countries to recognize all of the vaccines it has authorized, including two Chinese-made ones. Countries that decline to do so are "undermining confidence in lifesaving vaccines that have already been shown to be safe and effective, affecting uptake of vaccines and potentially putting billions of people at risk," the U.N. health agency said in a statement this month.

In June, the Serum Institute of India's CEO, Adar Poonawalla, tweeted that he was concerned about vaccinated Indians facing problems traveling to the EU and said he was raising the problem at the highest levels with regulators and countries.

Stefan De Keersmaeker, a spokesman for the EU's executive arm, said last week that regulators were obligated to check the production process at the Indian factory.

"We are not trying to create any doubts about this vaccine," he said.

AstraZeneca said it only recently submitted the paperwork on the Indian factory to the EU drug regulatory agency. It didn't say why it didn't do so earlier, before the agency made its original decision in January.

The refusal of some national authorities to recognize vaccines manufactured outside the EU is also frustrating some Europeans immunized elsewhere, including the U.S.

Gerard Araud, a former French ambassador to Israel, the U.S. and the U.N., tweeted this week that France's COVID-19 pass is a "disaster" for people vaccinated outside the country.

Public health experts warned that countries that decline to recognize vaccines backed by WHO are complicating global efforts to safely restart travel.

"You can't just cut off countries from the rest of the world indefinitely," said Dr. Raghiv Ali of the University of Cambridge. "To exclude some people from certain countries because of the vaccine they've received is wholly inconsistent because we know that these approved vaccines are extremely protective."

Nsofor said he and his wife are still deciding where to take their summer vacation and are leaning toward Singapore or East Africa.

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"I didn't realize there were so many layers to vaccine inequity," he said.

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, July 14, the 195th day of 2021. There are 170 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 14, 1798, Congress passed the Sedition Act, making it a federal crime to publish false, scandalous or malicious writing about the United States government.

On this date:

In 1789, in an event symbolizing the start of the French Revolution, citizens of Paris stormed the Bastille prison and released the seven prisoners inside.

In 1865, the Matterhorn, straddling Italy and Switzerland, was summited as a seven-member rope party led by British climber Edward Whymper reached the peak. (Four members of the party fell to their deaths during their descent; Whymper and two guides survived.)

In 1881, outlaw William H. Bonney Jr., alias "Billy the Kid," was shot and killed by Sheriff Pat Garrett in Fort Sumner in present-day New Mexico.

In 1914, scientist Robert H. Goddard received a U.S. patent for a liquid-fueled rocket apparatus.

In 1933, all German political parties, except the Nazi Party, were outlawed.

In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a measure providing funds for a national monument honoring scientist George Washington Carver; the monument was built at Carver's birthplace near Diamond, Missouri.

In 1945, Italy formally declared war on Japan, its former Axis partner during World War II.

In 1980, the Republican national convention opened in Detroit, where nominee-apparent Ronald Reagan told a welcoming rally he and his supporters were determined to "make America great again."

In 2004, the Senate scuttled a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. (Forty-eight senators voted to advance the measure — 12 short of the 60 needed — and 50 voted to block it).

In 2009, disgraced financier Bernard Madoff arrived at the Butner Federal Correctional Complex in North Carolina to begin serving a 150-year sentence for his massive Ponzi scheme. (Madoff died in prison in April 2021.)

In 2014, the Church of England voted overwhelmingly in favor of allowing women to become bishops.

In 2015, world powers and Iran struck a deal to curb Iran's nuclear program in exchange for relief from international sanctions.

Ten years ago: A federal judge in Washington, D.C. declared a mistrial in baseball star Roger Clemens' perjury trial over inadmissible evidence shown to jurors. (Clemens, who was accused of lying under oath to Congress when he denied ever using performance-enhancing drugs during his career, was acquitted in a retrial.)

Five years ago: Terror struck Bastille Day celebrations in the French Riviera city of Nice (nees) as a large truck plowed into a festive crowd, killing 86 people in an attack claimed by Islamic State extremists; the driver was shot dead by police.

One year ago: Researchers reported that the first COVID-19 vaccine tested in the U.S. revved up people's immune systems as scientists had hoped; the vaccine was developed by the National Institutes of Health and Moderna Inc. A Confederate monument that had long been a divisive symbol at the University of Mississippi was removed from a prominent spot on the Oxford campus and taken to a Civil War cemetery in a secluded area. In a primary, former U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions lost the Republican nomination for his old Senate seat in Alabama to former college football coach Tommy Tuberville. (Tuberville would go on to defeat Democrat Doug Jones in November.) The federal government carried out its first execution in almost two decades, killing by lethal injection Daniel Lewis Lee, who'd been convicted of murdering an Arkansas family in a 1990s plot to build a whites-only nation in the Pacific Northwest.

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Today's Birthdays: Actor Nancy Olson is 93. Former football player and actor Rosey Grier is 89. Actor Vincent Pastore is 75. Music company executive Tommy Mottola (muh-TOH'-luh) is 73. Rock musician Chris Cross (Ultravox) is 69. Actor Jerry Houser is 69. Actor-director Eric Laneuville is 69. Actor Stan Shaw is 69. Movie producer Scott Rudin is 63. Singer-guitarist Kyle Gass is 61. Actor Jane Lynch is 61. Actor Jackie Earle Haley is 60. Actor Matthew Fox is 55. Rock musician Ellen Reid (Crash Test Dummies) is 55. Rock singer-musician Tanya Donnelly is 55. Former child actor Missy Gold is 51. Olympic gold medal snowboarder Ross Rebagliati is 50. R&B singer Tameka Cottle (Xscape) is 46. Country singer Jamey Johnson is 46. Hip-hop musician "taboo" (Black Eyed Peas) is 46. Actor Scott Porter is 42. Actor Phoebe Waller-Bridge is 36. Rock singer Dan Smith (Bastille) is 35. Actor Sara Canning (TV: "The Vampire Diaries") is 34. Rock singer Dan Reynolds (Imagine Dragons) is 34.