

# Groton Daily Independent

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



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**The above photo is a better image of the moon this morning. The area received .66 of rain this morning and that allowed fog to form in the low lying areas in the photo below.** (Photos by Paul Kosel)



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DATE	AWAY TEAM	HOME TEAM	LOCATION	Result/Time
Wed, Jul 21	Redfield Post 92	Mobridge Post 4		<b>MOBR 13, RDFL 11</b> Final
Thu, Jul 22	Claremont Post 262	Groton Post 39	TBD	<b>GRTN 14, CLRM 8</b> Final
Thu, Jul 22	Redfield Post 92	WIN	TBD	<b>RDFL 10, WIN 1</b> Final
Thu, Jul 22	Mobridge Post 4	Wessington Springs Post 14	TBD	<b>MOBR 10, WESS 6</b> Final
Thu, Jul 22	Groton Post 39	Redfield Post 92		<b>RDFL 6, GRTN 5</b> Final
Fri, Jul 23	Redfield Post 92	Wessington Springs Post 14		<b>RDFL 9, WESS 5</b> Final
Fri, Jul 23	Redfield Post 92	Mobridge Post 4	TBD	<b>RDFL 13, MOBR 7</b> Final
Sat, Jul 24	Mobridge Post 4	Redfield Post 92		1:00PM CDT

The Region 6 American Legion Baseball Tournament has been going on at Locke-Karst Field in Groton. Mobridge and Redfield will be battling for first place honors today at 1 p.m. In the first game of the tournament, Mobridge defeated Redfield, 13-11; however last night, Redfield handed Mobridge a 13-7 loss. Each team has one loss so today's game will be the finale for Region 6.



## Service Club Feature

### Groton Garden Club

by Dorene Nelson

According to Groton's Centennial History Book of 1981, the Groton Garden Club had been organized in May 1951. A number of Groton citizens got together and decided that there were some vacant lots on Main Street that were detracting from the other buildings on Main Street.

Therefore, these ambitious citizens planted flowers, not only on Main Street, but also in the City Park and at the junction of Old Highway 12 and Main Street!

Currently there are sixteen members in the Garden Club who meet on the third Monday of each month at member's homes. They meet at 6:30 p.m. and pay yearly dues of \$10.00.

The current officers are Laurie Mitchell and Pam Rix, co-chairmen; Linda Gengerke, secretary; and Linda Anderson, treasurer.

The purpose and events of the Groton Garden Club are to educate its members with monthly programs, plant flowers and maintain the circle in the Groton City Park, and select a "Yard of the Week" from June through September.

The members of the garden club decorate Groton's Main Street in the fall to coincide with Groton High School's homecoming. They also maintain their own yards and encourage the community to beautify their yards as well.

The club celebrates Arbor Day on the last Friday in April by planting a tree somewhere in the city (many years this is done in May because of the weather).

Many other events have been planned but are now postponed until COVID allows them to be held.

Great joy and happiness came to the Garden Club when the GROW South Dakota Association informed the group that the association would be putting in an irrigation system in the City Park circle in 2020. This was made possible through a grant that helps small cities improve their over-all attractiveness.

What a wonderful, wonderful gift this is to the Groton Garden Club. Thank you, GROW South Dakota! GROW South Dakota is a statewide non-profit organization that provides programs and loan products to advance housing, community, and economic development in the State.

The Groton Garden Club is a great organization for like-minded people to meet and enjoy their love of gardening, whether it's the indoor or the outdoor kind or both. Club members enjoy socializing, friendship, laughter, and, of course, good food!

The club's motto is "Give a weed an inch; it will take a yard." The club flower is the petunia, and the bird is the robin.

Contact any club member to find out where the next meeting is to be held and come join us. Happy Gardening!



### Garden Club Officers

**Linda Gengerke, secretary; Laurie Mitchell and Pam Rix, co-chairmen; and Linda Anderson, treasurer.**



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## Garden Club Members

Back row: Arlys Kluess, Eunice McColister, Bev Sombke, Jolene Townsend, Marjorie Overacker, Linda Anderson, Toni Winther, Pam Rix, Ardella Theunisson, and Deb McKiver

Front row: Elda Stange, Linda Gengerke, Pat Larson, and Laurie Mitchell

Not pictured: Janice Flihs and Karyn Babcock

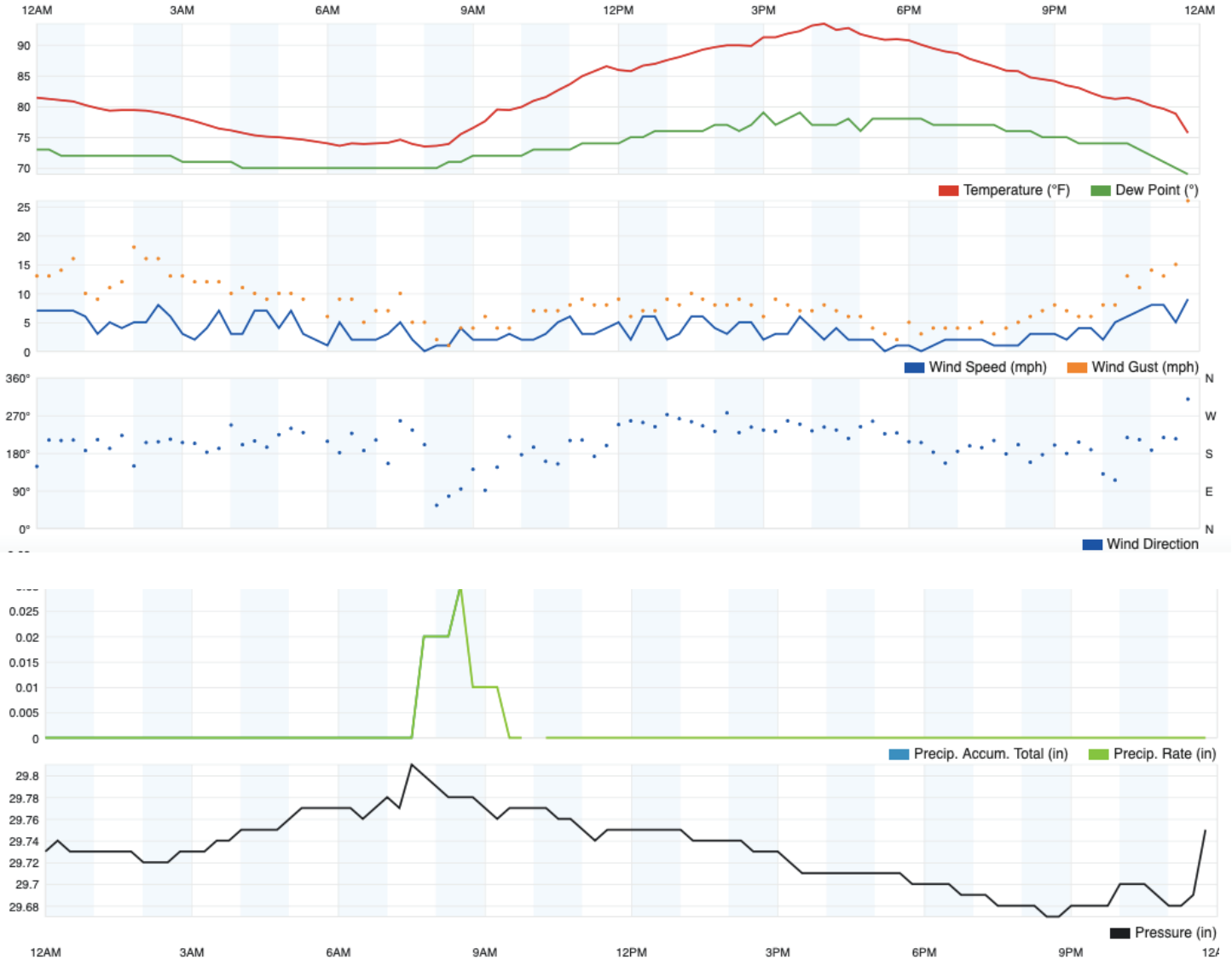


The members of the Groton Garden Club take care of the Circle of Flowers located in the Groton City Park. An irrigation system was installed with the aid of a grant from GROW South Dakota.

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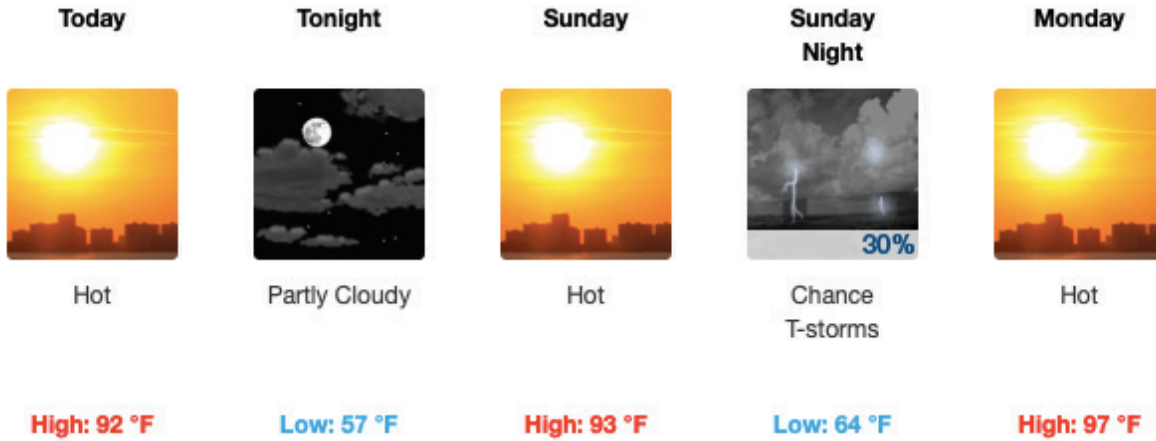
## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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**Warm today, but with less humidity by this afternoon.**

**Chance for thunderstorms Sunday afternoon – Monday morning.**

**Turning Hot Monday-Wednesday.**

### 3 Day Forecast

Saturday	Sunday	Monday
		
88-97°	90-100°	90-105°



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD  
7/24/2021 5:03 AM

Warm temperatures, but with less humidity, can be expected today with highs reaching the 90s. A few storms will be possible Sunday afternoon into Monday morning, with warmer temperatures moving back into the region early next week. Highs in the 90s to 105° will be possible Monday through Wednesday.

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## Today in Weather History

July 24, 1993: A severe thunderstorm struck southern Hyde County, including the city of Highmore, with winds more than 60 mph and heavy rains of two to four inches. Near Stephan, in far southern Hyde County, an estimated of over four inches of rain in 20 minutes caused flooding damage to a bridge. Three to nine inches of rain caused widespread flash flooding and flood damage to Day, Roberts, and southeastern Marshall Counties. Especially hard hit was an area from Webster, northeastward through the Pickerell and Buffalo Lakes area, to Sisseton. A state of emergency was declared in Sisseton. The heavy rains overwhelmed a small creek that flows through Sisseton, swelling it to three blocks wide and up to five feet deep. The rushing water carried lumber, railroad ties, propane tanks, and several vehicles. Flood damage occurred to 70 percent of all buildings in Sisseton, including 100 homes. In Webster, the excessive rain flooded all the sewer lifts that pump water out of low-lying areas in town. The sewer system then backed up into homes and businesses. The rainstorm flooded nine of the 12 main floor rooms at the Super 8 motel in Webster. Roads and bridge damage was also extensive in Roberts, Day, and Marshall Counties with about 50 roads and bridges in Day County damaged by the flooding. Areas lakes, including Pickerell, Blue Dog, Enemy Swim, and Buffalo lakes rose over two feet, inundating areas around lake homes and submerging docks. Some estimated storm total rainfall amounts include; 4.60 inches in Webster; 3.91 in Waubay; 3.90 in Britton; and 3.60 inches near Ashton.

July 24, 1997: Over 6 inches of rain fell in the Conde area in far northeast Spink County. Water was over Highway 37, and many town basements were flooded. One basement filled with 5 feet of water. Nearly 7 inches of rain was received at Lake Poinsett, and over 6 inches of rain was received in Estelline. Hidewood Creek in Hamlin County overflowed its banks. Water went into many residences homes, and some people were evacuated. A small bridge was taken out by the high water, and Highway 28 was closed for an hour.

1930: An estimated, F5 tornado tore through Montello, Veneto, and Friuli in Italy. The tornado killed 23 people along its 50 miles path.

1952: The temperature at Louisville, Georgia soared to 112 degrees to establish a state record. The temperature also hit 112 degrees in Greenville, Georgia on August 20, 1983.

2008: A tornado fluctuated between the category EF1 and the more destructive EF2 strikes Northwood and Pittsfield, as well as nine other towns in New Hampshire. It first touches down in Deerfield, then travels through Northwood, Epsom, Pittsfield, Barnstead, and Alton. From there, it rages through New Durham, Wolfeboro, Freedom, Ossipee, and Effingham. The storm destroys several homes, damaged dozens of others and kills at least one person.



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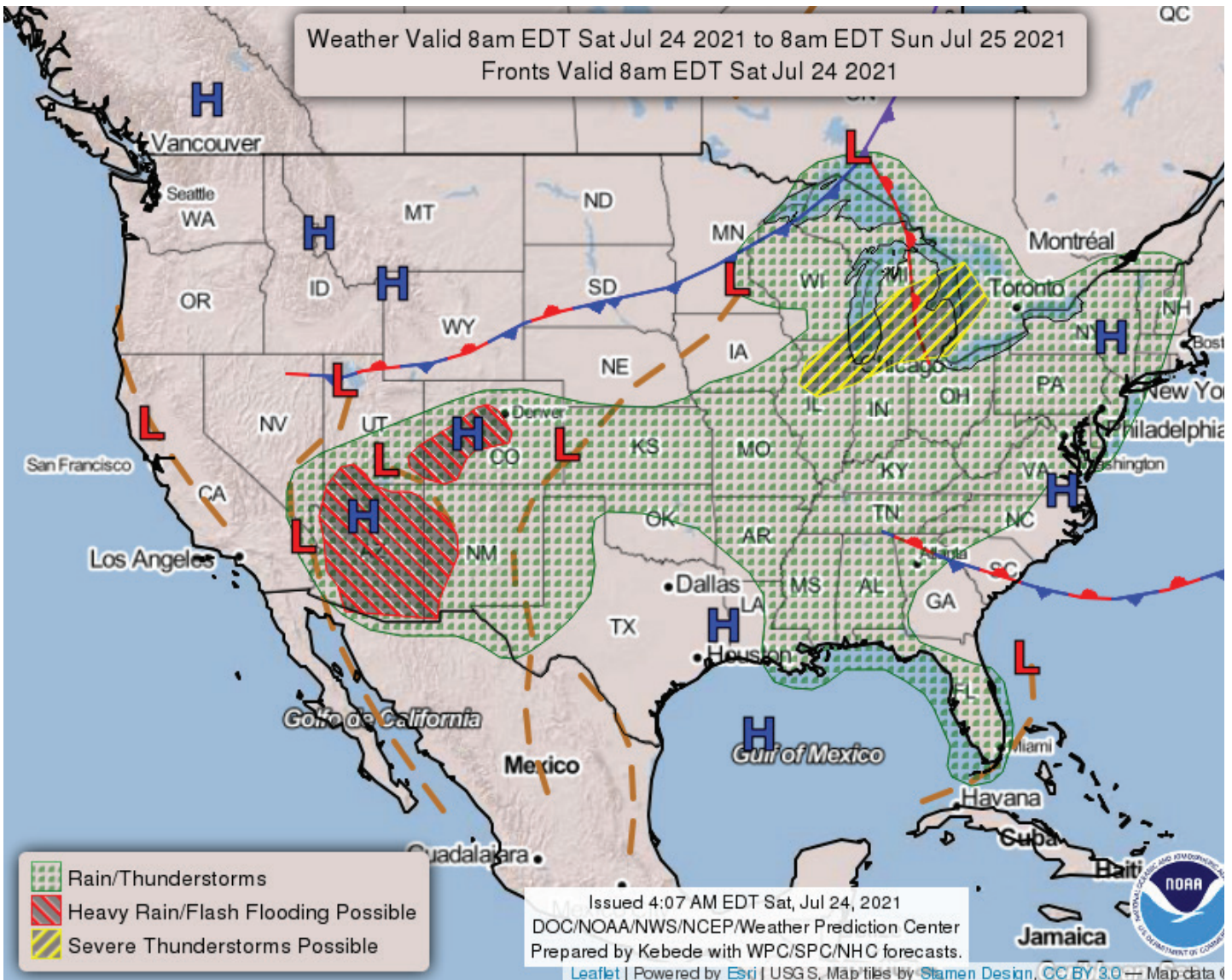
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 93.4 °F at 4:15 PM**  
**Low Temp: 73.5 °F at 8:00 AM**  
**Wind: 26 mph at 11:45 PM**  
**Precip: Total Rain: 0.69**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 108° in 1931**  
**Record Low: 46° in 1895, 1905**  
**Average High: 85°F**  
**Average Low: 60°F**  
**Average Precip in July.: 2.44**  
**Precip to date in July.: 2.42**  
**Average Precip to date: 13.45**  
**Precip Year to Date: 7.17**  
**Sunset Tonight: 9:11 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:10 a.m.**



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## HE NEVER QUIT!

We are reminded throughout God's Word that He has given us the gift of choice and its consequences. Nowhere are we told that we cannot choose our destinies. But we are also reminded, time and again, that our choices determine our destinies.

Even a casual reading of the New Testament tells us that there were those who followed Jesus because they wanted to get something from Him for selfish reasons. We read that when things looked horrible at His trial those who had been with Him for years fled for their lives. In His days of glamour and glory, they were close by His side. There were others who wanted to be with Him but they refused to make any sacrifices and went their own way.

A graduate of a midwestern university was just an average student. He played sports but never made any of the varsity teams. He was never elected to any office and did not make it far up the corporate ladder. When war broke out, he was among the first to volunteer. After completing basic training, he was sent to a war zone in France.

One day in combat he was serving alongside a soldier in the French army. His comrade was severely wounded and with no thought of himself, he made a decision to get him help. Unfortunately, he did not succeed and was killed on his way to find a medic.

The French Government learned of his act of bravery and awarded him The Croix de Guerre – Cross of War. And his alma mater posted a plaque in his honor that read, "He played with the scrubs for four years – but never quit."

The psalmist said, "We will not turn away from You" by taking the easy path or quitting.

Prayer: Give us courage, Father, to stand with You and for You when we are tempted to turn from You. May our lives demonstrate to others Your strength. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Then we will not turn away from you. Psalm 80:18a



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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

### States scale back virus reporting just as cases surge

By JOSH FUNK Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Several states scaled back their reporting of COVID-19 statistics this month just as cases across the country started to skyrocket, depriving the public of real-time information on outbreaks, cases, hospitalizations and deaths in their communities.

The shift to weekly instead of daily reporting in Florida, Nebraska, Iowa and South Dakota marked a notable shift during a pandemic in which coronavirus dashboards have become a staple for Americans closely tracking case counts and trends to navigate a crisis that has killed more than 600,000 people in the U.S.

In Nebraska, the state actually stopped reporting on the virus altogether for two weeks after Gov. Pete Ricketts declared an end to the official virus emergency, forcing news reporters to file public records requests or turn to national websites that track state data to learn about COVID statistics. The state backtracked two weeks later and came up with a weekly site that provides some basic numbers.

Other governments have gone the other direction and released more information, with Washington, D.C., this week adding a dashboard on breakthrough cases to show the number of residents who contracted the virus after getting vaccines. Many states have recently gone to reporting virus numbers only on weekdays.

When Florida changed the frequency of its virus reporting earlier this month, officials said it made sense given the decreasing number of cases and the increasing number of people being vaccinated.

Cases started soaring soon after, and Florida earlier this week made up one-fifth of the country's new coronavirus infections. As a result, Florida's weekly releases — typically done on Friday afternoons — have consequences for the country's understanding of the current summer surge, with no statewide COVID stats coming out of the virus hotspot for six days a week.

In Florida's last two weekly reports, the number of new cases shot up from 23,000 to 45,000 and then 73,000 on Friday, an average of more than 10,000 a day. Hospitals are starting to run out of space in parts of the state.

With cases rising, Democrats and other critics have urged state officials and Gov. Ron DeSantis to resume daily outbreak updates.

"There was absolutely no reason to eliminate the daily updates beyond an effort to pretend like there are no updates," said state Rep. Anna Eskamani, a Democrat from the Orlando area.

The trend of reducing data reporting has alarmed infectious disease specialists who believe that more information is better during a pandemic. People have come to rely on state virus dashboards to help make decisions about whether to attend large gatherings or wear masks in public, and understanding the level of risk in the community affects how people respond to virus restrictions and calls to get vaccinated.

"We know that showing the data to others actually is important because the actions that businesses take, the actions that schools take, the actions that civic leaders take, the actions that community leaders take, the actions that each of us individually take are all influenced by our perception of what the risk is out there," said Dr. Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo, who leads the department of epidemiology and biostatistics at the University of California, San Francisco.

But reporting the numbers on a weekly basis still allows people to see the overall trends while smoothing out some of the day-to-day variations that come from the way cases are reported and not the actual number of new cases. And experts have long advised that it makes sense to pay more attention to the seven-day rolling average of new cases because the numbers can vary widely from one day to the next.

And Florida health officials say that they have not curtailed the sharing of data with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Maintaining daily updates on the virus does require significant resources for states. For instance, Kansas went to reporting virus numbers three times a week in May because the state health department said providing daily statistics consumed too much time for its already overwhelmed staff.



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In Nebraska, officials decided that continuing to update the virus dashboard daily wasn't the best use of state resources now partly because there had been a steady decline in the number of views of the website indicating less interest in the numbers, spokeswoman Olga Dack said. The state could return to providing daily updates if the governor's office decided that was needed, she said.

"Now that Nebraska is back to normal, some of the staff that has been dedicated to the dashboard has been able to focus on some of the other important issues," Dack said.

State health departments have a long history of providing the public regular updates on other diseases like flu and West Nile, but those viruses have none of the political baggage associated with COVID-19.

In Florida, a former health department employee was fired last year after publicly suggesting that managers wanted her to manipulate information on coronavirus statistics to paint a rosier picture. The employee, Rebekah Jones, did not allege any tampering with data, but her comments sowed doubts about the reliability of the metrics.

Infectious disease specialist Dr. David Brett-Major said that for many people, national websites such as the one run by the CDC can be a good source of data on the latest state trends and weekly updates could be OK. The World Health Organization often uses weekly updates, but he said they do that for practical data management reasons, not political ones.

He said the message Nebraska sent when it ended its dashboard that the state emergency was over and conditions were returning to normal was troubling.

"The main problem is that it reflects a disinterest in pandemic risk management," said Brett-Major, with the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha.

Janet Hamilton, executive director of the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists, said part of the problem is that public health officials generally don't have sophisticated data systems so it is more labor intensive to produce the daily dashboards. Even though public health agencies have money for operations at a time when pandemic government spending is flush, they haven't necessarily had the chance to upgrade.

"It would be great if daily reporting could be made widely available, but public health would have to be funded better to do that and right now that is just not the case," said Hamilton.

And even in states where virus numbers aren't being reported publicly every day health officials are still looking at the latest data, Hamilton said.

But at a time when the delta variant is, in the words of the CDC director, "spreading with incredible efficiency," Bibbins-Domingo said it is important that everyone can see the latest trends and understand the risks.

"Even if we know that they are available to decisionmakers on a daily basis, there is considerable value to providing the data to the public," she said.

## South Dakota housing frenzy has some worried about crash

By SONYA SWINK Sioux Falls Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Real estate and home sales are setting records in Sioux Falls and across the country.

From cash offers to low mortgage rates to hundreds more real estate agents hoping to jump in the market and help buyers compete for homes, right now might feel like *déjà vu*.

Searches for "housing bubble" and related terms have skyrocketed on Google across the U.S., as people recall 2008's housing market crash and the pain of the recession that followed for years.

Today's buying frenzy for homes feels eerily similar for many, the Sioux Falls Argus Leader reported.

"Last year it started going crazy with people wanting new builds," Andrew Theesen, a broker-associate at Sioux Empire Home Team at eXp Realty, said.

Theesen noted buyers, sellers and plenty of new agents hoping to cash in all have arrived.

"It seems like there's so many agents that have come on that it's saturated," he said. "We have to go further out now to Brandon or Harrisburg."

While there's no way to truly predict the timing of a crash, there are signs pointing in either direction

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that real estate will stay strong or deflate.

The Great Recession all started with mortgage approvals for those who couldn't afford them, plus a similar frenzy for real estate that exists right now in Sioux Falls and throughout the country, even the world. Although mortgages are more regulated now, pricing still is hot.

And it isn't just buyers that are concerned. The bubble question is taking center stage.

In order to slow the impact of COVID-19 on the housing market, the Federal Reserve bought over \$1 trillion in mortgage bonds last year.

The federal home price index shows how national home prices have jumped.

As it looks to future guidance, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell is meeting with U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen to discuss risks with regulators in this hot housing market.

"I am a little bit concerned that we're feeding into an incipient housing bubble ... I think we don't need to be doing that with the economy growing at 7%," St. Louis Fed President James Bullard said in a statement to the Wall Street Journal.

So, history tends to rhyme.

Even during the peak years of the Great Recession, Sioux Falls did not suffer as the rest of the country did. Even if the skyrocketing costs of housing fueled by demand and a lack of places to buy all created a perfect storm and foreclosures abounded, it's not likely to be as strong now, according to those in the industry.

The massive growth in Sioux Falls, a lack of homes, plus plenty of first-time home buyers taking advantage of lending programs are all what's fueling the market, according to the real estate industry. Even nationwide, Freddie Mac reports a 3.8 million home shortage in 2020.

And sellers are cashing in.

"We knew it was a good time to sell, an opportune time," said Stephanie Collins, who along with her husband sold her home on the 600 block of S. Duluth Ave. in five days with a "generous offer." They took the jump to move closer to family while Collins is a stay-at-home mom.

Stephanie Collins and her husband Scot sold their home in Sioux Falls recently with Mike Niemeyer to take advantage of the hot market and to be closer to family while Collins works from home.

Yet Sioux Falls growing is actually a good sign, in some historical respects.

"Our market was not nearly affected in 2008 compared to other markets across the country. I'm holding onto that as a real estate agent," Kory Davis, a Sioux Falls real estate agent for over 20 years and owner of The Experience firm, said.

"We seem to be adding major employers compared to holding back (in 2008). That's good news and shows how this is different," Davis said.

In Sioux Falls, although homes could be overpriced, Davis stated that values won't suddenly drop to a third of their worth if something were to change, like Phoenix and other markets did in those years when skyrocketing home costs turned out to be far more than buyers could afford.

That still doesn't ease the stress for buyers now.

In early May, the median sale price of a home in Sioux Falls was \$250,000, according to the Real Estate Association of the Sioux Empire (RASE). For the 12-month period spanning July 2020 through June 2021, pending sales in the Sioux Falls region were up 19.4 percent overall while the amount of inventory, or homes to choose from, was down nearly 40%.

"I've been in Sioux Falls since 1993 and haven't seen a market like the last six months for sure. I've never seen the bidding wars; I've never seen the price overlist (like this)," said Brian Schmidt, owner of Ace Appraisal.

Schmidt's job is to use past and more current sales data to help appraise the value of a home. He's facing issues trying to fairly state what a home's value is, and subsequently what a bank's monthly payment loan offer to buyers will be, when prices jump within days.

"You're not trying to be the bad guy, but at the same time you have to say this is what's supportable," Schmidt said.



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Year over year home prices in June for Sioux Falls have risen considerably, according to monthly data from the Real Estate Association of the Sioux Empire.

Buyers could potentially have remorse in several months if prices drop. They're willing to pay additional cash on top of their down payment and monthly mortgage to just get into a home now. And these days more are reconsidering.

"It's half and half on our clients where half are able to go in and find a home. But we've seen where some of them say, 'Hey let's wait until winter or let's wait until next year,'" Theesen said.

"At the end of the day, we looked at the market and how tough it was going to be to compete with other offers," said one buyer working through Theesen. "Yes, we paid more, but after losing out to individuals paying cash, we had to adapt on the offers we made."

This Sioux Falls home went well over asking, ""Yes, we paid more, but after losing out to individuals paying cash, we had to adapt on the offers we made," the buyer, who wished to remain anonymous, said.

As an overall trend, there are still a steady stream of homes sold now compared to the last several years during the January through mid-July season, with some 1,962 single family homes sold in 2016 compared to 2021's 2,127.

Steady sales on the whole are good, and if the lumber and homes under construction can catch up in time for all the demand, there might not be much further issues for those looking to make the biggest investment of their lives.

Those who can buy a home and afford to hold onto it for years will still be strong winners in this market, according to John Maurer, member of RASE and the Weichert, Realtors — The Agents team, who doesn't believe this market is a bubble.

"It's easy to think it's a bubble when the last time real estate was in the news daily was in '08," Maurer said, adding that "those who understand equity," are winning.

Equity always wins over time, especially when they can take advantage of today's super low mortgage rates that hover around 3% while "moving their net proceeds into a down-payment on a more expensive home," Mauer said.

The best thing to do is to wait after buying a home, in order to let equity catch up.

Those trying to make a quick one- to two-year flip on their investment will be "sorely disappointed," Lori Halverson, an assistant business professor at the University of Sioux Falls said.

Further, although renters can and should save for a home, rising rents and so few homes to buy under \$250,000 makes it hard for first-timers to move up now, especially if they can't take advantage of The First-time Homebuyer Program in South Dakota or enough savings to pay some large price over asking.

Still, homes are key to growing wealth.

"Whenever you make a purchase of a home, it's a good investment not only for housing needs but for wealth creation," Halverson said.

The trick is for those in lower incomes to lower their costs now, from school or credit card debt to car payments, in order to become attractive to lenders down the road. For those who don't need a house now, it's likely best to wait out the market and build credit in the meantime.

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

13-17-19-40-69, Mega Ball: 17, Megaplier: 3

(thirteen, seventeen, nineteen, forty, sixty-nine; Mega Ball: seventeen; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$138 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$174 million

## Noem wants widespread changes at prisons after complaints

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem said Friday that she is looking to make widespread changes in the state's prison system after meeting with tired and discouraged employees working short-handed at the state penitentiary in Sioux Falls.

The Republican governor fired the prison's warden and deputy warden last week following an investigation into an anonymous complaint from a prison employee. It alleged low employee morale amid lagging pay raises and cuts to employee benefits. It also accused the prison leadership of allowing dangerous working conditions, with some employees receiving tactical equipment that was not "up to standards" as well as facing regular sexual harassment from supervisors.

"The prisons are safe for inmates and staff today but I would say the staff was tired and the staff is being asked for a lot and they deserve better equipment than what they have," Noem told reporters after the meeting.

The complaint alleges that prison officials ignored attempts to report the sexual harassment and that some supervisors even changed work schedules so that they could work in the same areas as the victims. Noem said that she could not confirm whether the investigation by the Bureau of Human Resources corroborated the sexual harassment complaint. But she said that a summary of the investigation left no doubt in her mind that changes needed to be made "immediately."

The governor's office has released little information on the human resources investigation. She said Friday that state law kept her from releasing the report.

The former deputy warden, Jennifer Dreiske has said in a statement that she "never wavered" in her duties of keeping staff safe and that she was fired without an explanation. The other fired or suspended officials have not spoken publicly about the allegations.

Noem said it was possible others would be fired. She has suspended her Cabinet Secretary who oversees the prison system and the director of a prison work program.

"Everybody's being evaluated," she said. "Every single person, and especially those in leadership."

The organization that advocates for government employees, the South Dakota State Employees Organization, has said complaints among prison employees statewide have become widespread in recent months and were prompted in part by a policy Noem initiated — requiring government workers to pay part of the premiums for their health insurance. She defended that policy, saying it would free up money for raises and make the health care plans financially viable.

South Dakota's incarceration rate is the 11th highest in the United States, according to the Prison Policy Initiative. The state's prisons last year also suffered through one of the nation's worst rates for infections. Two out of every three inmates were infected with COVID-19, according to data collected by The Associated Press and The Marshall Project.

The state employees' organization has said the pandemic just compounded the crunch on corrections officers and led to staffing shortages.

The governor also said she is looking to recruit more officers by changing salaries, vacation policy and training gear. But she said that boosting pay for state employees would require finding ongoing revenue sources. She added she would like to see the Legislature address an overhaul of the state's prison systems by replacing aging facilities and providing for prison programs that focus on rehabilitation.

"We are looking at evaluating every single policy," Noem said.

## 3 killed in 1-vehicle crash along interstate in Sioux Falls

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Three people have died in a crash along the interstate in Sioux Falls, according to the South Dakota Highway Patrol.

The one-vehicle crash happened about 5:30 p.m. Thursday on I-229, the patrol said.

According to authorities, a 22-year-old man, an 18-year-old woman and a female whose age is unknown were killed when their car left the interstate, hit a tree and caught fire.

The male driver and the two passengers were pronounced dead at the scene. The Highway Patrol is leading the investigation.

## Two bodies recovered from Missouri River near Pierre

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The bodies of two people have been recovered from the Missouri River near Pierre. Hughes County Sheriff Patrick Callahan said his department received a report about 11 p.m. Wednesday of two missing people who were last seen fishing near Farm Island.

Sheriff's deputies and Game, Fish and Parks conservation officers began a search of the area. Divers and drones from the Pierre Fire Department Rescue Squad and Hughes/Stanley County Emergency Management were also used in the search.

The missing individuals were recovered a short time later. Callahan says names of the victims are not being released and the incident remains an active investigation.

## UK's summer getaway takes off but nothing like pre-COVID

By PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — With all British schools now closed for the summer, airports and airlines were looking a tad more normal on Saturday, although the number of families heading off for warmer climes remains way down from before the coronavirus pandemic.

This weekend traditionally marks the great summer getaway from Britain, with airports jam-packed with excitable children and their anxious parents heading off mostly to the popular beach resorts of southern Europe, from Portugal's Algarve coast in the west to the sun-soaked island nation of Cyprus to the east.

However, with travel to and from many popular destinations facing varying and often confusing quarantine and testing requirements, it's clear that many British families think it's all too much hassle and have opted again to holiday within the U.K.

For the second year running, it's all about the "staycation."

What's not to like about fish and chips and a game of crazy golf by the seaside or enjoying a marshmallow over a campfire at the Latitude music festival in eastern England that is being attended this weekend by some 40,000 people?

Still, the numbers venturing abroad are certainly on the rise, partly as a result of the U.K.'s rapid rollout of coronavirus vaccines that has seen nearly 70% of the adult population receive the requisite two doses and over 87% get at least one dose.

The British government, which has been operating a traffic-light system for overseas travel, recently tweaked its rules to make it simpler for fully-vaccinated individuals and their families to travel. Now, anyone arriving back in England from "amber" list destinations — including Greece, Spain and the United States — are exempt from the government's 10-day quarantine requirement subject to testing requirements.

Although France is on the "amber" list, anyone returning from there to England still has to quarantine for 10 days amid concerns over the beta variant first identified in South Africa.

Industry leaders said the changes have helped buoy up the travel sector, one of the worst affected during the pandemic, as well as many destinations in Europe that rely heavily on British tourists.

Airports and airlines across the U.K. are enjoying their busiest weekend of the year so far. London's Heathrow Airport said it was expecting about 129,000 passengers on Saturday and Sunday. Though welcome, that's about half the number it saw two years ago.

"We look forward to welcoming back even more passengers as vaccination rates climb in the U.K. and abroad," said CEO John Holland-Kaye.

Gatwick, Britain's No. 2 airport, was expecting between 25,000 to 27,000 passengers a day over the weekend. Again that's far lower than the equivalent weekend in pre-COVID times, when it could see around 100,000 travellers a day.

Holiday company Tui said it has almost double the number of passengers traveling Friday to Sunday compared with last weekend. It will be resuming flights to a series of destinations including the Greek



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islands of Kefalonia and Skiathos, and Marrakech in Morocco.

For most people in Britain, though, getting on those flights will have to wait. There's always next year.

## US rebounds from opening loss with 6-1 win over New Zealand

By ANNE M. PETERSON AP Sports Writer

SAITAMA, Japan (AP) — The Americans rebounded from their opening loss with a 6-1 rout of New Zealand in front of the First Lady on Saturday in the women's soccer tournament at the Tokyo Olympics.

With the United States leading 2-0 at the break, Jill Biden arrived in time to watch the team put the game away in the second half at Saitama Stadium.

The United States was stunned by Sweden in the first match, losing 3-0. It was the team's first loss since January 2019, and snapped a 44-game unbeaten streak. The Americans had not been held scoreless since 2017.

But the Americans vowed to regain control of the tournament. Defender Kelley O'Hara said the United States needed to be "ruthless" against New Zealand.

And ruthless they were.

Rose Lavelle scored off a well-placed pass from Tobin Heath in the ninth minute to give the United States an early lead — and the team's first goal of the Olympics. Despite the lack of goals, the Americans dominated the half, unlike their out-of-sorts start against the Swedes.

Lindsey Horan scored with a header in the final moments of the half to put the United States up 2-0 at the break. It was Horan's 23rd international goal and it came on her milestone 100th appearance for the national team.

It could have been worse for New Zealand but the United States had four disallowed goals, all for offside, in the first half.

An own-goal by Abby Erceg extended the U.S. lead to 3-0 in the 64th. New Zealand avoided the shutout with Betsy Hassett's goal in the 72nd.

Christen Press, who came in as a second-half substitute, scored from the center of the box in the 80th off a feed from Julie Ertz, before Alex Morgan scored in the final minutes of regulation. Another New Zealand own-goal closed out the game in stoppage time.

U.S. coach Vlatko Andonovski made five changes to the starting lineup he used against Sweden, giving Carli Lloyd the start over Morgan, Megan Rapinoe for Press, Ertz for Sam Mewis, Emily Sonnett for O'Hara, and Tierna Davidson for captain Becky Sauerbrunn.

The United States, the reigning World Cup champion, has been to every Olympics since women's soccer joined the event in 1996. The world's top-ranked team has five gold medals, more than any other nation.

The U.S. also lost the first match of the 2008 Beijing Games, falling to Norway 2-0, but went on to win the gold.

Their nemesis at the Olympics has been Sweden, which booted the Americans from the Rio de Janeiro Games in the quarterfinals five years ago.

New Zealand lost to Australia 2-1 in its opening match and the Ferns' chances of reaching the knockout round grew slim with Saturday's loss.

New Zealand, coached by former U.S. coach Tom Sermanni, had not played any matches since March 2020 because of coronavirus restrictions.

## Olympics Latest: Dalhausser, Lucena lose to Dutch on beach

TOKYO (AP) — The Latest on the Tokyo Olympics, which are taking place under heavy restrictions after a year's delay because of the coronavirus pandemic:

Beach volleyball player Phil Dalhausser has had a rough start to the Tokyo Games.

The four-time Olympian and 2008 gold medalist has been in modified quarantine because he is considered a close contact of Taylor Crabb, the U.S. beach volleyball player who withdrew after testing positive

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for COVID-19. Dalhausser sat near Crabb on a flight from Los Angeles to San Francisco before heading over to Japan.

Dalhausser and teammate Nick Lucena practiced together only twice from the time they arrived in Tokyo until their opening match on Saturday.

The Americans lost to defending bronze medalists Robert Meeuwssen and Alexander Brouwer of the Netherlands. The Dutch won 21-17, 21-18 at the Shiokaze Park venue.

Wang Fan and Xia Xinyi of China beat Heather Bansley and Brandie Wilkerson of Canada 18-21, 21-15, 15-11 earlier.

One of the medal favorites lost its first match of pool play in the men's Olympic volleyball tournament.

Poland came into the Tokyo Games as one of the top contenders in the men's bracket led by Wilfredo Leon but fell in the first match to Iran in five sets. The Iranians made their Olympic debut in 2016 when they made it to the quarterfinals and now have a big win to start this year's tournament after pulling out the final set 23-21.

The loss isn't too detrimental to Poland's medal hopes because four of the six teams in Pool A able to advance to the quarterfinals. The last two men's gold medalists struggled in pool play with Brazil needing a win in its final match in 2016 to advance to the knockout round and Russia finishing third in 2012.

## MEDAL ALERT

Panipak Wongpattanakit of Thailand and Vito Dell'Aquila of Italy have won the first two gold medals of the Olympic taekwondo competition in Tokyo.

Wongpattanakit won her first gold in dramatic fashion in the women's 49-kilogram final, scoring two points on a body kick inside the final 10 seconds for an 11-10 victory over 17-year-old Adriana Cerezo of Spain. Wongpattanakit's gold is only the 10th in Thailand's entire Olympic history.

Dell'Aquila defeated Mohamed Khalil Jendoubi of Tunisia 16-12 in the men's 58-kilogram final to claim his first Olympic medal. The final was another thriller that was tied 10-10 with about 15 seconds left before Dell'Aquila won with a flurry of scoring strikes.

Chinese veteran Wu Jingyu's bid to become the first three-time Olympic taekwondo champion ended in the quarterfinals with a 33-2 loss to Cerezo.

Taekwondo's four-day tournament continues Sunday with British star Jade Jones' attempt to succeed where Wu failed by winning her own third consecutive gold medal.

## MEDAL ALERT

Aron Szilagyi of Hungary has become the first Olympic fencer to win three individual sabre gold medals after beating Luigi Samele 15-7 in the men's final at the Tokyo Games.

Szilagyi used his fast reflexes to build an early 7-1 lead and held off a brief comeback from his Italian opponent before closing out the win.

Szilagyi won gold at the 2012 London Games and the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games. His only loss in the Olympic individual tournament came in the third round in 2008.

Samele reached the final after a remarkable win in the semifinals. He came back from 12-6 down to beat Kim Junghwan of South Korea 15-12.

Kim took bronze with a 15-11 win over Sandro Bazadze of Georgia.

## MEDAL ALERT

Sun Yiwen of China has beaten five-time Olympian Ana Maria Popescu of Romania 11-10 in overtime to win gold in the women's épée fencing competition.

Popescu leveled the score at 10-10 with three seconds remaining to go to overtime but Sun soon scored the winning point in the deciding period.

Sun completed her set of Olympic medals after winning individual bronze and team silver at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games. Popescu has yet to win an individual gold medal at any of her five Olympic appearances

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despite often being among the favorites. She won team gold in 2016.

Katrina Lehis of Estonia took the bronze by beating Russian fencer Aizanat Murtazaeva 15-8. Lehis was trailing 4-3 in the second period before winning the next five points to take a lead she never gave up.

Members of the U.S. swimming team cheered and chanted from the stands for U.S. first lady Jill Biden, who sat across the pool and waved as swimming kicked off.

Without fans in the 15,000-seat Tokyo Aquatics Centre on Saturday, masked teams had ample room to spread out in socially distanced seats above the deck. The U.S. contingent waved tiny American flags and pounded red-white-and-blue Thunderstix, while the Germans spread their large-sized flag over two rows of seats.

Waiting for the session to begin, the Americans chanted "Dr. Biden, Dr. Biden" and clapped.

None of the usual electricity that typically courses through the Olympic pool was present. Teams shouted the names of their swimmers during the race, when the sound of water splashing was easily heard and music blasted.

Earlier in the day, Biden watched a 3-on-3 basketball game with French President Emmanuel Macron and hosted a softball watch party at the U.S. ambassador's residence.

Naohisa Takato has won Japan's first gold medal at its home Olympics, beating Taiwan's Yang Yung-wei in the men's 60-kilogram judo final.

Kosovo's Distria Krasniqi beat Japan's Funa Tonaki in the women's 48-kilogram final less than an hour before Takato made sure his team wouldn't have a double heartbreak on the opening day of competition in its beloved homegrown martial art.

Takato won his final three bouts in sudden-death golden score, but took the final a bit anticlimactically after Yang committed too many fouls.

The charismatic Takato's success — and Tonaki's heartbreaking, last-minute defeat — could provide a much-needed jolt of excitement for a nation still feeling profoundly ambivalent about these Olympics and discouraged by the scandals and coronavirus setbacks surrounding them.

Distria Krasniqi of Kosovo beat Funa Tonaki in the women's 48-kilogram Olympic judo final, depriving host Japan of its first gold medal in its home Olympics and winning Kosovo's second-ever Olympic medal.

Krasniqi won on a throw with 20 seconds left, scoring a waza-ari and claiming a title that moved her to tears moments later.

Although Krasniqi was the top seed, she was severely challenged by the 4-foot-10 Tonaki, who beat a series of difficult opponents to reach the final.

Tonaki fell agonizingly short of claiming a gold medal in Japan's beloved, homegrown martial art. Her success would have provided a much-needed jolt of positivity for a nation still feeling profoundly ambivalent about these Olympics and discouraged by the scandals and coronavirus setbacks surrounding them.

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French President Emmanuel Macron and U.S. first lady Jill Biden have attended a 3-on-3 Olympic basketball game in Tokyo.

The two sat near one another as the French women's team played the U.S. The U.S. won 17-10.

The 3-on-3 Olympic basketball tournament is making its debut at this Olympics.

Macron and Biden both attended the opening ceremony for the Games on Friday night.

Earlier Saturday, Biden attended a watch party at the U.S. ambassador's residence for embassy staff to watch the United States vs. Mexico women's softball game. The U.S. won 2-0.

She said she was excited to watch the game and apologized for not being able to offer food or drink due to COVID protocols. She also thanked foreign service officers and their families for their service.

Russian weightlifting leader Maxim Agapitov has beaten the IOC in court to win back his right to attend the Tokyo Olympics despite his own doping ban 27 years ago.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport says it upheld Agapitov's appeal to regain his games accreditation, which the International Olympic Committee took away this month.

The IOC had decided Agapitov should "not have a personal history linked to any anti-doping rule violation" in order to stay at the Olympics representing the International Weightlifting Federation.

CAS says its three-judge panel decided it was "clearly disproportionate" to punish someone for a violation at any point in their athletic career.

Agapitov's doping case was in 1994, before he became a world champion. He's now president of the Russian weightlifting federation and an executive board member of the troubled IWF.

The International Surfing Association has confirmed a last-minute alternate: Carlos Munoz, who will surf for Costa Rica as the sport makes its Olympic debut.

Munoz replaces Frederico Morais of Portugal, who announced Friday that he had tested positive for COVID-19 and would not travel to Japan while he quarantines at home.

Munoz's confirmation comes at the very last minute possible, as the association had set the 3 p.m. Saturday Tokyo time as the deadline for alternates to be approved.

Surfers qualify by name as individuals via world tournament rankings, though each country can only have two surfers per gender.

The first alternate for Morais' spot was Italian Angelo Bonomelli, who won't participate, though the association did not say why. Munoz was the next male surfer eligible.

The eight-day shortboard surfing competition period begins Sunday at Tsurigasaki beach.

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and French President Emmanuel Macron have met in Tokyo as the Olympics get underway.

They welcomed the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics as "a powerful symbol of global unity" for a victory over COVID-19, according to a joint statement released by the Japanese foreign ministry.

Macron attended the opening ceremony of the pandemic-delayed Olympics to represent France, the host nation for 2024.

They've also agreed to share Japan's experiences for the 2024 games, which will be held in Paris.

Japan has struggled to balance virus measures and preparation for the Olympics amid growing public concern about the health risks of holding the games.

Suga and Macron also agreed to cooperate in a wide range of areas including defense, climate change and the economy.

## MEDAL ALERT

Ecuador won its first cycling medal as Richard Carapaz took gold in the Olympic road race.

Embracing his nickname of "The Locomotive," Carapaz rode away from American breakaway buddy Brandon McNulty as they approached the finish at Fuji International Speedway.

He slapped his handlebars in celebration as he crossed the line, where he was greeted by one of the

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few crowds allowed at the Olympics.

The chasing group rounded the corner in sight of him at the finish line, then played a game of cat-and-mouse for the other two medals. Belgian star Wout van Aert wound up edging Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar of Slovenia in a photo finish.

## MEDAL ALERT

An San and teenager Kim Je Deok have paired up to lead South Korea to a gold medal in the Olympic debut of archery's mixed team event at the Tokyo Games.

On a sizzling Saturday at the Yumenoshima Park Archery Field, they held off Gabriela Schloesser and Steve Wijler of the Netherlands by a tally of 5-3 to bring home yet another archery gold for South Korea. The country has now captured 14 of 17 gold medals in archery team competitions since the current format was introduced to the Olympics in 1988.

What's more, it was the 24th Olympic gold medal for South Korea's archery program, matching short track speed skating for most by the country in a particular sport.

Alejandra Valencia and Luis Alvarez combined for Mexico and knocked off Yasemin Anagoz and Mete Gazoz of Turkey to earn the bronze medal.

Heat and humidity are quickly becoming a major issue for players at the Olympic tennis tournament in Tokyo.

The temperature soared to 91 degrees F (33 degrees C) and the heat index made it feel like 100 F (38 C).

French Open finalist Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova says she wasn't feeling great, although she still routed Sara Errani of Italy 6-0, 6-1.

Mona Barthel struggled with 10 double-faults in a loss to Iga Swiatek as a searing sun made it nearly impossible to see the ball once she tossed it.

Second-seeded Daniil Medvedev, who also competes for ROC at the Tokyo Games, called it "some of the worst" heat he has played in after eliminating Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan.

"I'm not going to lie. But you have to play," Medvedev said. "That's the Olympics, you go for the medal. You are not here to cry about the heat."

Medvedev suggested that organizers move all matches to the evening to avoid the heat of the day.

Novak Djokovic's bid for a Golden Slam is alive and well following a routine 6-2, 6-2 win over 139th-ranked Hugo Dellien of Bolivia in the opening round of the Tokyo tennis tournament.

The top-ranked Serb is attempting to become the first man to win all four major tennis tournaments and an Olympic singles gold medal in the same year.

Steffi Graf was the only tennis player to accomplish the Golden Slam in 1988.

Djokovic's next opponent will be 48th-ranked Jan-Lennard Struff of Germany.

Struff eliminated Thiago Monteiro of Brazil 6-3, 6-4.

The youngest table tennis player in Olympics history is out of the Tokyo Games.

Hend Zaza of Syria lost in straight sets to Liu Jia, a 39-year-old from Austria, in a preliminary match Saturday.

The 12-year-old told Olympics.com that she was pleased with her performance and learned from the loss — and she's hoping for another shot at the next Olympics, in Paris.

Zaza is from Hama, which has been heavily damaged by war.

She is the youngest athlete at the Tokyo Games.

## MEDAL ALERT

Javad Foroughi has become the oldest Iranian athlete to win an Olympic medal, earning gold in men's 10-meter air pistol.

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Foroughi set an Olympic record with 244.8 points, finishing 6.9 ahead of silver medalist Damir Mikec of Serbia. China's Pang Wei, the 2008 gold medalist, took bronze.

The 41-year-old Foroughi surpasses Iranian weightlifter Mahmoud Namdjou, who was 38 when he took bronze at the 1956 Melbourne Games.

Foroughi, ranked fourth in the world, qualified fifth and immediately jumped to the lead in the finals with a series of shots in the 10-ring. He led Mikec by 4.2 points entering the final two shots and celebrated by waving his towel before kneeling on it to pray.

## MEDAL ALERT

Hou Zhihui has won China's second gold medal of the Tokyo Olympics with a commanding showing in the women's 49-kilogram weightlifting category.

Hou lifted a total 210kg, 3kg short of her world record, to take gold ahead of Indian lifter Chanu Saikhom Mirabai on 202. It was India's first Olympic silver in weightlifting.

Indonesia took bronze as Windy Cantika Aisah lifted a total of 194kg.

Jourdan Delacruz of the United States was third after the snatch portion of the contest but failed on all three of her lifts in the clean and jerk.

Two-time Olympic champion Kohei Uchimura's Olympic career is over.

The 32-year-old Japanese gymnast, considered by many the greatest of all time, fell during qualifying on high bar and will not advance to the event finals.

Uchimura, the 2012 and 2016 all-around gold medalist, was midway through his set when he peeled off while doing a complicated connection. He picked himself up and finished his routine, drilling his dismount.

His score of 13.866 placed him outside of the top eight, meaning he will not make the finals. Uchimura competed as an individual, meaning he will not be part of the team final on Monday.

Uchimura waved to the judges and received a round of applause inside the largely empty Ariake Gymnastics Centre before quickly exiting the competition floor.

Tokyo organizers say the total of Olympics-related COVID-19 cases in Japan is now 127, with one athlete added to the tally.

German cyclist Simon Geschke's positive test was announced Friday, one day ahead before the men's road race. That's a signature event on the first full day of competition at any Summer Games.

Athletes account for 14 of the 127 cases in Japan since July 1. Among the new positive tests are 14 games contractors who live in Japan.

Dutch team officials said Saturday that rower Finn Florijn tested positive for COVID-19 and is out of the Games. Two other Dutch athletes previously tested positive. Florijn's positive test won't show up in the official tally of cases until Sunday.

China has sprinted to the lead in men's gymnastics qualifying, putting on a clinic inside the nearly empty Ariake Gymnastics Centre as it aims to return to the top of the sport.

China total of 262.061 — fueled by four brilliant sets on parallel bars — edged out Russia's 261.945 in the first of three qualifying subdivisions.

China is attempting to bounce back after slipping to bronze in Rio de Janeiro five years ago and coming in second to the Russians at the 2019 world championships.

Reigning world champion Nikita Nagornyy of Russia has grabbed the early lead in all-around qualifying, putting together a steady 87.897, just ahead of China's Xiao Ruoteng and Sun Wei.

Russian Artur Dalaloyan also assured himself of a spot in next week's all-around finals with a total of 85.597, remarkable considering that Dalaloyan is competing on a surgically repaired left Achilles torn at the European championships in April.



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The French Olympic Committee says some of the medical and support staff for its men's basketball team have been forced into quarantine at the Tokyo Games because a passenger aboard their flight to Japan tested positive for the coronavirus.

The committee didn't say how many staff members are affected as possible contact cases. It said they have been in isolation since July 19, unable to work with the athletes. It said all of the staff members' tests so far have been negative.

Dutch team officials say rower Finn Florijn has tested positive for COVID-19 and is out of the Games. The other members of the team who are considered close contacts can stay, but will need to adjust to separate transportation and eating and sleeping arrangements.

The 21-year-old son of former Olympic gold medalist rower Ronald Florijn was competing in single sculls and had finished fourth in his heat on Friday. He was scheduled to row again Saturday in the repechage before positive test results late Friday ended his Games.

"I was hopeful to improve in the rematch. Now it's over in an instant. I can't really say much more about it," Florijn said.

Florijn is the fourth member of the Dutch team or staff to test positive for COVID-19. The team said earlier this week that taekwondo athlete Reshmie Oogink and a rowing team staff member tested positive and skateboarder Candy Jacobs announced on Instagram that she had tested positive.

Chef de Mission of TeamNL Pieter van den Hoogenband says the team is doing everything it can to curb more positive tests.

The ban on fans for the Summer Olympics does not extend past Tokyo, and that means thousands of cycling fans have turned up at Fuji International Speedway to await the finish of the men's road race.

The facility built in the 1960s but extensively renovated over the years has a grandstand capacity of 22,000 people. And with 50 percent capacity limitations due to COVID-19, that means up to 11,000 will be able to see the finish.

Their eagerness to see the Olympics after a year delay was clear by the way fans turned out early Saturday. They showed up nearly seven hours before riders were expected to reach the finishing circuits, and the layout of the speedway meant they would be spending all that time in the sun on a steamy day two hours southwest of Tokyo.

## MEDAL ALERT

China's Yang Qian has won the first gold medal of the Tokyo Olympics in women's 10-meter air rifle.

Yang overtook Anastasiia Galashina when the Russian missed the center two rings for an 8.9 on her final shot.

Yang had a 9.8 on her final shot and finished with an Olympic record 251.8. Galashina finished at 251.1. Switzerland's Nina Christen took bronze.

An Algerian judo athlete will be sent home from the Tokyo Olympics after he withdrew from the competition to avoid potentially facing an Israeli opponent.

Fethi Nourine and his coach, Amar Benikhlef, told Algerian media they were withdrawing to avoid a possible second-round matchup with Israel's Tohar Butbul in the men's 73 kg division on Monday. Nourine was to face Sudan's Mohamed Abdalrasool in the opening round, with the winner facing Butbul, the fifth seed.

The International Judo Federation's executive committee has temporarily suspended Nourine and Benikhlef, who are likely to face sanctions beyond the Olympics, which began Saturday. The Algerian Olympic committee then withdrew both men's accreditation and made plans to send them home.

The IJF said Nourine's position was "in total opposition to the philosophy of the International Judo Federation. The IJF has a strict non-discrimination policy, promoting solidarity as a key principle, reinforced by the values of judo."

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Nourine and Benikhlef attribute their stance to their political support for Palestinians.

Two Georgian tennis players have been barred from the Tokyo Olympics after officials in their home country told them they were entered for the Games but never actually sent the paperwork.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport ruled that it had to turn away doubles players Oksana Kalashnikova and Ekaterine Gorgodze because they were never formally entered for the games, even though Georgia's Olympic committee "informed the applicants that their application had been submitted."

Without a formal entry for the Olympics, the court ruled that the "consequence, however unfortunate for the two athletes, can only be the dismissal of their petition."

Australia is without cyclist Rohan Dennis for the men's Olympic road race, though it's not because of a positive test for COVID-19.

Dennis chose to skip the race, which is taking place on a brutal course through searing heat that hardly suits his skillset, so that he can focus instead on next week's time trial.

Dennis, who has won stages in each of the three Grand Tours, is also one of the best in the world in the race against the clock. He's a two-time time trial world champion, helped Australia win team pursuit silver at the 2012 London Games and is a former world hour-record holder.

He was in medal contention at the Rio Games in the time trial, but he had a mechanical issue that required a bike change and took him out of the running.

The entire Spanish cycling team has been cleared for the men's road race hours before the start, ending a stressful period of limbo following a positive COVID-19 test involving a team masseuse.

Alejandro Valverde, Gorka Izagirre, Ion Izagirre, Omar Fraile and Jesus Herrada were considered close contacts of the masseuse, but all returned negative test results that allowed them to make the start at Musashinonomori Park on Saturday.

Spain has one of the strongest teams in the men's road race, which will finish at Fuji International Speedway. Valverde, Fraile and Ion Izagirre in particular have skillsets that are perfectly suited for the mountainous course.

The very first match of the Olympic beach volleyball tournament has been canceled because a Czech player tested positive for COVID-19.

Markéta Sluková tested positive earlier this week, knocking her and partner Barbora Hermannova out of the Tokyo Games.

The Czechs were supposed to be playing a team from the host country that would have been making its Olympic debut. Instead, the Japanese pair of Megumi Murakami and Miki Ishii earned the victory by default.

Sluková is one of at least three members of the Czech team who have tested positive since their arrival in Japan, including men's beach volleyball player Ondřej Perušič.

The team has said it's investigating if the outbreak of COVID-19 is linked to its charter flight to Tokyo.

German cyclist Simon Geschke has been ruled out of the men's road race after testing positive for the coronavirus.

The German team says Geschke initially tested positive Friday and his result was confirmed by another test later in the day.

Germany says fellow riders Nikias Arndt and Maximilian Schachmann are cleared to race Saturday. The fourth rider on the team, Emanuel Buchmann, was Geschke's roommate and was waiting overnight on the result of another PCR test for the virus. Team staff tested negative.

Geschke was a stage winner on the Tour de France in 2015.

The German road race team is living in a hotel and not in the Olympic Village.

Geschke says he followed the hygiene rules at the Olympics. He adds that "I feel fine physically but emotionally it's a really terrible day for me."

## Residents of flood-hit German towns tell of short lead time

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

AHRWEILER, Germany (AP) — Like other residents of his town in Germany, Wolfgang Huste knew a flood was coming. What nobody told him, he says, was how bad it would be.

The 66-year-old antiquarian bookseller in Ahrweiler said the first serious warning to evacuate or move to higher floors of buildings close to the Ahr River came through loudspeaker announcements at around 8 p.m. on July 14. Huste then heard a short emergency siren blast and church bells ring, followed by silence.

"It was spooky, like in a horror film," he said.

Huste rushed to rescue his car from an underground garage. By the time he parked it on the street, the water stood knee height. Five minutes later, safely indoors, he saw his vehicle floating down the street. He would learn later that he also lost books dating back to the early 1500s and estimates his total losses at more than 200,000 euros (\$235,000).

"The warning time was far too short," Huste said.

With the confirmed death toll from last week's floods in Germany and neighboring countries passing 210 on Friday and the economic cost expected to run into the billions, others in Germany have asked why the emergency systems designed to warn people of the impending disaster didn't work.

Sirens in some towns failed when the electricity was cut. In other locations, there were no sirens at all; volunteer firefighters had to go knocking on people's doors to tell them what to do.

Huste acknowledged that few could have predicted the speed with which the water would rise. But he pointed across the valley to a building that houses Germany's Federal Office for Civil Protection, where first responders from across the country train for possible disasters.

"In practice, as we just saw, it didn't work, let's say, as well as it should," Huste said. "What the state should have done, it didn't do. At least not until much later," he said.

Local officials who were responsible for triggering disaster alarms in the Ahr valley on the first night of flooding have kept a low profile in the days since the deluge. At least 132 people died in the Ahr valley alone.

Authorities in Rhineland-Palatinate state took charge of the disaster response in the wake of the floods, but they declined Friday to comment on what mistakes might have been made on the night disaster struck.

"People are looking at a life in ruins here. Some have lost relatives, there were many dead," said Thomas Linnertz, the state official now coordinating the disaster response. "I can understand the anger very well. But on the other hand, I have to say again: This was an event that nobody could have predicted."

The head of Germany's federal disaster agency BKK, Armin Schuster, acknowledged to public broadcaster ARD this week that "things didn't work as well as they could have."

His agency is trying to determine how many sirens were removed after the end of the Cold War, and the country plans to adopt a system known as 'cell broadcast' that can send alerts to all cellphones in a particular area.

In the town of Sinzig, resident Heiko Lemke recalled how firefighters came knocking on doors at 2 a.m., long after the floods had caused severe damage upriver in Ahrweiler.

Despite a flood in 2016, nobody had expected the waters of the Ahr to rise as high as they did in his community last week, Lemke said.

"They were evacuating people," he said. "We were totally confused because we thought that wasn't possible."

Within 20 minutes the water had flooded the ground floor of his family's house, but they decided it was too dangerous to venture out, he said.

"We wouldn't have managed to make it around the corner," said his wife, Daniela Lemke.

Twelve residents of a nearby assisted living facility for people with disabilities drowned in the flood.

Police are probing whether staff at the facility could have done more to save the residents, but so far there is no suggestion that authorities could face a criminal investigation for failing to issue timely warnings.



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Experts say such floods will become more frequent and severe due to climate change, and countries will need to adapt, including by revising calculations about future flood risks, improving warning systems and preparing populations for similar disasters.

Now that he knows of the flood risk, Heiko Lemke hope those things happen.

"But maybe it would be even better to leave," he said.

## Surfing science: Dependent on weather, defined by the ocean

By SALLY HO Associated Press

ICHINOMIYA, Japan (AP) — Olympic surfing's debut is making clear that these wave riders are unsung masters of science -- in climatology, meteorology and oceanography to be exact.

Serious wave chasers are by default atmospheric science junkies because there are few, if any, sports that are both dependent on an uncontrollable variable — the weather — and defined by a literal uneven playing field — the ocean.

Surfers are known to study both in obsessive detail.

"Any time the wind blows: 'What direction is the wind?'" said Owen Wright, 31, who is competing for the Australia team. "We don't just look at the weather and go 'Oh, it's nice and sunny' when we know (the wind is) probably offshore. It's never just like 'Oh, it's raining.' It's always got to do with what the surf is like."

At the Olympics, organizers are preparing for at least three days of competition over an eight day period, which begins July 25. Surf competitions are determined the day of, and based on the weather forecast, wave height, wind direction, tidal movement, and temperature, among other scientific data points.

"Every person who goes into the ocean, whether you're a surfer or not, you're an amateur meteorologist and oceanographer," said Kurt Korte, lead forecaster at Surfline and the official Olympic surfing forecaster.

But the numbers can only inform so much. The meteorological data is just part of the equation in assessing what the mighty ocean will deliver, which can change from 30-minute heat to 30-minute heat in competition.

Waves are created by the way the swells interact with the bottom contours of the ocean, called the break. Beach breaks — like the Olympic site at Tsurigasaki beach — happen because of sandbars, which can shift over time or due to storms.

Competitive surfing in a nutshell is about deciding which wave to take and what move or moves make the best use of what the ocean delivers. Surfers have to remain prepared and continuously observe the waves for their best guess of what wave they will get to ride.

"How often are the waves coming in? How many waves in a set? Which wave of the set offers the most quality wave?," said Richard Schmidt, a retired pro surfer who now runs a surf school in Santa Cruz, California. "The first wave of the set is going to be a little choppy but the second and third wave is a little more awesome because the tops get groomed out by that first wave of the set. So you watch the waves for a while and you kind of figure out where the quality waves first pick up."

Surfline, the U.S.-based surf forecasting service, was integral in the International Surfing Association's decision to have the sport's Olympic debut at Tsurigasaki beach, 90 miles east of Tokyo. Surfline has been studying the local conditions since 2015 and is currently forecasting sizable waves during the early days of the competition period thanks to a brewing typhoon.

Korte said he'll be at the beach before sunrise at 4 a.m. each day to see and feel the conditions. He'll advise officials from the ISA, the Olympic governing body, and event managers. The call on whether to go ahead with the competition will be made on site each day by about 7 a.m.

Surfers may be some of the only people who get excited to hear about a big storm, though they hope the typhoons, hurricanes and tropical weather systems stay hundreds of miles offshore. They calculate where the storm hits and how fast it's moving, then reverse engineer to project how many miles it is away from a certain beach to determine which days those ripples should make it onto shore.

The way the weather is currently moving is a major win for the Olympics, given that Tsurigasaki is not generally known for powerful waves. The beach is popular for surfing in Japan but is hardly a world class

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location like Hawaii or Tahiti. Korte said Tsurigasaki typically offers surfing conditions like those seen on the coast of North Carolina.

Many surfers have verbalized their fears that their grand global debut will be blunted by mediocre waves, though Korte rejects the notion that the world's best athletes could possibly disappoint in such a beautiful, visually stunning sport.

"They take a wave that an average surfer may not even surf and make it look incredible," Korte said. "I think it's a wonderful opportunity to see surfing in whatever conditions come."

## **EXPLAINER: Stalefish, nollie and other skateboarding lingo**

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — At the Tokyo Olympics, it's best to distinguish salad grinds from stalefish.

Not tasty Japanese delicacies, but choice morsels from the rich lexicon of skateboarding. The new Olympic sport — competition starts Sunday — comes with a language all of its own.

For skaters, the jargon these athletes use to describe their acrobatic tricks allows them to understand each other, regardless of where they're from. An ollie, for example, is an ollie in Paris, Portland or Perth.

"You can meet friends skateboarding really fast because of that," says U.S. skater Alexis Sablone. "Even if you can't say much of anything else, you can still skate together and cheer each other on (because) you know the names of the tricks."

Skate-speak saves time, too. Far easier to say "ollie" than "skating's basic trick where the athlete makes the board take off by pushing down hard on its tail and, once airborne, then levels it out before landing."

And a nollie? Basically the same trick, with the take-off impulsion applied via the nose. Nose. Nollie. Get it? There's a logic to much of the lingo. Olympic fans will be speaking skating in no time at all.

**THE ABCs:** In the "street" competition, skaters will rattle over stairs, rails, ledges and other urban furniture. The men go Sunday, followed by the women, including Sablone, on Monday.

The 20 contestants will be judged for their skills and style over two runs of 45 seconds and five individual tricks. The top eight then go again in the final. In the "park" competition, in week two, skaters will roll around a giant, feature-filled bowl.

Some, like Sablone, skate "goofy," with right foot forward, as opposed to left-foot forward "regular" skaters. Unless, of course, they skate "switch," riding against their natural preference. Either way, they'll need stunts that are "gnarly" — both risky and amazing.

**TALKING THE TALK:** Sometimes, the names of tricks tell their story. Scraping one or both "trucks" — the sturdy axles on the underside of the board — along a rail, curb or other obstacle is a "grind," evoking the screech of metal on metal or metal on concrete.

But it's a "slide" when the surface doing the scraping is the wooden board itself, including its mid-section between the wheels ("boardslide"), the underside of the nose ("noseslide"), or tail ("tailslide").

Also somewhat self-explanatory are names of some tricks that include degrees of rotation. Like the "frontside 180 ollie," with skater and board rotating half a turn whilst airborne, or doing a full rotation for the "frontside 360 ollie."

And there are all sorts of "grabs," clutching the skateboard in mid-air with a hand. The stalefish, grabbed between the heels, is one.

From there, the variations are almost endless.

**WHAT'S IN A NAME?**

Some tricks pay homage to their creators. The 360-rotated "caballerial," ridden backwards, is named after Steve Caballero. The salad grind owes a debt to the surname of skater Eric Dressen, which sounds like the dressings that go on salad. That play on words inspired the name.

When it comes to naming tricks, "there are no rules," says Greg Poissonier, who'll be commenting on Olympic skateboarding for French TV and contributed to an illustrated guide, or "tricktionary," of skating stunts.

"Sometimes, it's just what they called it at the moment it happened," he says. "They're like, 'We've done this, now what are we going to call it?' And they give it a name."

## Thousands protest lockdown in Sydney, several arrested

SYDNEY (AP) — Thousands of people took to the streets of Sydney and other Australian cities on Saturday to protest lockdown restrictions amid another surge in cases, and police made several arrests after crowds broke through barriers and threw plastic bottles and plants.

The unmasked participants marched from Sydney's Victoria Park to Town Hall in the central business district, carrying signs calling for "freedom" and "the truth."

There was a heavy police presence in Sydney, including mounted police and riot officers in response to what authorities said was unauthorized protest activity. Police confirmed a number of arrests had been made after objects were thrown at officers.

New South Wales Police said it recognized and supported the rights of free speech and peaceful assembly, but the protest was a breach of public health orders.

"The priority for NSW Police is always the safety of the wider community," a police statement said.

The protest comes as COVID-19 case numbers in the state reached another record with 163 new infections in the last 24 hours.

Greater Sydney has been locked down for the past four weeks, with residents only able to leave home with a reasonable excuse.

"We live in a democracy and normally I am certainly one who supports people's rights to protest ... but at the present time we've got cases going through the roof and we have people thinking that's OK to get out there and possibly be close to each other at a demonstration," said state Health Minister Brad Hazzard.

In Melbourne, thousands of protesters without masks turned out downtown chanting "freedom." Some of them lit flares as they gathered outside Victoria state's Parliament House.

They held banners, including one that read: "This is not about a virus it's about total government control of the people."

A car protest rally is also planned in Adelaide, which is also under lockdown, with police warning they will make arrests over unlawful activity.

By Friday, 15.4% of the nation's population aged 16 and above have received both jabs for COVID-19.

"We've turned the corner, we've got it sorted. We're hitting the marks that we need to make, a million doses a week are now being delivered," Prime Minister Scott Morrison said. "We are well on our way to where we want to be by the end of the year and potentially sooner than that."

The federal government said it will send thousands of extra Pfizer doses to Sydney while adults in Australia's largest city are also being urged to "strongly consider" AstraZeneca in view of the scarcity of Pfizer supplies.

## At surreal Olympics, a careful dance to push Tokyo tourism

By CLAIRE GALOFARO AP National Writer

TOKYO (AP) — The tour bus arrived after nightfall at the closed museum's back door. Its passengers climbed out with reflective yellow bands dangling from their media credentials so they could be easily identified as journalists in quarantine for the Tokyo Olympic Games.

The couple dozen in attendance had won a lottery to attend this after-hours tour of the museum that chronicles the city's evolution from small fishing village to world-class Olympic host. They were ushered through the back door and into the otherwise-empty exhibition.

The guide tried to put a positive spin on things.

"It is open only for you," she beamed. "You are VIPs."

But really, the point of the nighttime visit was to keep attendees as far away from locals as possible.

Olympics host cities often offer the thousands of journalists excursions to advertise their tourist destinations. But this time around, they are attempting to do so with a smaller group while keeping Olympic



visitors within a carefully controlled bubble, cut off from Tokyo's 14 million residents.

The attendees of the "escorted and controlled tour" program had signed a pledge: No straying from the tour. No talking to residents. The consequence of breaking the rules: possible deportation.

The first stop had been the 400-year-old Hama-rikyu Gardens on the edge of Tokyo Bay. About 600 people had visited that day. Then they closed the park, the locals went out and they let the outsiders in.

The sun was setting and the tour guide pointed out a perfect place for pictures of the quintessential Japanese scene: gleaming skyscrapers jutting up behind the garden's pine trees carefully trained to bend as bonsais.

Then the guide ushered the group back to the bus. The gardener stood at the massive stone gate waving goodbye, as Japanese custom is to wish guests farewell until they turn out of sight.

The bus steamed onto the expressway, where tolls had been raised to discourage local drivers in order to accommodate Olympians. It wound into a residential neighborhood where the sidewalks were mostly empty as Tokyo's residents, suffering another surge of the virus, are restricted to slow its spread.

It arrived at the museum in the dark. There, the journalists wandered the empty hall alone. Many trained their cameras on an exhibit about the 1964 Olympics, held less than two decades after World War II. At that opening ceremony, 8,000 white pigeons were released as a symbol of peace.

Now the games are here again, though less celebratory: In the world around them, a virus has killed more than 4 million.

The tour left through the back door, and the bus returned them safely back to the Olympic bubble.

## Rep. Luria's pro-Navy, centrist identity may get Jan. 6 test

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

NORFOLK, Va. (AP) — When members of Congress head home to connect with their constituents, some hit tractor pulls. Others might stop by mom-and-pop stores. For Democratic Rep. Elaine Luria, whose Virginia district includes the world's largest naval base, a recent swing included boarding an amphibious assault ship for a NATO ceremony and a speech by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"The congresswoman right here in front of me asks tough questions all the time, pins my ears against the wall on many, many topics," Gen. Mark Milley told a recent audience of dignitaries aboard the USS Kearsarge, a reference to Luria's grilling him on military readiness during committee meetings.

Luria's next round of tough queries will concern a topic that is potentially even more sensitive for the military: why veterans were disproportionately involved in the Jan. 6 insurrection. A 20-year naval veteran and nuclear-trained surface warfare officer who commanded 400 crewmembers in the Persian Gulf, Luria is joining House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's special committee to investigate the mob attack on the U.S. Capitol.

"I bring some additional perspective," Luria, 45, said in an interview from Naval Station Norfolk, where the Kearsarge and about 75 other ships are docked. She may end up being the lone member with military experience on the panel after most Republicans said they'd boycott following Pelosi's objecting to the appointment of two GOP lawmakers, including a Navy veteran.

Luria noted the high number of online misinformation campaigns that targeted veterans and said many participants have since spoken about how politically and socially marginalized they felt.

"As long as we have a very large group of people in this country who feel like the only way for their voice to be heard is to show up and be violent, then there's a risk of this happening again," Luria said.

According to George Washington University's Program on Extremism, 55 of the 547 people charged federally in connection with the insurrection, or 10%, have military experience — compared with a bit less than 7% of the population at large who are veterans. One of the most serious cases involves members of the Oath Keepers, an extremist group that recruits current and former members of the military and law enforcement, as well as first responders.

The attack has begun a military reckoning. The House Veterans Affairs Committee, on which Luria heads a subcommittee, has investigated recruitment of current and former military personnel by extremists. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin took the unusual step of ordering a militarywide "stand down" to allow

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troops time to discuss extremism that could be growing within their ranks.

"I think the military is a bureaucratic behemoth, so anything that happens, they're not going to turn on a dime," said Carolyn Gallaher, a professor of international service at American University in Washington who studies right-wing paramilitaries. "There are definitely people trying to do something. It's going to depend on how powerful they are and how well they're going to be able to get the levers of the military bureaucracy to do what they want to do."

A deeper investigation of Jan. 6's events would seem a natural fit for Luria, whose district has 40% of its economy tied directly or indirectly to the Navy or the Defense Department. But the assignment could carry serious political risks for Luria's chief congressional identity besides champion of all things Navy and national security — that of a centrist who has worked to bolster her bipartisan credentials and policy pursuits across the ideological spectrum.

"I think of myself as really moderate. I spent 20 years in the Navy. Didn't think much about political party. I voted for the guy in '16 who I ran against in '18," said Luria, referring to Republican Scott Taylor, a former Navy SEAL whose seat she won two cycles ago, then held in a 2020 rematch.

Many Republicans are dismissing the Jan. 6 committee as a political ploy, meaning the Democrats involved will face pressure to promote larger objectives pushed by their party's leadership.

That may make staying moderate tough and mark a departure for Luria, who passed several pieces of legislation under former President Donald Trump, including providing tax relief to Gold Star families. But she also helped lead 2019 calls from House Democrats with national security backgrounds for an inquiry that helped Trump's first impeachment come to fruition.

Luria is a cosponsor of progressive-championed efforts to raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour. She also has been outspokenly pro-Israel, even as her party's left wing has criticized that country over the recent conflict in Gaza.

And she was the only House Democrat to oppose repealing Congress' 2002 authorization for use of military force in Iraq. Luria says she opposes a repeal of a similar authorization for military force in Afghanistan, saying there hasn't been enough discussion on what Congress should replace them with. She argues that is dangerous given the ongoing threat of foreign terrorism.

Proud House moderates are rare in an age where redistricting has reduced the number of seats whose territories aren't hyper-ideological in favor of one party or the other. Luria's 2nd Congressional District ranks No. 217 on the nonpartisan Cook Political Report's partisan voting index, making it the median between the most-Republican and most-Democratic House seats in the nation — effectively the country's swingiest swing district.

Including Virginia's most populous city, Virginia Beach, as well as the rural Eastern Shore, Luria's district voted for Trump in 2016 but shifted blue last November, as Joe Biden became the first Democratic presidential candidate since 1964 to carry Virginia Beach.

Luria nonetheless may face a tough reelection test as Democrats cling to their six-seat House majority. Taylor, the former congressman who lost to Luria, said such a long military career gives her ideological cover.

"If you're a veteran and you're a Democrat, you might be given a little more the benefit of the doubt. Like, you're not going to be super far left," Taylor said. "Never mind how you vote."

During a Virginia Beach town hall hours after the Milley event, Luria was asked about the possibility the Capitol insurrection was a dry run for a larger attack. She cited the Jan. 6 committee, saying, "This is too important not to do anything."

"I think we need to do this in an unbiased and nonpartisan way," Luria said.

Luria has likened being on the Jan. 6 committee to her serving on an aircraft carrier launching simultaneous airstrikes on foreign terrorist targets in Iraq and Afghanistan, noting that then, "I didn't turn to the sailor next to me operating a nuclear reactor and say: 'Are you a Democrat? Are you a Republican?'"

She concedes that won't stop critics from making her participation a potential line of 2022 attack, but shrugs off the possibility as common in today's Congress.

"You can't, like, help a preschool plant a tree," she joked, "and not have somebody criticize it."

## Biden stumps for McAuliffe in early test of political clout

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Va. (AP) — President Joe Biden led the kind of campaign rally that was impossible last year because of the pandemic, speaking before nearly 3,000 people in support of a fellow moderate Democrat whose race for Virginia governor could serve as a test of Biden's own strength and coattails.

Biden motorcaded across the Potomac River Friday night to back Terry McAuliffe, a former governor looking for a second term whose centrist leanings in many ways mirror those of the president. The race is seen as an early measure of voters' judgment on Democratic control of all branches of the federal government.

The president stood before an enthusiastic and largely unmasked crowd who gathered around a park pavilion and playground on a warm July night. He emphasized that he shared the same vision as McAuliffe about the need for greater public investments in order to drive economic growth. But Biden was also focused on the political stakes.

"You're not gonna find anyone, I mean anyone, who knows how to get more done for Virginia than Terry," Biden said. "Off-year election, the country's looking. This is a big deal."

Biden pointed to his management of the pandemic and highlighted the economic recovery during the first six months of his term, providing a window into his party's messaging as it tries to maintain narrow margins next fall in both houses of Congress. He also highlighted the relative popularity of his \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill and called for action on his infrastructure plan, much as he has done in official visits to congressional districts expected to see close races next year.

It was a clear return to politics as normal after 2020, when Biden had to speak to supporters who stayed in their cars at drive-in rallies or give remarks in front of sparse and socially distanced audiences. The rock songs and tightly packed people standing before center stage suggested that Democrats will not be waging campaigns via Zoom meetings and conference calls this year.

Protesters against an oil pipeline interrupted Biden and the president took a shot at his 2020 opponent as he told the crowd to not shout them down.

"It's not a Trump rally," Biden said. "Let them holler. No one's paying attention."

McAuliffe's win in his state's gubernatorial primary was one of a string of recent victories by self-styled pragmatic candidates in relatively low-turnout elections — which tend to draw the most loyal base voters — and his race is being carefully watched by Democrats looking to shape their messaging for next year.

"It's an important test for the Biden administration. The margins are so small, and he needs to be able to use his clout to help candidates get across the finish line," said Adrienne Elrod, a senior adviser to Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign who also worked on Biden's inaugural. "His message is simple: that he is delivering on promises on vaccines, record job growth and infrastructure."

McAuliffe, who previously served as governor from 2014 to 2018, is facing Glenn Youngkin, a political newcomer who made a fortune in private equity. Despite the state trending blue over the last decade, the race is seen as competitive. As one of only two regularly scheduled governor's races this year, is drawing outside national attention as a potential measuring stick of voter sentiment ahead of the 2022 midterms.

Biden and McAuliffe profile similarly, as moderate Democrats who don't necessarily electrify the party's base but who won their primaries on a promise of electability. The Virginia race could serve as a checkup on Biden's status, and the Democratic National Committee has pledged to spend \$5 million to help McAuliffe's campaign this year, a clear signal that the White House has prioritized the race.

Even as much of the Republican Party remains in the thrall of the Donald Trump, Youngkin has positioned himself as a more moderate Republican in a state Trump lost by 10 points in 2020. He has said he was "honored" by the former president's endorsement of his campaign.

Democrats on Friday repeatedly tried to link Youngkin with Trump.

"I tell you what, the guy Terry is running against is an acolyte of Donald Trump, for real," Biden said. "I don't know where these guys come from."



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Biden has long been an eager campaigner on the road — and on the rope line — during his time as senator and vice president, and emerged as a successful surrogate in 2018 when Democrats won back control of the House.

But the COVID-19 pandemic eliminated campaigning for the bulk of the 2020 race, and the events that were held for the general election stretch run were socially distant and infrequent. As the pandemic receded this spring, Biden, always the most tactile of politicians, has reveled in interacting with people, spending an hour chatting with supporters at a recent Philadelphia event.

Aides said he was eager to do the same in Arlington on Friday. But privately, there was increased worry about the danger posed by the virus's highly contagious delta variant.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Biden would follow federal health guidelines, which offer no restrictions for vaccinated individuals.

Biden has pledged to work with Republicans and has spent enormous political energy on the bipartisan infrastructure deal. But he still went after the GOP on Friday, saying it "offers nothing more than fear, lies and broken promises."

White House aides have pointed to polling that suggests Biden's agenda is broadly popular with voters of both parties, even though it has received little support from GOP lawmakers in Washington. But Republican strategists cast doubt on whether Biden's poll numbers would translate into votes.

While both Biden and McAuliffe have been active in Democratic politics for decades, they have relatively few direct political connections, though McAuliffe ran the state campaign for Biden in 2020. But their political and ideological similarities are extensive.

Virginia's off-year elections have always been looked at as a sort of national bellwether, and "with the Democratic nominee being so philosophically close and similar to Biden, many may see Virginia as a stronger bellwether than usual," said Mark Rozell, a political science professor at George Mason University.

Current Democratic Gov. Ralph Northam, like all Virginia governors, is prohibited from seeking a second consecutive term. The other notable off-year election in 2021, for New Jersey governor, is not expected to be competitive, with Democrats likely maintaining control.

## Groups worry about tapping COVID relief for infrastructure

By KEVIN FREKING and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Organizations representing long-term care facilities on Friday urged lawmakers working on a bipartisan infrastructure plan to avoid dipping into COVID-relief funds to help pay for the roughly \$600 billion in new spending sought for the public works buildout.

The request comes as lawmakers are struggling to finish up negotiations over the package amid stubborn disagreements over how to pay for the new spending. Lawmakers and staff are expected to work through the weekend, sorting through the flurry of tensions over funds for water resources, public transit and other details in what they hope are the final stages of their work.

The groups representing the long-term care facilities said tapping virus relief dollars would be "short-sighted, especially as COVID-19 variants continue to spread." They noted the Delta variant that now accounts for most of the new cases and threatens "the safety of our nation's seniors and their caregivers."

Senators working on the infrastructure plan hope to have a bill ready to be voted on next week. President Joe Biden has made passing the bipartisan plan a top priority, the first of his two-part \$4 trillion proposal to rebuild, but a Senate test vote failed this week after Republicans said they needed more time to finish the package and review the details.

Negotiators have struggled over how to pay for the new spending without raising income taxes or user fees such as the federal gas tax. They're looking at other sources, including undoing a Trump-era rule on pharmaceutical rebates, redirecting billions of unspent dollars from last year's COVID relief and tapping other potential funding streams.

Even if the negotiators strike an agreement, it's not at all clear the funding sources will pass muster with the Congressional Budget Office, the chief arbiter of many bills in Congress. If the final accounting

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shows the package is not fully paid for, some lawmakers may balk and use that as another reason to vote against it.

"Folks will always find a problem with our pay-fors," Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., said on Bloomberg Television. "On the other hand, we will have it paid for and we will be able to not just pay for it, but point towards long-term gains the society, the economy will benefit from, according to multiple economists from across the political spectrum."

Groups representing nursing homes and other long-term care facilities called on the negotiators Friday not to redirect money from a fund established to reimburse health care providers for expenses and lost revenue due to COVID-19.

The Department of Health and Human Services said Friday there is about \$24 billion not yet allocated to providers, out of about \$178 billion Congress approved for the fund through various relief measures.

The groups said some of their members have not been able to get reimbursement for expenses and lost revenue incurred in the latter months of 2020 and this year and were anxiously awaiting another round of funding from HHS.

A Democratic aide granted anonymity to discuss the negotiations confirmed that how to redirect certain COVID relief dollars is still among the issues that have not yet been resolved. Another is the amount of money that would be dedicated to public transit. There are also disputes over broadband funds and labor laws, the aide said.

Sens. Sherrod Brown of Ohio, the chairman of the Banking Committee, and Tom Carper of Delaware, the chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, released a joint statement saying that "robust funding" for transit is a must.

"We will not support any package that neglects this fundamental part of our nation's infrastructure," the two senators said.

Republican Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, said that 20% of funding from the Highway Trust Fund traditionally goes to transit versus 80% for roads and bridges, and there is concern from Republicans that the bipartisan framework changes that ratio to the advantage of transit.

Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., has also voiced concerns about the water and wastewater segments of the bill. She warned that she can't commit to supporting a final bill if didn't fully fund a \$35.9 billion water bill that she sponsored and which passed the Senate by a vote of 89-2.

Carper said senators were assured that the legislation would be fully funded, but "now we're hearing it may be moved around." He said that \$15 billion may be specifically allocated for lead pipe removal, rather than giving the states and local governments the flexibility to use that money as they deem most appropriate, which could include lead pipe removal.

The final package would need the support of 60 senators in the evenly split 50-50 Senate to advance past a filibuster. Last week's test vote failed along party lines.

The package would next go to the House, where some Democrats are fearful that their priorities have been overlooked during the Senate negotiations and are warning that their votes should not be taken for granted.

Congress would next turn to Biden's broader goals that are being drawn up in a \$3.5 trillion package that Democrats plan to pass on their own under special budget reconciliation rules that would allow for a 51-vote threshold in the Senate.

## Unlikely partners Pelosi and Cheney team up for Jan. 6 probe

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Nancy Pelosi raised a glass to Liz Cheney, it was the most unlikely of toasts. Democratic lawmakers and the Republican congresswoman were gathered in the House speaker's office as the group prepared for the first session of the committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol.

Pelosi spoke of the "solemn responsibility" before them and raised her water glass to Cheney, a daughter

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of the former vice president and the sole Republican in the room.

"Let us salute Liz for her courage," she said, according to a person familiar with the gathering who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private meeting.

Politics often creates unlikely alliances, the odd-couple arrangements between would-be foes who drop their differences to engage on a common cause.

But the emerging partnership between Pelosi and Cheney is remarkable, if not astonishing, as the longtime political adversaries join forces to investigate what happened the day former President Donald Trump's supporters stormed the Capitol.

Rarely has there been a meeting of the minds like this — two of the strongest women on Capitol Hill, partisans at opposite ends of the political divide — bonding over a shared belief that the truth about the insurrection should come out and those responsible held accountable. They believe no less than the functioning of America's democracy is on the line.

"Nothing draws politicians together like a shared enemy," said John Pitney, a former Republican staffer and professor of politics at Claremont McKenna College.

The committee will hold its first hearing next week, and the stakes of the Pelosi-Cheney alliance have never been higher. The panel will hear testimony from police officers who battled the Trump supporters that day at the Capitol. The officers have portrayed the hours-long siege as hardly a gathering of peaceful demonstrators, as some Republicans claim, but rather a violent mob trying to stop Congress from certifying Joe Biden's election.

As their new partnership unfolds, the risks and rewards have an uneven flow. Pelosi benefits more politically from drawing Cheney to her side, giving the committee's investigation the big-name bipartisan stamp it needs to avoid being viewed as a strictly political exercise.

For Cheney, who has already been booted from GOP leadership over her criticism of Trump, the political dangers are far greater. She was one of 10 House Republicans who voted to impeach Trump over the insurrection, and her willingness to speak out against his top ally, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, now leaves her isolated on Capitol Hill. She is facing blowback from the ranks and serious primary challenges for her reelection back home.

"I'm horrified," said Sen. Cynthia Lummis, a fellow Wyoming Republican, about Cheney's actions.

Cheney, though, shows no signs of backing down on what she views as an existential fight not only for the party she and her family helped build, but also for the soul of the nation itself.

"The American people deserve to know what happened," she said this week.

Standing on the steps of the Capitol, Cheney lambasted the rhetoric coming from McCarthy as "disgraceful" and supported Pelosi's decision to block two of his appointees to the panel because of their alliance with Trump.

McCarthy has suggested Cheney might be closer now to Pelosi than her own party, and he withdrew all Republican participation in the committee.

Pelosi and Cheney are hardly fast friends.

Despite their long resumes in American politics, they never really talked to each other before this moment.

Pelosi won her first term as speaker during the George W. Bush administration, largely attacking the White House over the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the hawkish defense posture of then-Vice President Dick Cheney.

Liz Cheney took office in 2017 defending her father's legacy, speaking boldly at one of her first news conferences in support of the enhanced interrogation technique of waterboarding that was decried as torture under his watch. During Trump's first impeachment, she lacerated Pelosi's intentions in speeches.

While both are political royalty, Pelosi and Cheney have operated in parallel political universes for much of their careers. A generation apart, they bring different styles to the job — Pelosi, the San Francisco liberal, Cheney, the Wyoming conservative. About the only thing they have in common is that both are mothers of five.

Yet when Pelosi called Cheney the morning after the vote to establish the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the Capitol, both seemed to instantly grasp the historical gravity of the moment.



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Pelosi thanked Cheney for her patriotism and invited her to join the panel — a stunning moment, the Democratic speaker appointing a Republican to a spot.

Cheney quickly accepted, responding that she was honored to serve, according to another person familiar with the conversation who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private talks.

Behind closed doors, those involved in the committee's work see in Cheney a serious and constructive member, hardly a Republican figurehead but a determined partner to what she has said must be a "sober" investigation. It was Cheney who elevated the idea of having former Republican Rep. Denver Riggleman of Virginia serve as an adviser to the committee, which is under consideration, one of the people said.

Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., the chair of the Jan. 6 panel, said while he and others didn't know Cheney well, he found her to be "just like every other member that I have a relationship with. And I think that's good. I just wish we had more of that kind of relationship in this institution. We'd be better off."

For Cheney and Pelosi, the commission and its findings are likely to be defining aspects of their careers.

Pelosi led the House to twice impeach Trump and is determined to hold him accountable for his actions on Jan. 6 as she wraps what could be her final years as speaker.

Seven people died in the siege and its aftermath, including Trump supporter Ashli Babbitt, who was shot by police as she climbed through a broken window trying to access the House chamber. Three other Trump supporters in the mob died of natural causes. Police officer Brian Sicknick, who had battled the rioters, died the next day. Two other officers took their own lives.

Cheney, who warned her party in an op-ed that "history is watching" in this moment, vows to seek a fourth term but has an uncertain political future.

According to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, 60% of Americans say it's very or extremely important that investigations continue to examine what happened during the Jan. 6 breach of the U.S. Capitol.

The poll, conducted July 15-19, showed 51% of Americans say they have an unfavorable opinion of Pelosi, though among Democrats it's more favorable. For Cheney, the results show her more positively rated by Democrats than Republicans. Among Democrats, 47% say they have a favorable view of Cheney and 20% an unfavorable view, while among Republicans, 21% have a favorable view and 46% have an unfavorable one.

Pitney, the professor who worked for the elder Cheney decades ago in House leadership but left the Republican Party during the Trump era, said the Pelosi and Cheney bond will be one for history.

"It's like one of those 1950s science-fiction movies where everyone unites over the alien invader," he said. Pelosi and Cheney have "a legitimate shared interest in getting to the bottom of the insurrection."

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Wildfires blasting through West draw states to lend support

By NATHAN HOWARD Associated Press

BLY, Ore. (AP) — Out-of-state crews headed to Montana Saturday to battle a blaze that injured five firefighters as the West struggled with a series of fires that have ravaged rural lands and destroyed homes.

Progress was being made on the nation's largest blaze, the Bootleg Fire in Oregon, but less than half of it had been contained, fire officials said. The growth of the sprawling fire had slowed but thousands of homes remained threatened on its eastern side, authorities said.

In California, Gov. Gavin Newsom on Friday proclaimed a state of emergency for four northern counties because of wildfires that he said were causing "conditions of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property." The proclamation opens the way for more state support.

On Saturday, fire crews from California and Utah were coming to Montana, Gov. Greg Gianforte announced. Five firefighters were injured Thursday when swirling winds blew flames back on them as they worked on the Devil's Creek fire burning in rough, steep terrain near the rural town of Jordan.

They remained hospitalized Friday but Bureau of Land Management spokesperson Mark Jacobsen declined to release the extent of their injuries. The firefighters included three U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service crew members from North Dakota and two U.S. Forest Service firefighters from New Mexico.

In California, the Tamarack Fire south of Lake Tahoe continued to burn through timber and chaparral and

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threatened communities on both sides of the California-Nevada state line. The fire, sparked by lightning July 4 in Alpine County, has destroyed at least 10 buildings.

Mandatory evacuation orders were issued Friday in Butte County, California, as the Dixie Fire continued to grow explosively eastward, becoming the state's largest wildfire so far this year.

In north-central Washington, firefighters battled several blazes in Okanogan County that threatened hundreds of homes. And in northern Idaho, east of Spokane, Washington, a small fire near the Silverwood Theme Park prompted evacuations Friday evening in the surrounding area.

Although hot weather with afternoon winds posed a continued threat of spreading some blazes, weekend forecasts also called for a chance of scattered thunderstorms in California, Utah, Nevada, Arizona and other states. However, forecasters said some could be dry thunderstorms that produce little rain but a lot of lightning, which can spark new blazes.

More than 80 large wildfires were burning around the country, most of them in Western states and they had burned some 1.4 million acres (2,135 square miles or more than 553,000 hectares) of land.

## Biden stumps for McAuliffe in early test of political clout

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Va. (AP) — President Joe Biden led the kind of campaign rally on Friday that was impossible last year because of the pandemic, speaking before nearly 3,000 people in support of a fellow moderate Democrat whose race for Virginia governor could serve as a test of Biden's own strength and coattails.

Biden motorcaded across the Potomac River to back Terry McAuliffe, a former governor looking for a second term whose centrist leanings in many ways mirror those of the president. The race is seen as an early measure of voters' judgment on Democratic control of all branches of the federal government.

The president stood before an enthusiastic and largely unmasked crowd who gathered around a park pavilion and playground on a warm July night. He emphasized that he shared the same vision as McAuliffe about the need for greater public investments in order to drive economic growth. But Biden was also focused on the political stakes.

"You're not gonna find anyone, I mean anyone, who knows how to get more done for Virginia than Terry," Biden said. "Off-year election, the country's looking. This is a big deal."

Biden pointed to his management of the pandemic and highlighted the economic recovery during the first six months of his term, providing a window into his party's messaging as it tries to maintain narrow margins next fall in both houses of Congress. He also highlighted the relative popularity of his \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill and called for action on his infrastructure plan, much as he has done in official visits to congressional districts expected to see close races next year.

It was a clear return to politics as normal after 2020, when Biden had to speak to supporters who stayed in their cars at drive-in rallies or give remarks in front of sparse and socially distanced audiences. The rock songs and tightly packed people standing before center stage suggested that Democrats will not be waging campaigns via Zoom meetings and conference calls this year.

Protesters against an oil pipeline interrupted Biden and the president took a shot at his 2020 opponent as he told the crowd to not shout them down.

"It's not a Trump rally," Biden said. "Let them holler. No one's paying attention."

McAuliffe's win in his state's gubernatorial primary was one of a string of recent victories by self-styled pragmatic candidates in relatively low-turnout elections — which tend to draw the most loyal base voters — and his race is being carefully watched by Democrats looking to shape their messaging for next year.

"It's an important test for the Biden administration. The margins are so small, and he needs to be able to use his clout to help candidates get across the finish line," said Adrienne Elrod, a senior adviser to Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign who also worked on Biden's inaugural. "His message is simple: that he is delivering on promises on vaccines, record job growth and infrastructure."

McAuliffe, who previously served as governor from 2014 to 2018, is facing Glenn Youngkin, a political newcomer who made a fortune in private equity. Despite the state trending blue over the last decade, the

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race is seen as competitive. As one of only two regularly scheduled governor's races this year, is drawing outside national attention as a potential measuring stick of voter sentiment ahead of the 2022 midterms.

Biden and McAuliffe profile similarly, as moderate Democrats who don't necessarily electrify the party's base but who won their primaries on a promise of electability. The Virginia race could serve as a checkup on Biden's status, and the Democratic National Committee has pledged to spend \$5 million to help McAuliffe's campaign this year, a clear signal that the White House has prioritized the race.

Even as much of the Republican Party remains in the thrall of the Donald Trump, Youngkin has positioned himself as a more moderate Republican in a state Trump lost by 10 points in 2020. He has said he was "honored" by the former president's endorsement of his campaign.

Democrats on Friday repeatedly tried to link Youngkin with Trump.

"I tell you what, the guy Terry is running against is an acolyte of Donald Trump, for real," Biden said. "I don't know where these guys come from."

Biden has long been an eager campaigner on the road — and on the rope line — during his time as senator and vice president, and emerged as a successful surrogate in 2018 when Democrats won back control of the House.

But the COVID-19 pandemic eliminated campaigning for the bulk of the 2020 race, and the events that were held for the general election stretch run were socially distant and infrequent. As the pandemic receded this spring, Biden, always the most tactile of politicians, has revealed in interacting with people, spending an hour chatting with supporters at a recent Philadelphia event.

Aides said he was eager to do the same in Arlington on Friday. But privately, there was increased worry about the danger posed by the virus's highly contagious delta variant.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Biden would follow federal health guidelines, which offer no restrictions for vaccinated individuals.

Biden has pledged to work with Republicans and has spent enormous political energy on the bipartisan infrastructure deal. But he still went after the GOP on Friday, saying it "offers nothing more than fear, lies and broken promises."

White House aides have pointed to polling that suggests Biden's agenda is broadly popular with voters of both parties, even though it has received little support from GOP lawmakers in Washington. But Republican strategists cast doubt on whether Biden's poll numbers would translate into votes.

While both Biden and McAuliffe have been active in Democratic politics for decades, they have relatively few direct political connections, though McAuliffe ran the state campaign for Biden in 2020. But their political and ideological similarities are extensive.

Virginia's off-year elections have always been looked at as a sort of national bellwether, and "with the Democratic nominee being so philosophically close and similar to Biden, many may see Virginia as a stronger bellwether than usual," said Mark Rozell, a political science professor at George Mason University.

Current Democratic Gov. Ralph Northam, like all Virginia governors, is prohibited from seeking a second consecutive term. The other notable off-year election in 2021, for New Jersey governor, is not expected to be competitive, with Democrats likely maintaining control.

## **EXPLAINER: This year's four new Olympic sports, broken down**

By The Associated Press undefined

TOKYO (AP) — The Tokyo Olympics are introducing four new sports — skateboarding, surfing, karate and sport climbing. Each traveled its own unique path to the Games. Here, at a glance, from Associated Press journalists covering each sport, are the tales of how these sports reached Tokyo and what to watch for in each.

THE SPORT: Karate

WHEN IT DEBUTS: Aug. 5-7

WHY IT'S IN THE OLYMPICS NOW: Because it's coming home for its Olympic debut. The martial art

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that spread across Japan in the early 20th century and soon became ubiquitous worldwide has been a candidate for Olympic inclusion since the 1970s, but organizers never found its case compelling until the Tokyo Games presented an opportunity to showcase its blend of striking combat and rigorous discipline from its homeland.

**WHAT TO LOOK FOR:** The three days of competition at the famed Nippon Budokan will feature dozens of talented kumite (sparring) competitors in three weight divisions, along with the fascinating precision of kata (forms demonstration, often compared to a floor exercise in gymnastics). With karate currently on another upswing due to its resurgent popularity in movies and television, viewers are hoping to see excitement in a sport that isn't always as violent as casual sports fans probably believe.

**STARS TO WATCH:** Japan's greatest fighters will be under pressure to deliver. Naoto Sago's competition against France's Steven Da Costa and the best of the 67 kg field could be an opening day highlight. Miho Miyahara could kick off the women's competition on the same day with another gold for Japan. Ken Nishimura is a favorite at 75 kg. The women's kata competition is almost certain to be close between Spain's Sandra Sánchez and Japan's Kiyou Shimizu.

— By Greg Beacham

**THE SPORT:** Skateboarding.

**WHEN IT DEBUTS:** Sunday, July 25, with the men's street competition.

**WHY IT'S IN THE OLYMPICS NOW:** An Olympic debut sport recruited by organizers to attract young audiences.

**WHAT TO LOOK FOR:** High-flying tricks and stunts; an astounding age-range, with competitors aged 12 to 47.

**STARS TO WATCH:** U.S. skater Nyjah Huston, in men's street, is arguably the best-known skater; in women's park, 13-year-old Sky Brown has been making waves for Britain with her girl-power bravado, recovery from injury and social media footprint.

— By John Leicester

**THE SPORT:** Surfing

**WHEN IT DEBUTS:** There will be at least three days of competition over an eight-day period, beginning Sunday, though the events are determined the day of based on surf conditions.

**WHY IT'S IN THE OLYMPICS NOW:** The International Surfing Association has been lobbying the International Olympic Committee since 1995, though the effort to include the sport dates back to the 1912 Summer Games in Stockholm, when Duke Kahanamoku, the five-time medalist in swimming and Hawaiian icon revered as the godfather of modern surfing, first pushed for it to become an Olympic sport.

**WHAT TO LOOK FOR:** Most maneuvers are either types of turns, airs or barrels. Whereas the men's competition typically dazzles with explosive airs, the women's game often features a more dance-like rhythm that showcases the speed, power and flow of the ride.

**STARS TO WATCH:** Reigning world champion Carissa Moore of the U.S. looks to be the woman to beat, as well as the Australian Stephanie Gilmore, whose record-tying seven world titles makes her the most decorated female surfer in competition today. The Brazilians are expected to dominate the men's side, with Gabriel Medina and Italo Ferreira known as the masters of aerial maneuvers.

— By Sally Ho

**THE SPORT:** Sport climbing

**WHEN IT DEBUTS:** Aug. 3-6

**WHY IT'S IN THE OLYMPICS NOW:** Climbing has reached new heights in recent years, both in the professional ranks and recreationally. The documentary "Free Solo" — Alex Honnold is not in the Olympics — added to climbing's popularity, as has the social media expertise of the sport's top climbers.

**WHAT TO LOOK FOR:** Sport climbing has been dubbed the epitome of the Olympic motto "citius, altius,



fortius" (faster, higher, stronger). Climbers scale a 15-meter wall filled with a variety of holds in the lead discipline. Bouldering involves smaller "problems" and dynamic movements. Speed is a race to the top on predetermined holds.

**STARS TO WATCH:** Czech climber Adam Ondra has completed some of the most difficult outdoor climbs in the world and is a favorite to earn gold in the sport's debut. Slovenian Janja Ganbret has a similar resume and has dominated the World Cup Circuit.

— By John Marshall

## Search for bodies concludes at Florida condo collapse site

By DAVID FISCHER and TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Firefighters on Friday declared the end of their search for bodies at the site of a collapsed Florida condo building, concluding a month of painstaking work removing layers of dangerous debris that were once piled several stories high.

The June 24 collapse at the oceanside Champlain Towers South killed 97 people, with at least one more missing person yet to be identified. The site has been mostly swept flat and the rubble moved to a Miami warehouse. Although forensic scientists are still at work, including examining the debris at the warehouse, there are no more bodies to be found where the building once stood.

Except during the early hours after the collapse, survivors never emerged. Search teams spent weeks battling the hazards of the rubble, including an unstable portion of the building that teetered above, a recurring fire and Florida's stifling summer heat and thunderstorms. They went through more than 14,000 tons (13,000 metric tonnes) of broken concrete and rebar, often working boulder by boulder, rock by rock, before finally declaring the mission complete.

Miami-Dade Fire Rescue's urban search-and-rescue team pulled away from the site Friday in a convoy of firetrucks and other vehicles, slowly driving to their headquarters for a news conference to announce that the search was officially over.

At a ceremony, Fire Chief Alan Cominsky saluted the firefighters who worked 12-hour shifts while camping out at the site.

"It's obviously devastating. It's obviously a difficult situation across the board," Cominsky said. "I couldn't be prouder of the men and women that represent Miami-Dade Fire Rescue."

Officials have declined to clarify whether they have one additional set of human remains in hand that pathologists are struggling to identify or whether a search for that final set of remains continues.

If found, Estelle Hedaya would bring the death toll to 98.

Hedaya was an outgoing 54-year-old who loved to travel and was fond of striking up conversations with strangers. Her younger brother Ikey has given DNA samples and visited the site twice to see the search efforts for himself.

"As we enter month two alone, without any other families, we feel helpless," he told The Associated Press on Friday. He said he gets frequent updates from the medical examiner's office.

Leah Sutton, who knew Hedaya since birth and considered herself a second mother to her, is worried that she will be forgotten.

"They seem to be packing up and congratulating everyone on a job well done. And yes, they deserve all the accolades, but after they find Estelle."

The dead included members of the area's large Orthodox Jewish community, the sister of Paraguay's first lady, her family and their nanny, as well as a local salesman, his wife and their two young daughters.

The collapse fueled a race to inspect other aging residential towers in Florida and beyond, and it raised broader questions about the nation's regulations governing condominium associations and building safety.

Shortly after the disaster, it became clear that warnings about Champlain Towers South, which opened in 1981, had gone unheeded. A 2018 engineering report detailed cracked and degraded concrete support beams in the underground parking garage and other problems that would cost nearly \$10 million to fix.

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The repairs did not happen, and the estimate grew to \$15 million this year as the owners of the building's 136 units and its governing condo board squabbled over the cost, especially after a Surfside town inspector told them the building was safe.

A complete collapse was all but impossible to imagine. As many officials said in the catastrophe's first days, buildings of that size do not just collapse in the U.S. outside of a terrorist attack. Even tornadoes, hurricanes and earthquakes rarely bring them down.

The ultimate fate of the property where the building once stood has yet to be determined. A judge presiding over several lawsuits filed in the collapse aftermath wants the property sold at market rates, which would bring in an estimated \$100 million or more. Some condo owners want to rebuild, and others say a memorial should be erected to remember the dead.

"All options are on the table," Miami-Dade Circuit Judge Michael Hanzman said at a hearing this week.

The disaster was one of the nation's deadliest engineering failures. A set of overhead walkways collapsed at a Kansas City hotel in 1981, killing 114 people attending a dance. But that wasn't the structure itself. A Washington, D.C., movie theater collapsed in 1922, killing 98. But that came after a blizzard dumped feet of snow on the flat roof.

In the weeks after the collapse, a 28-story courthouse in downtown Miami, built in 1928, and two apartment buildings were closed after inspectors uncovered structural problems. They will remain shut until repairs are made.

The first calls to 911 came at about 1:20 a.m., when Champlain residents reported that the parking garage had collapsed. A woman standing on her balcony called her husband, who was on a business trip, and said the swimming pool had fallen into the garage.

Then, in an instant, a section of the L-shaped building fell straight down. Eight seconds later, another section followed, leaving 35 people alive in the standing portion. In the initial hours, a teen was rescued, and firefighters believed others might be found alive. They took hope from noises emanating from inside the pile that might have been survivors tapping, but in retrospect the sounds came from shifting debris.

Rescue crews worked tirelessly, even when smoke and heat from a fire inside the building's standing portion hampered their efforts. They persisted when the temperatures pushed into the upper 90s (35 Celsius) under the blazing sun, some toiling until they needed IVs to replenish fluids. They carried on when Tropical Storm Elsa passed nearby and dumped torrential rain. They left the pile only when lightning developed.

The portion of the building that remained standing posed another grave threat as it loomed precariously above the workers. Authorities ordered it demolished on July 4.

In the end, crews found no evidence that anyone who was found dead had survived the initial collapse, Cominsky said.

## Algerian judoka refuses potential Olympic bout with Israeli

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — An Algerian judo athlete will be sent home from the Tokyo Olympics after he withdrew from the competition to avoid potentially facing an Israeli opponent.

Fethi Nourine and his coach, Amar Benikhlef, told Algerian media they were withdrawing to avoid a possible second-round matchup with Israel's Tohar Butbul in the men's 73 kg division on Monday. Nourine was drawn to face Sudan's Mohamed Abdalrasool in the opening round, with the winner facing Butbul, the fifth seed.

The International Judo Federation's executive committee has temporarily suspended Nourine and Benikhlef, who are likely to face sanctions beyond the Olympics, which began Saturday. The Algerian Olympic committee then withdrew both men's accreditation and made plans to send them home.

The IJF said Nourine's position was "in total opposition to the philosophy of the International Judo Federation. The IJF has a strict non-discrimination policy, promoting solidarity as a key principle, reinforced by the values of judo."

Nourine and Benikhlef attribute their stance to their political support for Palestinians.

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Nourine also quit the World Judo Championships in 2019 right before he was scheduled to face Butbul, who is a much more accomplished judo athlete than Nourine. Those world championships were held in Tokyo at the Budokan, the site of the Olympic judo tournament.

Judo's world governing body has been firm in its antidiscrimination policies and strong support of Israel's right to compete in recent years.

In April, the IJF suspended Iran for four years because the nation refused to allow its fighters to face Israelis. The IJF said Iran's policies were revealed when former Iranian judoka Saeid Mollaei claimed he was ordered to lose in the semifinals of the 2019 world championships in Tokyo to avoid potentially facing Israeli world champion Sagi Muki in the finals.

The IJF called Iran's policy "a serious breach and gross violation of the statutes of the IJF, its legitimate interests, its principles and objectives." Iran's ban runs through September 2023.

The IJF aided Mollaei's departure for Germany after the controversy, and he now represents Mongolia. He will compete Tuesday at the Olympics.

## **DOJ says no probe into state-run nursing homes in New York**

By MARINA VILLENEUVE Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — The Justice Department has decided not to open a civil rights investigation into government-run nursing homes in New York over their COVID-19 response, according to a letter sent Friday to several Republican members of Congress.

Under former President Donald Trump's administration, the department's civil rights division requested data last August from four states — New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Michigan — about the number of COVID-19 infections and deaths in public nursing homes.

The request came amid still-unanswered questions about whether some states, especially New York, inadvertently worsened the pandemic death toll by requiring nursing homes to accept residents previously hospitalized for COVID-19.

In a letter sent to several Republicans who had demanded an investigation, Deputy Assistant Attorney General Joe Gaeta said civil rights division lawyers had reviewed the data sent by New York, along with additional information.

"Based on that review, we have decided not to open a CRIPA investigation of any public nursing facility within New York at this time," Gaeta wrote, referring to the federal Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act, which empowers the Justice Department to investigate allegations about unlawful conditions in government-run residences.

The Justice Department sent similar letters earlier in the week to officials in Pennsylvania and Michigan. Gov. Andrew Cuomo's spokesperson, Richard Azzopardi, declined to comment.

Cuomo, a Democrat, has previously accused Trump's Department of Justice of initiating the inquiry for purely political reasons. He has also defended the decision to bar nursing homes from rejecting COVID-19 patients during the worst weeks of the pandemic, saying the state was desperate at the time to move recovering patients out of overwhelmed hospitals.

Friday's letter doesn't address the status of other Justice Department inquiries into how the Cuomo administration handled data related to COVID-19 outbreaks at nursing homes.

Federal prosecutors have been examining the governor's coronavirus task force and trying to determine whether the state intentionally manipulated data regarding nursing home deaths, The Associated Press previously reported.

More than 15,800 people have died in nursing homes and assisted living residences in New York. The state's original count of the dead had been much lower because it had excluded thousands of people who got infected in nursing homes, but died in hospitals.

## **Family of James Brown settles 15-year battle over his estate**

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

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COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — The family of entertainer James Brown has reached a settlement ending a 15-year battle over the late singer's estate, an attorney involved in the mediation said Friday.

David Black, an attorney representing Brown's estate, confirmed to The Associated Press that the agreement was reached July 9. Details of the settlement were not disclosed.

Legal wrangling over the Godfather of Soul's estate has been ongoing since his death at the age of 73 on Christmas Day 2006.

The performer's death touched off years of bizarre headlines, beginning with Tomi Rae Hynie — a former partner who claimed to be Brown's wife — being locked out of his 60-acre (24-hectare) estate while photographers captured her sobbing and shaking its iron gates, begging to be let in.

Brown was renowned for hundreds of iconic musical works including hits like "I Feel Good" and "A Man's World," and was known around the world for his flashy performances and dynamic stage presence. But years of drug problems and financial mismanagement caused his estate to dwindle.

More than a dozen lawsuits were filed over the years by people trying to lay claim to the singer's assets, which courts have estimated to be worth anything from \$5 million to more than \$100 million.

The fight over Brown's estate even spilled over into what to do with his body. Family members fought over the remains for more than two months, leaving Brown's body, still inside a gold casket, sitting in cold storage in a funeral home.

Brown was eventually buried in Beech Island, South Carolina, at the home of one of his daughters. The family wanted to turn the home into a shrine for Brown similar to Elvis Presley's Graceland, but that idea never got off the ground.

Last year, the South Carolina Supreme Court ruled that Hynie had not been legally married to Brown and therefore did not have a right to his multimillion-dollar estate.

Justices also ordered a circuit court to "promptly proceed with the probate of Brown's estate in accordance with his estate plan," which outlined creation of a trust that would use his music royalties to fund educational expenses for children in South Carolina and Georgia.

A 2009 settlement plan would have given nearly half of Brown's estate to a charitable trust, a quarter to Hynie, and the rest to be split among his adult children. The state Supreme Court overturned that deal in 2013, writing that then-Attorney General Henry McMaster — now the state's governor — hadn't followed Brown's expressed wishes for most of his money to go to charity, having instead selected a professional manager who took control of Brown's assets from the estate's trustees to settle debts.

## At Tokyo Olympics, a debt to 'Back to the Future' and 'E.T.'

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Although the name Marty McFly won't be on the start list for the first Olympic skateboarding competition, the "Back to the Future" character who inspired the immortal lines "What's that thing he's on? It's a board, with wheels!" was a landmark personality for the sport in its groundbreaking journey to the Tokyo Games.

The Olympic debut in Tokyo of BMX freestyle also owes a debt to Hollywood, because it was Steven Spielberg's movie "E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial" that showcased the acrobatic sport's wow factor to mainstream audiences.

So Tinseltown, take an Olympic bow. Skateboarding starts Sunday with the men's street competition. The men and women's medal events in BMX freestyle are on the second Sunday, Aug. 1. Back when the movie blockbusters hit screens in the 1980s, McFly would have needed a time-traveling DeLorean to foresee that these counterculture activities would be welcomed into the Olympic extravaganza unfolding in Tokyo.

"The skateboard associations and the BMX associations should be giving Bob Zemeckis, myself and Steven Spielberg lifetime achievement awards," joked "Back to the Future" screenwriter Bob Gale in an interview with The Associated Press ahead of the competitions.

Gale co-created and cowrote the hit series with director Robert Zemeckis. They imagined McFly as a skateboarder to help make the character — played by actor Michael J. Fox — stand out.



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"Marty McFly was always supposed to be kind of this rebellious kid," Gale recollected. "We thought it was appropriate that he might still be using the skateboard or may have decided to use a skateboard because everybody told him not to."

In one of the movie's signature scenes, McFly uses a makeshift skateboard to outrun and outfox the villainous Biff Tannen. McFly soars on his board over a hedge and races around a town square, sparks flying. Biff and his gang of bullies are humiliated, ending up neck-deep in dung after crashing into a manure truck.

Skateboarding pioneer Tony Hawk was 17 and already a pro when the time-travel movie was released in July 1985. He credits "Back to the Future" for luring a whole generation of kids to skating.

"There are plenty of legendary pros that I know of that started skating because they saw that," Hawk said in an AP interview.

Skateboarding featured again as an outcast activity two years later in "Police Academy 4: Citizens on Patrol." Hawk was part of the stunt crew that skated around downtown Toronto performing jumps and tricks for that movie.

"Back to the Future" was also pivotal for Josh Friedberg, the CEO of USA Skateboarding, who is leading the U.S. team of 12 skaters in Tokyo. The movie and a friend's return to their Kansas hometown from Florida with a skating video and a board all combined to hook Friedberg for life.

"My head exploded," he said in an AP interview. "I fell in love with skateboarding that summer and there are billions of kids my age (for whom) the same exact thing happened.

"That movie was fascinating to me as a 13-year-old, with Michael J. Fox skating on his tail and making sparks and escaping the bad guys," Friedberg added. "There is an entire generation of skateboarders that are the 'Back to the Future' generation."

For the movie's makers, long before skateboarding was Tokyo-bound and plastered all over the internet and social media, one of the challenges was finding skaters good enough to carry the scenes.

"The stunt guys didn't know how to skateboard," Gale recalled.

The hunt took him on a Sunday morning to Los Angeles' Venice Beach, a cradle for the skating culture that Olympic organizers now hope will entice young audiences to tune in to Tokyo.

"Sure enough, there were these two guys that were just doing these outstanding skateboard tricks," Gale said. "So I went up to them and I said, 'I know you are going to think that I am full of it, but I am actually producing a movie and I need a couple of guys.'"

Freestyle BMX pioneer Bob Haro had a similar experience: An out-of-the-blue phone call offering him work as a stuntman on "E.T.," released in 1982.

Among those inspired by Spielberg's blockbuster about a stranded alien was future Olympic track cycling champion Chris Hoy. Then only 7, Hoy was instantly smitten by its thrilling chases and took up BMX racing before later switching to track, where his six gold medals made him Britain's most decorated Olympian.

In the movie's climactic chase scene, Haro jumped his BMX bike onto the roof and hood of a police vehicle, knocking off its flashing red light.

"It turned, again, millions of kids onto BMX," Haro said in an AP interview. "Really great timing, too, because the sport of BMX was blowing up at that time and they capitalized on it in a good way.

"For the younger generation, a lot of them, that's a long time ago," he acknowledged. "They are having their moment, which is great."

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## China's Xi visits Tibet amid rising controls over religion

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese leader Xi Jinping has made a rare visit to Tibet as authorities tighten controls over the Himalayan region's traditional Buddhist culture, accompanied by an accelerated drive for economic development and modernized infrastructure.

State media reported Friday that Xi visited sites in the capital, Lhasa, including the Drepung Monastery, Barkhor Street and the public square at the base of the Potala Palace that was home to the Dalai Lamas, Tibet's traditional spiritual and temporal leaders.

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Xi's visit was previously unannounced publicly and it wasn't clear whether he had already returned to Beijing.

China has in recent years stepped up controls over Buddhist monasteries and expanded education in the Chinese rather than Tibetan language. Critics of such policies are routinely detained and can receive long prison terms, especially if they have been convicted of association with the 86-year-old Dalai Lama, who has lived in exile in India since fleeing Tibet during an abortive uprising against Chinese rule in 1959.

China doesn't recognize the self-declared Tibetan government-in-exile based in the hillside town of Dharmasala, and accuses the Dalai Lama of seeking to separate Tibet from China.

Meanwhile, domestic tourism has expanded massively in the region during Xi's nine years in office and new airports, rail lines and highways constructed.

China's official Xinhua News Agency said that while in Lhasa on Thursday, Xi sought to "learn about the work on ethnic and religious affairs, the conservation of the ancient city, as well as the inheritance and protection of Tibetan culture."

A day earlier, he visited the city of Nyingchi to inspect ecological preservation work on the basin of the Yarlung Zangbo River, the upper course of the Brahmaputra, on which China is building a controversial dam.

He also visited a bridge and inspected a project to build a railway from southwestern China's Sichuan province to Tibet before riding Tibet's first electrified rail line from Nyingchi to Lhasa, which went into service last month.

Xi's visit may be timed to coincide with the 70th anniversary of the 17 Point Agreement, which firmly established Chinese control over Tibet, which many Tibetans say had been effectively independent for most of its history. The Dalai Lama says he was forced into signing the document and has since repudiated it.

It also comes amid deteriorating relations between China and India, which share a lengthy but disputed border with Tibet.

Deadly encounters last year between Indian and Chinese troops along their disputed high-altitude border dramatically altered the already fraught relationship between the nuclear-armed neighbors.

That appears to have prompted Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to wish the Dalai Lama well on his birthday this month on Twitter and said he also spoke to him by phone. That was the first time Modi has publicly confirmed speaking with the Dalai Lama since becoming prime minister in 2014.

In a statement, the advocacy group International Campaign for Tibet called Xi's visit "an indication of how high Tibet continues to figure in Chinese policy considerations."

The way in which the visit was organized and the "complete absence of any immediate state media coverage of the visit indicate that Tibet continues to be a sensitive issue and that the Chinese authorities do not have confidence in their legitimacy among the Tibetan people," the group based in Washington, D.C., said.

## 'This can be me': Black participation rising in gymnastics

By WILL GRAVES AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — There's a phenomenon that happens every time Simone Biles appears on a screen inside Power Moves Gymnastics & Fitness.

As if flipping a switch, the young women of color on the gym's competitive team spring to life, fueled by the jolt of adrenaline that comes with watching the reigning Olympic champion test the limits of their sport.

"They just get this motivation that's just unreal," said DeLissa Walker, who co-owns the gym just outside New York City with her sister Candice. "And we're like, 'Wow, they're really inspired.' ... They're like 'This can be me.'"

Maybe because more and more, it is.

The face of gymnastics in the United States is changing. There are more athletes of color starting — and sticking — in a sport long dominated by white athletes at the highest levels.

Half of the U.S. women's Olympic delegation that will walk onto the floor — Biles, Jordan Chiles and

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Sunisa Lee — at Ariake Gymnastics Center for Olympic qualifying on Sunday are minorities. Biles and Chiles are African American; Lee is Hmong American.

More than half of the 18 women invited to Olympic trials in St. Louis last month were women of color. While numbers are still low on college teams, there is progress. Black women account for nearly 10% of the scholarship athletes at the NCAA Division I level, an increase from 7% in 2012. More than 10% of USA Gymnastics membership self-identify as Black.

And while the current athletes at the top level of the sport were already involved when Gabby Douglas became the first Black woman to win the Olympic all-around title in London in 2012, the rise in participation among athletes of color since Douglas' golden moment at the 02 Dome is real, one amplified by Biles' unmatched brilliance.

"Simone has opened the eyes to so many women of color saying 'Hey, you can do this, too,'" said Cecile Landi, who has served as Biles' co-coach along with husband Laurent since the fall of 2017. "It's not just little skinny white girls that can do it. Anyone can do it. And then it's a Black-owned business, so I think it attracts its own families that way."

Even if it's not exactly what Nellie Biles had in mind when she opened World Champions Centre in the northern Houston suburbs. Yet over the last six years, WCC has become a mecca of sorts. All six members of the club's elite team are Black, and the diversity sprinkled throughout the program — from the elite level all the way down to the recreational kids who spend a few hours in the gym to burn energy — struck Gina Chiles the second her daughter moved from Washington state to train at WCC in 2019.

"I remember calling my husband and saying 'Bruh, you will never guess,'" Gina Chiles said. "At our home gym, Jordan was the only one. It was refreshing to be able to see people of all colors. But to see the amount of little Black girls doing gymnastics, it just did my heart so good. It's hard to explain. It just felt like 'Wow.'"

It's a moment Derrin Moore saw coming the second Douglas climbed to the top of the podium as "The Star-Spangled Banner" blared. The sight of a Black woman standing atop the sport in front of tens of millions in the U.S. provided an immediate spike in interest from families in the predominantly Black neighborhoods surrounding Moore's gym in suburban Atlanta.

"It was huge," Moore said. "Our phones were ringing off the hook."

Yet getting Black kids into gymnastics is one thing. Keeping them is another, one of the reasons Moore founded Black Girls Do Gymnastics in 2015. The foundation is dedicated to providing "scholarships, coaching, training and other forms of support to athletes from underrepresented and marginalized groups."

While Biles and her U.S. teammates head to work in search of helping the Americans win their third straight Olympic title on Sunday in Japan, nearly 7,000 miles away, a group of 100 Black and brown gymnasts will converge at Grambling State University in Louisiana as part of the foundation's annual conference.

The timing with the Olympics is coincidental. The venue is not. Grambling is in the exploratory process of becoming the first historically Black college and university to offer women's gymnastics.

"Our university leadership is looking at young gymnasts in our community and realizing and understanding the path from toddler gymnastics tumbling to the Olympics for a Black and brown gymnast is arduous," said Raven Thissel, the marketing and public relations director for The Doug Williams Center, located on Grambling's campus. "How can we make it a smoother one?"

The conference isn't just focused on athletic development. There are also workshops planned for parents to educate them on what it takes to rise if their athletes want to graduate from entry-level programs to the NCAA/elite level. It's an element that Moore believes can get lost for members of the Black community.

"It's just giving families a little edge," Moore said. "We want to give them information so they can step into the gymnastics arena and be confident and advocating for their girls."

The Walkers, both board members at Brown Girls Do Gymnastics, already are starting to see the results. The business they started in 2012 in a space so small it's now a barbershop is thriving. They moved to a warehouse in 2015 before opening at their current location in Cedarhurst, New York — on Long Island, about 20 miles from Manhattan — last August.

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Even as they've grown, the majority of their clientele has remained athletes of color. Eight members of Power Moves competitive team will be at Grambling this weekend to participate in the Isla Invitational, an exhibition held in conjunction with the conference. The Walkers view it as the next step in the growth process for girls — and their families — eyeing a long-term commitment.

It's a commitment that requires a significant investment of both time and money. Some members of the competitive team put in five to six hours a day several times a week. The Walkers estimate their monthly dues are about half of what other gyms in the area charge. They offer discounts for siblings and promote fundraisers.

Moore's gym limits the number of competition leotards her athletes use and believes her coaches are willing to work for less because they view their mission as more of a calling than a job.

They are preparing for another spike in interest among Black communities that is likely in the offing as Biles steps onto the world stage again. The Walkers, both former competitive gymnasts, are encouraged by what they see, but work remains to be done.

Even as the number of Black and brown athletes rises, diversity among coaching, club ownership, judging and representation at the top levels of USA Gymnastics remains very much a work in progress. While more than half of the athletes at the Olympic trials were women of color, the overwhelming majority of the coaches and the judges on the floor were white.

"We have a role to play in making sure that we are intentionally diverse in that aspect," USA Gymnastics President Li Li Leung said. "And then the hope is as the athletes pave the way. That the ecosystem that supports the athletes also becomes more diverse from a coaching standpoint, also from a club ownership standpoint. That we're hoping to see that as well."

Biles has vowed to remain in the sport long after the Olympic flame in Tokyo is passed along to organizers for the 2024 Games in Paris. Three years from now, perhaps some of the young Black girls who entered the sport in the afterglow of Douglas' victory in London will be the ones in the mix to represent the United States in France or scattered across NCAA gymnastics programs across the country, maybe even at historically Black colleges and universities.

"Representation does matter," Gina Chiles said. "And Simone has put her foot in it. She's definitely set that path in a lot of ways. Whatever level you go to, you can be excellent at that level. And a lot of Black girls see that. And a lot of Black girls now want to be that."

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## Unlikely partners Pelosi and Cheney team up for Jan. 6 probe

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Nancy Pelosi raised a glass to Liz Cheney, it was the most unlikely of toasts. Democratic lawmakers and the Republican congresswoman were gathered in the House speaker's office as the group prepared for the first session of the committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol.

Pelosi spoke of the "solemn responsibility" before them and raised her water glass to Cheney, a daughter of the former vice president and the sole Republican in the room.

"Let us salute Liz for her courage," she said, according to a person familiar with the gathering who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private meeting.

Politics often creates unlikely alliances, the odd-couple arrangements between would-be foes who drop their differences to engage on a common cause.

But the emerging partnership between Pelosi and Cheney is remarkable, if not astonishing, as the longtime political adversaries join forces to investigate what happened the day former President Donald Trump's supporters stormed the Capitol.

Rarely has there been a meeting of the minds like this — two of the strongest women on Capitol Hill, partisans at opposite ends of the political divide — bonding over a shared belief that the truth about the insurrection should come out and those responsible held accountable. They believe no less than the func-



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tioning of America's democracy is on the line.

"Nothing draws politicians together like a shared enemy," said John Pitney, a former Republican staffer and professor of politics at Claremont McKenna College.

The committee will hold its first hearing next week, and the stakes of the Pelosi-Cheney alliance have never been higher. The panel will hear testimony from police officers who battled the Trump supporters that day at the Capitol. The officers have portrayed the hours-long siege as hardly a gathering of peaceful demonstrators, as some Republicans claim, but rather a violent mob trying to stop Congress from certifying Joe Biden's election.

As their new partnership unfolds, the risks and rewards have an uneven flow. Pelosi benefits more politically from drawing Cheney to her side, giving the committee's investigation the big-name bipartisan stamp it needs to avoid being viewed as a strictly political exercise.

For Cheney, who has already been booted from GOP leadership over her criticism of Trump, the political dangers are far greater. She was one of 10 House Republicans who voted to impeach Trump over the insurrection, and her willingness to speak out against his top ally, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, now leaves her isolated on Capitol Hill. She is facing blowback from the ranks and serious primary challenges for her reelection back home.

"I'm horrified," said Sen. Cynthia Lummis, a fellow Wyoming Republican, about Cheney's actions.

Cheney, though, shows no signs of backing down on what she views as an existential fight not only for the party she and her family helped build, but also for the soul of the nation itself.

"The American people deserve to know what happened," she said this week.

Standing on the steps of the Capitol, Cheney lambasted the rhetoric coming from McCarthy as "disgraceful" and supported Pelosi's decision to block two of his appointees to the panel because of their alliance with Trump.

McCarthy has suggested Cheney might be closer now to Pelosi than her own party, and he withdrew all Republican participation in the committee.

Pelosi and Cheney are hardly fast friends.

Despite their long resumes in American politics, they never really talked to each other before this moment.

Pelosi won her first term as speaker during the George W. Bush administration, largely attacking the White House over the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the hawkish defense posture of then-Vice President Dick Cheney.

Liz Cheney took office in 2017 defending her father's legacy, speaking boldly at one of her first news conferences in support of the enhanced interrogation technique of waterboarding that was decried as torture under his watch. During Trump's first impeachment, she lacerated Pelosi's intentions in speeches.

While both are political royalty, Pelosi and Cheney have operated in parallel political universes for much of their careers. A generation apart, they bring different styles to the job — Pelosi, the San Francisco liberal, Cheney, the Wyoming conservative. About the only thing they have in common is that both are mothers of five.

Yet when Pelosi called Cheney the morning after the vote to establish the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the Capitol, both seemed to instantly grasp the historical gravity of the moment.

Pelosi thanked Cheney for her patriotism and invited her to join the panel — a stunning moment, the Democratic speaker appointing a Republican to a spot.

Cheney quickly accepted, responding that she was honored to serve, according to another person familiar with the conversation who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private talks.

Behind closed doors, those involved in the committee's work see in Cheney a serious and constructive member, hardly a Republican figurehead but a determined partner to what she has said must be a "sober" investigation. It was Cheney who elevated the idea of having former Republican Rep. Denver Riggleman of Virginia serve as an adviser to the committee, which is under consideration, one of the people said.

Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., the chair of the Jan. 6 panel, said while he and others didn't know Cheney well, he found her to be "just like every other member that I have a relationship with. And I think that's good. I just wish we had more of that kind of relationship in this institution. We'd be better off."

For Cheney and Pelosi, the commission and its findings are likely to be defining aspects of their careers.

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Pelosi led the House to twice impeach Trump and is determined to hold him accountable for his actions on Jan. 6 as she wraps what could be her final years as speaker.

Seven people died in the siege and its aftermath, including Trump supporter Ashli Babbitt, who was shot by police as she climbed through a broken window trying to access the House chamber. Three other Trump supporters in the mob died of natural causes. Police officer Brian Sicknick, who had battled the rioters, died the next day. Two other officers took their own lives.

Cheney, who warned her party in an op-ed that "history is watching" in this moment, vows to seek a fourth term but has an uncertain political future.

According to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, 60% of Americans say it's very or extremely important that investigations continue to examine what happened during the Jan. 6 breach of the U.S. Capitol.

The poll, conducted July 15-19, showed 51% of Americans say they have an unfavorable opinion of Pelosi, though among Democrats it's more favorable. For Cheney, the results show her more positively rated by Democrats than Republicans. Among Democrats, 47% say they have a favorable view of Cheney and 20% an unfavorable view, while among Republicans, 21% have a favorable view and 46% have an unfavorable one.

Pitney, the professor who worked for the elder Cheney decades ago in House leadership but left the Republican Party during the Trump era, said the Pelosi and Cheney bond will be one for history.

"It's like one of those 1950s science-fiction movies where everyone unites over the alien invader," he said. Pelosi and Cheney have "a legitimate shared interest in getting to the bottom of the insurrection."

## UN adopts first resolution on vision, aims to help 1 billion

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. General Assembly approved its first-ever resolution on vision Friday, calling on its 193 member nations to ensure access to eye care for everyone in their countries which would contribute to a global effort to help at least 1.1 billion people with vision impairment who currently lack eye services by 2030.

The "Vision for Everyone" resolution, sponsored by Bangladesh, Antigua and Ireland, and co-sponsored by over 100 countries, was adopted by consensus by the world body.

It encourages countries to institute a "whole of government approach to eye care." And it calls on international financial institutions and donors to provide targeted financing, especially for developing countries, to address the increasing impact of vision loss on economic and social development.

According to the resolution, "at least 2 billion people are living with vision impairment or blindness and 1.1 billion people have vision impairment that could have been prevented or is yet to be addressed."

"Global eye care needs are projected to increase substantially, with half the global population expected to be living with a vision impairment by 2050," the resolution says.

Bangladesh's U.N. Ambassador Rabab Fatima introduced the resolution, stressing its first-ever focus on vision, and calling it "a long overdue recognition of the central role that healthy vision plays in human life and for sustainable development."

He said over 90% of the 1.1 billion people worldwide with vision loss live in low- and middle-income countries, adding that 55% of blind people are women and girls.

On average, the loss of sight costs the global economy "a staggering amount of \$411 billion in productivity each year," Fatima said. And access to eye care services can increase household spending per capital by 88% "and the odds of obtaining paid employment by 10%."

While General Assembly resolutions are not legally binding, they do reflect global opinion.

Fatima said it was critical for the assembly to convey the U.N.'s "unequivocal commitment to ensure proper eye care facilities for everyone, everywhere, to prevent conditions which can lead to serious and permanent damages."

He called the resolution an "opportunity to change the lives of millions who are living in blindness or

with impaired vision.”

The resolution stresses that access to eye care is essential to achieve U.N. goals for 2030 to end poverty and hunger, ensure healthy lives and quality education, and reduce inequality.

It calls on all nations to mobilize resources and support to ensure eye care for all people in their countries, in order to reach at least 1.1 billion people worldwide “who have a vision impairment and currently do not have access to the eye care services that they need” by 2030.

Hong Kong philanthropist James Chen, founder of the Clearly campaign to promote global vision who campaigned for the resolution for the past two decades, called it “a significant milestone” and “a critical preliminary step” to achieving the U.N. goals.

“The first step, now, is to ensure governments follow up on their commitment to action,” and “regard vision correction as essential healthcare, alongside other priorities like family planning and infant immunization,” he said in a statement to The Associated Press.

With that kind of engagement from governments and non-governmental organizations, “glasses are affordable, and their distribution is solvable,” and the ambitious U.N. 2030 deadline can be met, said Chen, who is chairman of the Chen Yet-Sen Family Foundation.

## Federal court lifts CDC rules for Florida-based cruise ships

MIAMI (AP) — Pandemic restrictions on Florida-based cruise ships are no longer in place under a ruling Friday by a federal appeals court, while the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention seek to fight a Florida lawsuit challenging the regulations.

A three-judge panel of the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals had temporarily blocked a previous ruling last Saturday that sided with Florida officials, but the court reversed that decision on Friday, explaining that the CDC failed to demonstrate an entitlement to a stay pending appeal.

Last weekend’s temporary stay had kept the CDC regulations regarding Florida-based cruise ships in place while the CDC appeals the June decision by U.S. District Judge Steven Merryday. Those regulations can no longer be enforced but can still be used as guidelines.

The lawsuit, championed by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, claims that the CDC’s multiple-step process to allow cruising from Florida is overly burdensome, harming both a multibillion-dollar industry that provides some 159,000 jobs and revenue collected by the state.

In court filings, attorneys for Florida had urged the 11th Circuit to reject the CDC request to keep its rules intact.

“The equities overwhelmingly favor allowing the cruise industry to enjoy its first summer season in two years while this Court sorts out the CDC’s contentions on appeal,” Florida’s lawyers argued.

The CDC, however, said keeping the rules in place would prevent future COVID-19 outbreaks on ships that are vulnerable to the spread of the virus because of their close quarters and frequent stops at foreign ports.

“The undisputed evidence shows that unregulated cruise ship operations would exacerbate the spread of COVID-19, and that the harm to the public that would result from such operations cannot be undone,” the CDC said in a court filing.

The CDC first flatly halted cruise ships from sailing in March 2020 in response to the coronavirus pandemic, which had affected passengers and crew on numerous ships.

Then the CDC on Oct. 30 of last year imposed a four-phase conditional framework it said would allow the industry to gradually resume operations if certain thresholds were met. Those included virus mitigation procedures and a simulated cruise to test them before embarking regular passengers.

Merryday’s decision concluded that the CDC can’t enforce those rules for Florida-based ships and that they should merely be considered nonbinding recommendations or guidelines. Several cruise lines have begun preliminary cruises under those guidelines, which the Tampa judge agreed with Florida are too onerous.

“Florida persuasively claims that the conditional sailing order will shut down most cruises through the summer and perhaps much longer,” the judge wrote in June, adding that Florida “faces an increasingly

threatening and imminent prospect that the cruise industry will depart the state.”

Disney Cruise Lines held its first simulated sailing under CDC rules last Saturday when the Disney Dream departed from Port Canaveral, Florida. The passengers were volunteer Disney employees.

## Jolie-Pitt divorce judge disqualified by appeals court

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Angelina Jolie scored a major victory Friday in her divorce with Brad Pitt when a California appeals court agreed with her that the private judge deciding who gets custody of their children should be disqualified.

The 2nd District Court of Appeal agreed with Jolie that Judge John W. Ouderkirk didn't sufficiently disclose business relationships with Pitt's attorneys.

“Judge Ouderkirk's ethical breach, considered together with the information disclosed concerning his recent professional relationships with Pitt's counsel, might cause an objective person, aware of all the facts, reasonably to entertain a doubt as to the judge's ability to be impartial. Disqualification is required,” the court ruled.

The decision means that the custody fight over the couple's five minor children, which was nearing an end, could just be getting started.

The judge already ruled the pair divorced, but separated the child custody issues.

Like many celebrity couples, Pitt and Jolie opted to hire their own judge to increase their privacy in the divorce proceedings.

“The appeals court ruling was based on a technical procedural issue. The facts haven't changed. There is an extraordinary amount of factual evidence which led the judge — and the many experts who testified — to reach their clear conclusion about what is in the children's best interests,” a statement by Pitt's representative said. “We will continue to do what's necessary legally based on the detailed findings of what's best for the children.”

Details of the custody rulings have not been publicly released.

Jolie and Pitt have six children: 19-year-old Maddox, 17-year-old Pax, 16-year-old Zahara, 15 year-old Shiloh, 12-year-old Vivienne and 12-year-old Knox. Only the five minors are subject to custody decisions.

Ouderkirk declined to disqualify himself when Jolie asked him to in a filing in August. A lower court judge ruled that Jolie's request for disqualification came too late. Jolie's attorneys then appealed.

The July 9 oral arguments in front of the appeals court focused on exactly which ethical rules should apply to private judges, who, like Ouderkirk, are usually retired superior court judges.

“If you're going to play the role of a paid private judge you have to play by the rules and the rules are very clear, they require full transparency,” Jolie's attorney Robert Olson said. “Matters that should have been disclosed were not disclosed.”

Pitt attorney Theodore Boutsos said the attempt at disqualification was a stalling tactic by Jolie to keep Ouderkirk's recent tentative custody decision, which is favorable to Pitt, from going into effect.

The court cited several cases, including the divorce of “Modern Family” co-creator Steven Levitan, in which Ouderkirk either failed entirely to disclose a business relationship with Pitt's attorneys or failed to disclose one quickly or completely enough.

The panel questioned whether such an arrangement should be allowed in California at all, but their ruling applies only to Ouderkirk.

Jolie, 46, and Pitt, 57, were among Hollywood's most prominent couples for 12 years. Ouderkirk officiated the couple's 2014 wedding, then was hired to oversee their divorce when Jolie filed to dissolve the marriage in 2016. They were declared divorced in April 2019, after their lawyers asked for a judgment that allowed a married couple to be declared single while other issues remained, including finances and child custody.

In May, Jolie and her attorneys criticized Ouderkirk for not allowing the couple's children to testify in the proceedings.

The actress also said the judge “has failed to adequately consider” a section of the California courts



code, which says it is detrimental to the best interest of the child if custody is awarded to a person with a history of domestic violence. Her filing did not give details about what it was referring to, but her lawyers submitted a document under seal in March that purportedly offers additional information.

The ruling does not address whether the children should be allowed to testify in the case.

## **New technology propels efforts to fight Western wildfires**

By DON THOMPSON Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — As drought- and wind-driven wildfires have become more dangerous across the American West in recent years, firefighters have tried to become smarter in how they prepare.

They're using new technology and better positioning of resources in a bid to keep small blazes from erupting into mega-fires like the ones that torched a record 4% of California last year, or the nation's biggest wildfire this year that has charred a section of Oregon half the size of Rhode Island.

There have been 730 more wildfires in California so far this year than last, an increase of about 16%. But nearly triple the area has burned — 470 square miles (1,200 square kilometers).

Catching fires more quickly gives firefighters a better chance of keeping them small.

That includes using new fire behavior computer modeling that can help assess risks before fires start, then project their path and growth.

When "critical weather" is predicted — hot, dry winds or lightning storms — the technology, on top of hard-earned experience, allows California planners to pre-position fire engines, bulldozers, aircraft and hand crews armed with shovels and chain saws in areas where they can respond more quickly.

With the computer modeling, "they can do a daily risk forecast across the state, so they use that for planning," said Lynne Tolmachoff, spokeswoman for Cal Fire, California's firefighting agency.

That's helped Cal Fire hold an average 95% of blazes to 10 acres (4 hectares) or less even in poor conditions driven by drought or climate change, she said. So far this year it's held 96.5% of fires below 10 acres (4 hectares).

Federal firefighters similarly track how dry vegetation has become in certain areas, then station crews and equipment ahead of lightning storms or in areas where people gather during holidays, said Stanton Florea, a U.S. Forest Service spokesman at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho.

In another effort to catch fires quickly, what once were fire lookout towers staffed by humans have largely been replaced with cameras in remote areas, many of them in high-definition and armed with artificial intelligence to discern a smoke plume from morning fog. There are 800 such cameras scattered across California, Nevada and Oregon, and even casual viewers can remotely watch wildfires in real time.

Fire managers can then "start making tactical decisions based on what they can see," even before firefighters reach the scene, Tolmachoff said.

Fire managers also routinely summon military drones from the National Guard or Air Force to fly over fires at night, using heat imaging to map their boundaries and hot spots. They can use satellite imagery to plot the course of smoke and ash.

"Your job is to manage the fire, and these are tools that will help you do so" with a degree of accuracy unheard of even five years ago, said Char Miller, a professor at Pomona College in California and a widely recognized wildfire policy expert.

In California, fire managers can overlay all that information on high-quality Light Detection and Ranging topography maps that can aid decisions on forest management, infrastructure planning and preparation for wildfires, floods, tsunamis and landslides. Then they add the fire behavior computer simulation based on weather and other variables.

Other mapping software can show active fires, fuel breaks designed to slow their spread, prescribed burns, defensible space cleared around homes, destroyed homes and other wildfire damage.

"It's all still new, but we can see where it's going to take us in the future when it comes to planning for people building homes on the wildland area, but also wildland firefighting," Tolmachoff said.

Cal Fire and other fire agencies have been early adopters of remote imaging and other technologies that

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can be key in early wildfire detection, said John Bailey, a former firefighter and now professor at Oregon State University.

Some experts argue it's a losing battle against wildfires worsened by global warming, a century of reflexive wildfire suppression and overgrown forests, and communities creeping into what once were sparsely populated areas. Climate change has made the West hotter and drier in the past 30 years, and scientists have long warned the weather will get more extreme as the world warms.

Yet, firefighters' goal is to replicate the outcome of a fire that started Monday in the canyon community of Topanga, between Los Angeles and Malibu.

It had the potential to swiftly spread through dry brush but was held to about 7 acres (3 hectares) after water-dropping aircraft were scrambled within minutes from LA and neighboring Ventura County.

What firefighters don't want is another wildfire like the one that ravaged the Malibu area in 2018. It destroyed more than 1,600 structures, killed three people and forced thousands to flee.

In another bid to gain an early advantage, California is buying a dozen new Sikorsky Firehawk helicopters — at \$24 million each — that can operate at night, fly faster, drop more water and carry more firefighters than the Vietnam War-era Bell UH-1H "Hueys" they will eventually replace.

It will also soon receive seven military surplus C-130 transport aircraft retrofitted to carry 4,000 gallons (15,140 litres) of fire retardant, more than three times as much as Cal Fire's workhorse S-2 airtankers.

For all that, firefighters' efforts to outsmart and suppress wildfires is counterproductive if all it does is postpone fires in areas that will eventually burn, argued Richard Minnich, a professor in Riverside who studies fire ecology.

"No matter how sophisticated the technology may be, the areas they can manage or physically impact things is small," he said. "We're in over our heads. You can have all the technology in the world — fire control is impossible."

Working with wildfires is more realistic, he said, by taking advantage of patches that previously burned to channel the spread of new blazes.

Timothy Ingalsbee, a former federal firefighter who now heads Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics and Ecology, also said firefighters need to adopt a new approach when confronting the most dangerous wind-driven wildfires that leapfrog containment lines by showering flaming embers a mile or more ahead of the main inferno.

It's better to build more fire-resistant homes and devote scarce resources to protecting threatened communities while letting the fires burn around them, he said.

"We have these amazing tools that allow us to map fire spread in real time and model it better than weather predictions," Ingalsbee said. "Using that technology, we can start being more strategic and working with fire to keep people safe, keep homes safe, but let fire do the work it needs to do — which is recycle all the dead stuff into soil."

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## AP-NORC poll: Most unvaccinated Americans don't want shots

By TAMMY WEBBER and EMILY SWANSON Associated Press

Most Americans who haven't been vaccinated against COVID-19 say they are unlikely to get the shots and doubt they would work against the aggressive delta variant despite evidence they do, according to a new poll that underscores the challenges facing public health officials amid soaring infections in some states.

Among American adults who have not yet received a vaccine, 35% say they probably will not, and 45% say they definitely will not, according to a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Just 3% say they definitely will get the shots, though another 16% say they probably will.

What's more, 64% of unvaccinated Americans have little to no confidence the shots are effective against variants — including the delta variant that officials say is responsible for 83% of new cases in the U.S. — despite evidence that they offer strong protection. In contrast, 86% of those who have already been vaccinated have at least some confidence that the vaccines will work.

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That means “that there will be more preventable cases, more preventable hospitalizations and more preventable deaths,” said Dr. Amesh Adalja, an infectious disease specialist at Johns Hopkins University.

“We always knew some proportion of the population would be difficult to persuade no matter what the data showed, (and) a lot of people are beyond persuasion,” Adalja said. He echoed Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Rochelle Walensky in calling the current surge “a pandemic of the unvaccinated” because nearly all hospital admissions and deaths have been among those who weren’t immunized.

The AP-NORC survey was conducted before several Republicans and conservative cable news personalities this week urged people to get vaccinated after months of stoking hesitancy. That effort comes as COVID-19 cases nearly tripled in the U.S. over the past two weeks.

Nationally, 56.4% of all Americans, including children, have received at least one dose of the vaccine, according to the CDC. And White House officials said Thursday that vaccinations are beginning to increase in some states where rates are lagging behind and COVID-19 cases are rising, including in Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Missouri and Nevada.

Still, just over 40% of Louisiana’s population has received at least one dose, and the state reported 5,388 new COVID-19 cases Wednesday — the third-highest single-day figure since the pandemic began. Hospitalizations also rose steeply in the last month.

The AP-NORC survey found that the majority of Americans — 54% — are at least somewhat concerned that they or someone in their family will be infected, including 27% who are very concerned. That’s up slightly from a month ago, but far below the beginning of the year, when about 7 in 10 Americans said they were at least somewhat concerned that they or someone they knew would be infected.

Democrats are far more likely than Republicans to say they’re at least somewhat concerned about someone close to them being infected, 70% to 38%.

And overall, Republicans are far more likely than Democrats to say they have not been vaccinated and definitely or probably won’t be, 43% to 10%. Views are also divided along age and education lines: Thirty-seven percent of those under age 45 say they haven’t and likely won’t get the shots, compared with just 16% of those older. And those without college degrees are more likely than those with them to say they aren’t and won’t be vaccinated, 30% to 18%.

Cody Johansen, who lives near Orlando, Florida, considers himself a conservative Republican, but said that had no bearing on his decision to skip vaccination.

“It hasn’t really been that dangerous to people in my demographic, and I have a good immune system,” said Johansen, a 26-year-old who installs audio-visual equipment at military bases. “Most of my friends got vaccinated, and they’re a little mad at me for not getting it. There is peer pressure because they say it’s a civic responsibility.”

He said it’s obvious the shots have been effective, though it bothers him a little that they have only emergency use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration.

Johansen said he approves of how President Joe Biden has handled the pandemic response, saying he has exhibited good leadership.

That reflects the poll’s findings. A large majority of Americans, 66%, continue to approve of how Biden is handling the pandemic — higher than Biden’s overall approval rating of 59%.

The difference is fueled largely by Republicans, 32% of whom say they approve of Biden’s handling of COVID-19 compared with 15% who approve of him overall. About 9 in 10 Democrats approve of Biden overall and for his handling of the pandemic.

On Friday, White House press secretary Jen Psaki told reporters that the Biden administration has persuaded “a whole lot of people to change their minds and take action, get a shot, save their lives and the lives of people around them.” She noted that more than 5.2 million have received shots in the past 10 days, and said officials would continue their outreach efforts.

Jessie McMasters, an aerospace engineer who lives near Rockford, Illinois, said she got her first shot when she was 37 weeks’ pregnant after talking with her midwife and reading about how the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were developed.

"That gave me high confidence that they worked," McMasters said. Her parents both were infected but did not suffer serious illness, and both have since been vaccinated.

She said her friends and family are all over the place when it comes to their views on vaccination and other virus-prevention measures — often reflecting how such discussions have become partisan. Some who got it are "so far on one end that they may never give up masks because now it's a personal statement," said McMasters, who leans Democratic, just as others won't get the shots because of their political beliefs or misinformation.

Dr. Howard Koh, a professor at the Harvard Chan School of Public Health, said vaccine hesitancy is not new, but the misinformation surrounding COVID-19 and the fast-spreading variant make it imperative to reach people one-on-one to understand their concerns and provide accurate information.

He called the new surge in infections and deaths "just heartbreaking."

"What I learned from my patients is that when a loved one dies, that's a tragedy," said Koh, who was a senior public health official in the Obama administration. "But when a loved one dies and you know it could have been prevented, that tragedy haunts you forever."

## Trump inaugural committee chair to be released on \$250M bail

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The chair of former President Donald Trump's inaugural committee was ordered freed Friday on \$250 million bail to face charges he secretly worked as an agent for the the United Arab Emirates to influence Trump's foreign policy.

Tom Barrack, 74, will be subject to electronic monitoring and largely confined to his residence after he is arraigned Monday in a New York courtroom. He was arrested Tuesday in Los Angeles near his home.

Barrack is expected to plead not guilty to conspiring to influence U.S. policy on the UAE's behalf during Trump's 2016 campaign and while Trump was president. Barrack, the founder of private equity firm Colony Capital, was among three men charged in the case.

Prosecutors said Barrack used his long personal friendship with Trump to benefit the UAE without disclosing his ties to the U.S. government.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Patricia Donahue in Los Angeles ordered strict conditions for Barrack's release. He must surrender his passport, wear a GPS-monitor to track his whereabouts, limit travel between Southern California and New York City and obey a curfew.

Barrack is charged with conspiracy, obstruction of justice and making multiple false statements during a June 2019 interview with federal agents. Matthew Grimes, 27, a former executive at Barrack's company from Aspen, Colorado, and Rashid al Malik, 43, a businessman from the United Arab Emirates who prosecutors said acted as a conduit to that nation's rulers, were also charged in the seven-count indictment.

Grimes was ordered released on \$5 million bail. Al Malik fled the U.S. three days after an April 2018 interview by law enforcement and remains at large, authorities said. He and is believed to be living somewhere in the Middle East.

Barrack is one of several of the former president's associates to face criminal charges, including his former campaign chair, his former deputy campaign chair, his former chief strategist, his former national security adviser, his former personal lawyer and his company's longtime chief financial officer.

Barrack was an informal adviser to Trump's 2016 campaign before becoming the inaugural committee chair.

He raised \$107 million for the lavish celebration scrutinized both for its spending and for attracting numerous foreign officials and businesspeople looking to lobby the new administration. The inaugural committee was not implicated in the indictment.

After Trump took office, Barrack informally advised senior U.S. government officials on Middle East foreign policy. He also sought appointment as special envoy to the Middle East or U.S. ambassador to the UAE, prosecutors said.

He relayed sensitive information about developments within the Trump administration to UAE officials—



including how senior U.S. officials felt about a yearslong boycott of Qatar conducted by the UAE and other Middle Eastern countries, prosecutors said.

He told al Malik that landing an official position within the administration would enable him to advance UAE interests, prosecutors said.

Such an appointment "would give ABU DHABI more power!" he wrote to al Malik, prosecutors said.

Prosecutors originally sought to detain Barrack because they said he owned a private jet and was a flight risk. They also noted he has citizenship in Lebanon, a country with no extradition treaty with the U.S.

## Brazil reopens amid looming threat from delta variant

By DÉBORA ÁLVARES and MAURICIO SAVARESE Associated Press

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — With the number of coronavirus deaths starting to recede in Brazil, a renewed sense of optimism has led state governors to roll back restrictions, soccer fans are starting to return to stadiums, and the mayor of Rio de Janeiro has said the city's famous New Year's party is back on.

But one question looms over these early signs of recovery: What will happen as the delta variant of COVID-19 spreads through the mostly unvaccinated country, which already has the world's second-highest death toll with 547,000 fatalities?

The variant is boosting cases and deaths globally after a period of decline, and the World Health Organization anticipates it will become dominant within months. The race is on to vaccinate as many Brazilians as possible.

Countries that succeeded in doing so, like the U.K., have seen infections soar in recent weeks — but without a corresponding rise in serious illnesses or deaths.

Experts are concerned that it is unlikely Brazil can do the same in time.

"It will be explosive," said Gonzalo Vecina, a professor of public health at the University of Sao Paulo. "There will be a new wave. We are opening too much."

Brazil's Health Ministry counted 140 cases of the delta variant by Friday, including its three most populous states, and 12 deaths. Analysts say the figures are vast undercounts due to lack of testing and genome sequencing.

President Jair Bolsonaro has long opposed restrictions and played down COVID-19's risks, often saying infection is inevitable. Lawmakers have begun investigating his administration's handling of the pandemic, particularly why officials appear to have been slow to acquire vaccines.

Health Minister Marcelo Queiroga says getting more of the population vaccinated is the best way to stop the variant, but he insists that Brazil must resume its economic activities.

"We have available hospital bed capacity and we will live with this pandemic until we can control it definitively," Queiroga said Wednesday. He stressed the importance of knowing whether each person infected with the variant has already had one shot or two.

British researchers found that two doses of either the Pfizer or AstraZeneca vaccines were only slightly less effective at blocking delta's symptomatic illness, compared with earlier variants. Importantly, the vaccines were hugely effective at preventing hospitalization.

But just one dose proved far less effective than against other variants. That prompted Britain, which earlier extended the gap between doses, to speed up second shots. There's little information on the efficacy of other vaccines against the variant.

That's worrisome for Brazil, where 17% of the population is fully vaccinated and 44% have received the first of two shots. The AstraZeneca shot makes up nearly half of all vaccines administered, China's Sinovac more than a third, and Pfizer most of the rest.

Sao Paulo Gov. João Doria is among those leaders considering a booster shot for those who got two Sinovac doses. At the same time, he allowed businesses to stay open later and increase their customer capacity.

Pernambuco's government similarly loosened restrictions for bars and social events on July 5 — the same day the northeastern state identified its first two delta cases.

Federal District Gov. Ibaneis Rocha allowed 15,000 spectators to attend a soccer match this week —

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the first professional club match attended by fans in Brazil since the pandemic began. Shortly before the game, the district's health secretary confirmed delta variant cases in the region.

"The information that governors are conveying to people is that the pandemic is under control," said Ethel Maciel, an epidemiologist at the Federal University of Espirito Santo. "We shouldn't be talking about control, or the pandemic coming to an end when less than 20% of people are fully vaccinated and more than 1,000 people are dying every day."

Israel and the Netherlands reopened widely after vaccinating most of their citizens, but they had to re-impose some restrictions after new surges of infections. The Dutch prime minister said lifting restrictions too early "was a mistake."

In the U.K, where delta has become dominant, infections have surged in the past two months to the highest level since January. Officials repeatedly expressed confidence that, with more than two-thirds the adult population fully vaccinated, the impact would be lessened. Indeed, daily deaths remain under 5% of the peak.

Indonesia trails Brazil in the rate of vaccinations, and on Thursday, the Southeast Asian country reported its deadliest day since the start of the pandemic. Sinovac was the predominant vaccine there, but with growing concern that the shot is less effective against delta, the government is planning booster shots of other vaccines.

Brazilians are paying attention to reports of the delta variant causing havoc in U.S. states with low vaccination rates. Still, many remain optimistic with Brazil's death toll down almost two-thirds from April.

Claudio Santos, 64, was calmly ordering food at a juice bar in Rio on Wednesday when he remembered his mask was too old and needed replacing.

"It's a little different since the start of this month. We have this perception more people are vaccinated, we don't hear every day that someone we know got COVID," Santos said. "Of course, we are worried about the new variant, but I haven't panicked since the pandemic began and don't plan to now. I got my shots and life is going back to some kind of normal."

Delta's impact may be cushioned by the highly contagious gamma variant, which emerged in the Amazonian city of Manaus and has already established dominance across Brazil, said Felipe Naveca, a Manaus-based virologist at the state-run Fiocruz Institute who studies the variants.

Brazil conducts hardly any genomic sequencing of coronavirus tests, compared with the U.S and the U.K., said Maciel, the epidemiologist. In Rio state, the most recent study found gamma accounted for 78% of 380 samples and delta 16%, according to its health secretariat.

Delta has been detected in at least 18 Latin America's countries, according to the Pan-American Health Organization.

It comprises almost two-thirds of all sampled cases in Mexico City, health officials said last week. Mexican Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard suggested that its spread had contributed to the U.S. decision to postpone reopening its border. The death toll in Mexico has begun ticking upward after months of decline.

In Cuba, the delta variant has caused the collapse of Matanza province's health care system. A medical team sent to aid Venezuela was recalled to cope with a crush of patients.

A greater share of Cuban and Mexican populations are fully vaccinated than Brazil's, according to Our World in Data, an online research site.

Denise Garrett, an epidemiologist and vice president of the Sabin Vaccine Institute, said she believes the Brazilian health care system will buckle if it doesn't prepare for surging COVID-19 infections.

"We are seeing it happen in countries with a bigger vaccination coverage," Garrett said. "There is nothing that should make us think that Brazil will be any different."

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

The Associated Press undefined

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

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them out. Here are the facts:

Video misrepresents voluntary vaccine clinic outside Idaho school

CLAIM: A video shows U.S. government agents forcing students at an Idaho middle school to receive COVID-19 vaccines behind the building.

THE FACTS: An incendiary video circulating widely on social media this week weaponizes footage from a voluntary, health district-run vaccine clinic to push the false narrative that the U.S. military is forcibly vaccinating children. "You're about to see some disturbing footage," the video's narrator says over suspenseful music. "You're going to see government agents escort children to their execution, to a little shed behind the school in secrecy. They pull these children out of class, they force them into getting the vaccine and they inject them in broad daylight." The narrator refers to immunizing children as a "genocide," even though the FDA has declared that the Pfizer vaccine is safe and offers strong protection to children as young as 12. The narrator also claims the press wasn't invited "to witness the lethal injection." As the narrator speaks, a video clip shows students milling in and out of a tent outside their school. The Panhandle Health District arranged the voluntary vaccine clinic at Coeur d'Alene's Canfield Middle School on May 28 to "reduce barriers individuals may have to receiving the vaccine" and "make it convenient for students and parents," said Katherine Hoyer, public information officer for the health agency. It was one of several clinics held at local schools in the spring, according to Scott Maben, communications director for Coeur d'Alene Public Schools. Maben confirmed that the event was "completely voluntary and with parent permission" and that it was organized by the Panhandle Health District, with the middle school as a venue. Maben also explained there was no truth to claims that this or other vaccine clinics at local schools were hidden from the public. "The health department announced these clinics publicly weeks in advance, and we shared the sign-up links and parental permission form with middle and high school parents," Maben said. "A few weeks prior to this I invited local media to attend the first vaccination clinic at a high school." Members of the Idaho National Guard helped facilitate the clinics because they were deployed by Idaho Gov. Brad Little to assist local health districts with the COVID-19 response, which includes vaccination efforts, Hoyer said.

— Associated Press writer Ali Swenson in Seattle contributed this report.

Inaccurate data spreads about COVID hospitalizations in the UK

CLAIM: Sixty percent of people being admitted to the hospital for COVID-19 in England have had two doses of coronavirus vaccine.

THE FACTS: The opposite is true. Sixty percent of people who are hospitalized with COVID-19 in the U.K. are unvaccinated. Sir Patrick Vallance, chief scientific advisor for the U.K., gave the wrong statistic at a press conference Monday, but issued a correction later that day. "Correcting a statistic I gave at the press conference today, 19 July," Vallance wrote in his post. "About 60% of hospitalisations from covid are not from double vaccinated people, rather 60% of hospitalisations from covid are currently from unvaccinated people." Nevertheless, social media users quickly ran with the inaccurate information without acknowledging the correction. An Instagram post with 21,000 likes shows a screenshot of a tweet from media site Disclose.tv that says, "JUST IN- 60% of people being admitted to the hospital with #COVID19 in England have had two doses of a coronavirus vaccine, according to the government's chief scientific adviser." The user who posted the image to Instagram captioned it, "This is playing out just as many predicted..." Emma Griffiths, head of communications at the U.K. Government Office for Science, also affirmed the corrected statistic in an email to The Associated Press. "Chief Scientific Adviser Patrick Vallance yesterday clarified, 60% of hospitalisations from COVID-19 are currently from unvaccinated people," Griffiths said. Neither the Government Office for Science nor Public Health England immediately responded to inquiries about what caused the initial error.

— Associated Press writer Terrence Fraser in New York contributed this report.

Canada does not ban vaccinated pilots from flying

CLAIM: Canada prohibits vaccinated pilots from flying because the COVID-19 vaccine is a "medical trial"

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and there are health risks involved with such trials.

**THE FACTS:** Canada's transportation agency allows pilots to receive any vaccine that's been approved by the country's health regulator, Health Canada, according to Transport Canada Senior Communications Adviser Sau Sau Liu. All four COVID-19 vaccines available in Canada — vaccines made by Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson and AstraZeneca — went through extensive clinical trials, were found to be safe and effective, and were authorized for use by Health Canada. Therefore, pilots are allowed to get the vaccines. The false claim started with a screenshot of a 2020 web page from Transport Canada. Text on the page stated that while Transport Canada Civil Aviation Medicine "places no restrictions or limitations on vaccines approved by Health Canada, it remains the general position of TC CAM that participation in medical trials is not considered compatible with aviation medical certification." The screenshot circulated on Twitter, Facebook and various Canadian websites and message boards with claims Canada had banned pilots from flying if they were vaccinated for COVID-19. Twitter users claimed the COVID-19 vaccines were categorized as medical trials. However, receiving a COVID-19 vaccine is not grounds for pilots to be blocked from flying in Canada, nor are the vaccines considered medical trials, according to Liu. The outdated screenshot circulating online is a relic from early in the pandemic, when pilots were asking Transport Canada if they could take part in early-stage COVID-19 vaccine trials, Liu said. At that time, the agency reminded pilots that participation in medical trials is typically not considered compatible with aviation certification. "Now that Health Canada has approved the vaccines, the comment regarding medical trials is less relevant," Liu said. The web page has been updated to clarify that pilots won't be grounded or denied certification for getting one of the four COVID-19 vaccines approved by Health Canada.

— Ali Swenson

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Photo of flooding manipulated to add anti-Thunberg sticker on car

**CLAIM:** Photo shows German car caught in floodwaters with anti-Greta Thunberg sticker on rear window.

**THE FACTS:** Last week, as severe floods in Germany and Belgium turned streets into raging torrents, a manipulated photo circulated on social media that appears to show a BMW half-submerged in the floodwaters with a sticker on the rear window saying "F--- you Greta." The sticker, which was added digitally to the original image, was an apparent reference to Greta Thunberg, the well-known Swedish environmental activist. Twitter users shared the manipulated photo and claimed it was "ironic" and an example of "karma." The photo was also shared widely on Facebook. The original, unaltered photo, which does not include the sticker, was featured in a July 16 article about car water damage during severe weather by German media outlet Bild. Photographer David Young captured the photo for Bild in the city of Wuppertal last week. The sticker does not appear in the original photo. "It is my photo and it has been manipulated," Young told the AP in a call. "The sticker is fake."

— Associated Press writer Arijeta Lajka in New York contributed this report.

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Satire fuels false claims of 'quarantine camps' for unvaccinated in US

**CLAIM:** President Joe Biden recently announced that Americans not vaccinated for COVID-19 before 2022 will be sent to quarantine camps until they get their shots.

**THE FACTS:** An image circulating widely on Instagram this week pushes the false claim that Biden is planning on sending Americans to "quarantine camps." Biden has not made any such announcement. The image shows a screenshot of an article from the website ValueWalk.com, featuring an illustration of the president. "Announces Americans Not Vaccinated Before 2022 Will Be Put In Camps," reads the visible part of the story's headline. The text of the story claims Biden will detain people "indefinitely until they get their shots." An internet search finds the story does appear on ValueWalk.com, which bills itself as a nonpartisan financial news website. However, at the bottom of the story, the text reveals the post is satire and originated on The Stonk Market, a financial satire website. The COVID-19 vaccine is not mandatory in the United States and Biden has not announced any plans to detain people who choose not to get vaccinated. Biden continues to encourage Americans to get vaccinated as the nation sees rising COVID-19 case numbers driven by large pockets of infection among people who have yet to get shots.



— Ali Swenson

French flag photo shows World Cup celebration, not protests

CLAIM: Photo of a blonde woman holding a French flag above a large crowd shows recent protests in Paris over the government's latest coronavirus measures.

THE FACTS: The image shows celebrations in Paris in July 2018 after France won the World Cup, not a recent protest. More than 100,000 people protested across France on Saturday against the government's recent measures to make vaccines compulsory for all health care workers and to require a "health pass" for access to restaurants and other public venues. Twitter and Facebook users shared a photo over the weekend of a blonde woman holding a large French flag near a crowd filling the Champs-Élysées with vague references to a "revolution" and unsubstantiated claims that millions of people attended the protests. But a reverse-image search shows the image was taken by an AFP photographer in July 2018. It appeared in news reports about celebrations in Paris after France won that year's World Cup. "This picture taken from the top of the Arch of Triumph (Arc de Triomphe) on July 15, 2018 shows people celebrating France's victory in the Russia 2018 World Cup final football match between France and Croatia, on the Champs-Élysées avenue in Paris," reads a caption of the photo on Getty Images.

— Ali Swenson

## Ruling leaves immigrants who newly applied for DACA in limbo

By DEEPTI HAJELA, SOPHIA TAREEN and AMY TAXIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — When the text message popped up on his phone, Samuel Alfaro didn't want to believe it.

It said his appointment with U.S. immigration services about his application to join the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, the one he had been waiting on for months, was canceled because of a court order halting the Obama-era deportation protections for those brought to the U.S. as children.

"I thought it was a scam," the 19-year-old from Houston said of the message he received Sunday night, hours before his appointment.

Alfaro went to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website and "kept checking it, refreshing it every few hours." Later, he got an email, confirming it was true.

Now, he simply feels "a little sad."

Alfaro isn't the only one. Tens of thousands of young immigrants in the country without legal status are in the same position following a July 16 ruling from a federal judge in Texas that declared DACA illegal while leaving the program intact for existing recipients.

The ruling bars the government from approving any new applications, like that of Alfaro, whose parents brought him to the U.S. from Mexico when he was 2, along with his older brother. Immigrants and advocates have said they will appeal.

In a statement, Citizenship and Immigration Services said it "will comply with the court order, continue to implement the components of DACA that remain in place."

It's the latest twist for the program, which has been struck down and revived in a constant stream of court challenges since then-President Barack Obama created it by executive order in 2012.

Former President Donald Trump announced early on that he was ending the program, but a U.S. Supreme Court decision last year determined that he had not done it properly, bringing it back to life and allowing for new applications like the one from Alfaro, who filed at the beginning of the year.

The latest ruling calling DACA illegal involved a lawsuit that had been filed by Texas and eight other states. They said Obama didn't have the authority to create the program and that it was an action under the power of Congress.

U.S. District Judge Andrew Hanen in Houston agreed, saying in his ruling that "Congress's clear articulation of laws for removal, lawful presence and work authorization illustrates a manifest intent to reserve for itself the authority to determine the framework of the nation's immigration system."

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Immigration attorneys say the court decision has renewed fears about the future of the program and once again puts young immigrants in a precarious position.

Attorney Max Meyers with the Mississippi Center for Justice was gearing up to submit DACA paperwork on behalf of 40 young immigrants last week, most of them first-time applicants. But he had to scrap those plans.

"It really just throws everybody back into uncertainty," he said. "Rather than people treat people as humans with foundational needs to go to school and be able to get a job, a judge decided that politics is more important in striking this down."

Advocates were informed that as of last week, Citizenship and Immigration Services had 90,000 new DACA applications pending, according to Astrid Silva, executive director of Dream Big Nevada.

She said the agency received 50,000 applications in the first three months of the year but made decisions on fewer than 1,000.

After the application period opened in December following the Supreme Court decision, Silva said advocates were patient with the delays, understanding the agency might face a backlog from the coronavirus pandemic or other issues. But as time went on, they started to wonder what might be wrong.

"We started seeing these issues from the get-go," Silva said. "We understood COVID and the mail and UPS, and we had an insurrection and it's Christmas. We were, quite honestly, very patient. I think many of us felt like this was a blessing and we can wait a little bit."

"For us, the frustration has really been since January," she said.

Now, the applications have ground to a halt. Silva said advocates are still encouraging eligible people to apply in the hope their applications will eventually be processed and because having something pending with immigration authorities is better than nothing.

She's been fielding calls from mothers worried about what this means for their children.

"The applications will literally just be held in a box somewhere," Silva said.

Esperanza Avila, 21, sent her application about a month ago and presumes it's among those on hold. While she is counting on the program to help her get a steady job at Home Depot or as a restaurant server while she pursues her nursing degree in Los Angeles, Avila said she isn't losing hope.

"We've been through this already. They brought down DACA, they brought it back up. It's just like ups and downs," she said. "I do think eventually we'll be OK."

DACA supporters say Congress needs to approve legislation that would offer permanent protection to young immigrants. The House has passed a measure that would create a pathway to citizenship, but it's gone nowhere in the Senate. There's also hope something could be included in budget legislation Democrats want to pass, but it's unclear if that will happen.

Alfaro would love to see it. He's seen the sense of freedom DACA has given his older brother, who initially applied shortly after Obama proposed it. By the time Alfaro was eligible, the Trump administration was in charge, and DACA out of reach.

When Alfaro, the 19-year-old from Houston, submitted his application and hundreds of dollars in fees this year, he thought it was the beginning of a life where he didn't have to constantly look over his shoulder because he lacks documentation.

"You can get a driver's license and not be scared to be pulled over," he said.

Alfaro looked forward to being able to build a credit score, get a decent-paying job and maybe move out on his own.

He doesn't know what to do now, other than wait. He's trying to find optimism to hold on to, like the comments he's seeing people post online.

"They say that it'll for sure come back, it's just a matter of time," Alfaro said hopefully.

But, he adds quietly, "the wait, again, it's stressful."

## 316 people are shot every day in America. Here are 5 stories

By REBECCA SANTANA, CLAUDIA LAUER, SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN, CASEY SMITH, TOM FOREMAN Jr.

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and HILARY POWELL Associated Press

They panic if a balloon pops. They hold dying family members. They push their wounded bodies to heal and scroll longingly through photos and videos of their lost loved ones. Behind the statistics and the political blame game over rising gun violence are the victims.

The spike plaguing many American cities this year has lawmakers reeling and police scrambling, though homicide rates are not rising as high as the double-digit jumps seen in 2020. Still, according to the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, 316 people are shot every day in the U.S. and 106 of them die. It's even prompted President Joe Biden to order federal strike forces in to help catch gun traffickers who are supplying weapons used in the shootings.

And for Americans who have lost someone, a grim reminder of how the cycle of violence never seems to end, only to ebb and flow. In Washington D.C., Kathren Brown's 11-year-old was killed in 2019, and the new wave weighs her down.

"I just want people that are picking up these guns and hurting these innocent people (to know) you have no idea what you're doing to these families," she says. "We are suffering."

## NEW ORLEANS

Todriana Peters was a combination of sugar and sass, a 12-year-old with strong opinions who also liked to snuggle up with her grandmother or cousin on the couch.

"She was a sweetheart. She was our sweetheart," said her grandmother Bonnie Peters, sitting in the living room of her home near a life-size cardboard cutout of a photograph of Todriana, wearing stylish sunglasses and angel's wings.

Todriana loved to try new food like fu-fu — a West African dish found in New Orleans — and could polish off three pounds of crawfish. And unlike most 12-year-olds, she loved to clean. She'd clean her cousin's closet or her grandmother's house. Todriana liked things organized and neat.

Her cousin, Brione Rodgers, remembers Todriana as the consummate "girly-girl," whose favorite colors were pink and purple. She loved going to the nail salon and liked to do people's makeup. Despite their age difference, Brione and Todriana were more like sisters. Brione's phone is filled with videos of the two of them performing TikTok dance routines or posing for selfies. Todriana liked to dance and often did backflips in the middle of her grandmother's living room.

"When we have a family function she gets all the attention," Bonnie said.

Brione and Todriana went everywhere together, so much so that people would ask Brione why she was always hanging out with a 12-year-old. "I said if you knew her, you would want her everywhere you went," Brione said.

Brione was with Todriana the night she died May 30. The two had been at an end-of-school party for young kids and needed to charge their phones so they could let their grandmother know to open the door when they came home. They stopped by another party to get a charger from Brione's brother. During the few minutes they were there, someone opened fire outside. Two people were wounded and Todriana, who was shot in the leg and head, died. So far, five people have been arrested and charged in the shooting.

After a 2019 that marked the lowest number of homicides in nearly half a century, New Orleans saw the number of people killed skyrocket in 2020. And this year homicides are up about 16% over the same time last year.

Todriana would have been 13 on September 20, and the family plans to have a special celebration in her honor then.

"You never know when they walk off from you, that you're never going to see them alive again," said her grandmother.

## ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.

Alicia Otero would try to say no but all it would take was one glance of those puppy dog eyes followed by a long drawn out "pleeeeeease" and she would cave. Even at 24, her oldest son Elias knew how to win

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over his mother.

And she knew the fastest way to his heart. If it wasn't homemade green chile enchiladas, hot wings would surely do the trick. They talked every day. The jabs and jokes were endless. They were best friends.

"He was amazing, he was just so amazing," Otero said, sitting at the kitchen table not far from a memorial made up of dozens of photographs — from Elias' early days of being pushed around in a stroller and sucking his thumb to camping trips with his younger brothers, football games, the last family trip to Las Vegas and a portrait of him when he worked as a correctional officer.

Elias Otero was killed in front of his home in southwest Albuquerque on Feb. 11, 2021. He was shot multiple times when he confronted a group of men who were holding his youngest brother at gunpoint in what witnesses described as an attempted robbery and carjacking.

No arrests have been made and his family is still reeling, heartbroken and in disbelief that they have been swept up in Albuquerque's crime wave. With more than 70 homicides so far this year, the city is well on its way to smashing the previous record of 80 set in 2019.

It has been a nightmare for Elias' parents, his siblings, his fiancé and the rest of their close-knit family. Everything had been on track for Elias, his mom said. He was doing well at work, he had his own place and he and his fiancé were starting to make plans. His mom had even started thinking about the possibility of a grandchild. It all turned upside down with a hysterical call on a cold winter's night.

Since then she's been meeting regularly with other families who've lost their loved ones to violence — in hopes they can help stop the violence or just to have a shoulder to lean on.

"Me and the other moms feel like no one is listening to us. No one is listening, like if their lives didn't matter," said Otero, holding back tears. "They're not just a number — they're everything to us."

## PHILADELPHIA

The front door of Michelle Bolling's house has to be closed by about 6:40 p.m. every night, no matter how nice the weather is.

"That's around the time my son was shot," she said. "So he wants the door to be shut or he starts to panic."

On April 15, Bolling's son, Sadiq Nelson, was leaving the Police Athletic League facility in South Philadelphia, where he worked. He'd just celebrated his 19th birthday the night before. He had played basketball and talked to his boss about getting his 17-year-old brother a job.

Then everything changed. A car with darkly tinted windows stopped near Sadiq and another teen. A stranger opened fire sending a bullet through Sadiq's left thigh, shattering his femur, then tearing away a large patch of skin from his right thigh.

Sadiq hasn't walked since, and it will be months before he can even try. He wears a heavy, metal brace to keep all pressure and weight off his femur.

"I wouldn't wish this feeling or death on nobody," Nelson said, noting he had lost friends from elementary and high school to gun violence. "I'm probably going to have arthritis in my knee for the rest of my life. Some days I'm just off and don't want to talk. Some days I'll have flashbacks and just keep reliving what happened."

To get a full picture of the gun violence epidemic, many experts say it's important to look at not just the number of people killed but those who have survived gunshots and will likely need support for years to come. Sadiq is one of close to 1,000 people shot in nonfatal gun violence in Philadelphia through mid-July of 2021 — nearly double what it was in 2019.

Balloons popping, firecrackers or fireworks going off, cars that linger too long on the street, or cars with dark tinted windows all trigger panic attacks for Sadiq.

He sleeps downstairs in the living room because the stairs to his bedroom are hard to navigate. His 17-year-old brother stays with him because there are nights Sadiq doesn't sleep at all.

Bolling has had her bad days too, but she's tried to focus on what she can do to stop other mothers from getting those calls. She's organizing a youth march in September to give teens and parents a chance to



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talk about how the violence has affected them.

"It's gotta stop," she said.

## INDIANAPOLIS

Malik Parks had always been proud of his long, black hair that earned him the nickname "Black Jesus" from close friends and family.

"He was beautiful, and he really just had the prettiest hair," Machel Tompkins said of her 23-year-old cousin. "Malik had such a good heart and was such a loving person, but that hair ... you'd never forget it."

Parks, who lived in Indianapolis, enjoyed playing video games and basketball at the gym with friends. He was recently baptized and was looking forward to starting a new job at UPS.

He also loved – "really, really loved" – to dance, especially with his mom.

"He was his mom's angel child," Tompkins said. "They had a very special bond. He just did anything ... he was always there for her. They were so close."

The night of May 8, hours before his death, it was Parks' mom who helped comb his hair before he left for a friend's birthday party. It's not clear what exactly happened at the party. Tompkins said Parks tried to leave the gathering after he and another man had a verbal disagreement over a girl. Parks, who was unarmed, called his mom, telling her he felt unsafe, and asked if she could pick him up. Parks' sister got there first but it was too late. He was shot and killed on the sidewalk outside the apartment complex where the party was held, dying in his sister's arms. No arrests have been made in the case.

"He was a good kid who was just in the wrong place at the wrong time," Tompkins said. "It's an unbelievable pain."

Indianapolis police say the city is headed toward another record year for violence, with 144 homicides recorded as of July 20. That's compared to 108 homicides for the same time period in 2020 — which was already the city's most violent year ever recorded.

Malik's family said they weren't really fearful of violent crime before his death but Tompkins says they're worried about safety even during everyday chores like going to the gas station or the store.

"What happened to Malik ... it's changed all of our lives forever," she said.

## CHARLOTTE, N.C.

There was hardly a day that Marcqueon Jaquez Goodman didn't have a basketball in his hands. And if he wasn't on the court, he was on TikTok, Instagram or PlayStation. His mother says he always had a smile on his face that drew people to him.

"He was loved by many," said Latoria Goodman, 34. Near her were two photos of Marcqueon as well as a large, framed gold banner proclaiming him as a member of a local club basketball team where he was going to play guard.

"He was just a fun person to be around. He was the joy of our life," she said.

Marcqueon would have been a junior in high school this fall and his mom said he was working on his grades so he could play for the school team. He could look to his uncle, Kadeem Allen, for motivation. Allen spent three seasons in the NBA with the New York Knicks and the Boston Celtics.

Marcqueon's social media accounts were filled with pictures and videos of him playing the game he loved.

"That was his life. That was all he did," said his mother. "He always said he wanted to play in the NBA like his uncle."

Marcqueon's nickname was "Binky" because it wasn't until 3 years old that he finally parted with his pacifier. He would grow to become something of a fashion plate, but his aunt, Trina Allen, said he wanted nothing to do with suits like the one his grandma dressed him in for Easter one year.

"He did not care for that suit," Allen remembers.

Basketball shoes were his thing, and his mother said he was very happy when he found out he had earned a spot on that club team. But he'd barely gotten to celebrate it. On the morning of April 28 he was heading to a friend's house when he was shot and killed.

The city is in the midst of a grim, record-setting three-year run with midyear totals nearly exceeding what was considered a normal year in the early 2010s.

Latoria Goodman is convinced that whoever shot her son did so out of jealousy.

"It's not like he went out there and got himself killed. No, they called him out there and killed him," she said.

## LeVar Burton: 'Jeopardy!' host gig began 'scary,' ended fun

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — LeVar Burton's quest to become the new host of "Jeopardy!" has been a confident, upbeat effort by the actor and those who rooted him on with a petition drive.

But when the day came to tape the first of his week's share of episodes as one of a succession of guest hosts, the show's pace and the challenge of following in Alex Trebek's much-admired footsteps threw Burton off stride.

It made for a rough start to the five back-to-back tapings that begin airing Monday, said the veteran actor known for "Roots," "Star Trek: The Next Generation" and "Reading Rainbow." He turned for advice to wife Stephanie Cozart Burton, who as his makeup artist was on hand to play coach during a production break.

"Being at home, it feels like a really relaxed half-hour, but it's not relaxed at all," he said. "You can't let your focus drop for a nanosecond."

Burton has been watching and assessing the other guest hosts — in other words, his competition for the position that the Canadian-born Trebek held from 1984 to shortly before his November 2020 death from cancer at age 80. Art Fleming was the quiz's show's original and only other host, in the 1960s and '70s.

Although Burton had made the show's producers aware of his interest in being considered, his addition to the roster came after a petition backing him as the new "Jeopardy!" host caught fire (with more than 250,000 signatures to date).

He faces other openly eager would-be hosts — including NFL quarterback Aaron Rodgers — but the actor, director and education and literacy advocate sees himself as a solid match for a game show that rewards knowledge.

Burton spoke with The Associated Press about his wife's on-point advice, why diversity matters for "Jeopardy!" and what he thinks of his chances for the job expected to be filled this summer, before next season's taping begins. Remarks have been edited for clarity and length.

AP: What was the guest-host experience like?

BURTON: Scary. Really, really, really scary. Did I mention it was scary?

AP: How so?

BURTON: I've jumped out of airplanes. I've walked over hot coals. This was a real challenge. First of all, because ('Jeopardy!') is singular in the culture and what it means to people as a part of their daily lives. And the fact that there are only two hosts who have ever stood in that spot. The pressure, the natural tendency was to want to live up to Alex's example, his legacy. I had, like all of the hosts, one day of rehearsal and the following day I shot five episodes of 'Jeopardy!' I came backstage after taping the first episode and I said to Stephanie, 'Well, how did I do?' She said, 'ehhh.' Now, this is a woman who loves me enough to tell me the truth. She said it wasn't me.

AP: How did you adjust?

BURTON: I made it my business for the next four chances at bat to just be myself, to forget about the procedure, to forget about the process, stop trying, stop focusing on the wrong thing. You're not going to be smooth as Alex, let go of that. But what you can bring to the table is you. So that became my point of focus. And when it did, I started having fun.

AP: Why do you consider the show and the host's role as worthwhile?

BURTON: I've been about education my entire career, and I definitely believe in the medium (of television) as one where more than simply entertaining is the order of the day. I try and use the medium in a way that brings something else to the table as often as I can. I think that 'Roots' and 'Star Trek' and 'Reading

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Rainbow, they all have that commonality about them, that common thread of entertainment, yes — and informational, inspiring, enlightening, educational, uplifting. We can do so much more than just sell each other stuff with the medium.

AP: There's significant diversity among the guest hosts. Would there be value in 'Jeopardy!' having its first person of color or woman as host?

BURTON: There's nothing like 'Jeopardy!' in the cultural consciousness. It's not that I'm trying to put it on the same level, but I liken it to Barack Obama being elected president in the United States in 2008. I personally never thought I would see that happen in my lifetime. Did his election mean that we were in a post-racial America? Obviously not at all. But it was an important step. Every time we reach that milestone of a first, it does say something about us. It also tells us something that we continue to have these moments of firsts.... that white is the normative default. The reason that white is the default is the conversation that we are trying to have in this country now, that there's so much resistance to.

AP: How optimistic are you about being picked as host?

BURTON: I am a preternaturally optimistic person. Look, if I don't get this job, will it be devastating to me? No. I mean, it will hurt, I'll be disappointed. And I'll be fine, because what I know about my life is that which is supposed to be for me comes my way. And that which is not mine, doesn't. The most important thing is that I went for it and my passion was rewarded. I got what I wanted, which was an opportunity to compete for the job. If I don't get the gig, it's not immaterial, but it certainly is secondary. I got what I was after. The chance — get me in the room.

## As Herschel Walker eyes Senate run, a turbulent past emerges

By BRIAN SLODYSKO, BILL BARROW and JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — At first glance, Herschel Walker has a coveted political profile for a potential Senate candidate in Georgia.

He was a football hero at the University of Georgia before his long NFL career. He's a business owner whose chicken products are distributed across the U.S. And he's a Black conservative with backing from former President Donald Trump, a longtime friend.

But an Associated Press review of hundreds of pages of public records tied to Walker's business ventures and his divorce, including many not previously reported, sheds new light on a turbulent personal history that could dog his Senate bid. The documents detail accusations that Walker repeatedly threatened his ex-wife's life, exaggerated claims of financial success and alarmed business associates with unpredictable behavior.

Walker, now 59, has at times been open about his long struggle with mental illness, writing at length in a 2008 book about being diagnosed with dissociative identity disorder, once known as multiple personality disorder. But it's unclear how he would discuss these events as a candidate.

Walker did not respond to requests for comment. Multiple emails went unanswered, although his executive assistant confirmed they were received. AP also sent emails and left a message with his long-time attorney, who did not respond.

The Georgia seat is a top target for Republicans as they try to take control of the U.S. Senate in next year's midterm elections. Walker's potential bid is a wildcard. He might easily win the GOP primary with Trump's help, setting up a general election fight against Democrat Raphael Warnock, who became Georgia's first Black senator after a special election in January. But Republican leaders in Washington and Georgia are concerned that Walker's history might haunt his campaign.

Walker "certainly could bring a lot of things to the table," Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp, a Republican, said in a recent interview. "But as others have mentioned, there's also a lot of questions out there."

Walker has yet to announce his intentions, but he has been consulting with political advisers in Georgia. A native of tiny Wrightsville, between Atlanta and Savannah, the former Dallas Cowboys star retired after the 1997 season and now resides in Texas. In a video posted to Twitter last month, he revs the engine of a sports car and says, "I'm getting ready, and we can run with the big dogs," before revealing a Georgia

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license plate.

The Twitter tease intensified buzz about the potential for a celebrity candidate. But it also helped surface details about Walker's troubled past, many first disclosed by Walker himself in his 2008 book, "Breaking Free."

His account details years of struggles and an eventual diagnosis in 2001. Walker describes himself dealing with as many as a dozen personalities — or "alters" — that he had constructed as a defense against bullying he suffered as a stuttering, overweight child.

In an AP interview at the time, Walker emphasized his purpose was to help others with similar disorders. "People say, 'Herschel is just trying to write something to make money,'" he said. "I say, 'Guys, why would I write something like this to make money?'"

The National Alliance on Mental Illness describes dissociative identity disorder as "alternating between multiple identities," leaving a person with "gaps in memory of everyday events." It notes men with the disorder "exhibit more violent behavior rather than amnesia."

In his book, Walker acknowledges violent urges. He writes that he played Russian roulette and recounts sitting at his kitchen table in 1991 pointing a gun, loaded with a single bullet, at his head. "I wasn't suicidal," Walker explained, but "just looked at mortality as the ultimate challenge."

The book is framed as a turnaround story. He describes it as cathartic and casts himself as someone on the path to "integration" because of therapy and his Christian faith.

A watershed moment, he writes, came in February 2001, when he drove around suburban Dallas, hunting for a man who he said was avoiding his calls after being days late delivering a car Walker had purchased.

"The logical side of me knew that what I was thinking of doing to this man — murdering him for messing up my schedule — wasn't a viable alternative," Walker wrote. "But another side of me was so angry that all I could think was how satisfying it would feel to step out of the car, pull out the gun, slip off the safety, and squeeze the trigger."

Ultimately, Walker wrote, he had a change of heart after seeing a "SMILE. JESUS LOVES YOU" bumper sticker on the man's car-hauling truck. He decided to seek professional help.

"I'd been running for most of life, from what only I really knew but seldom talked about. It was time to stop running and face some harsh realities," he wrote.

Walker's threatening behavior continued well after the 2001 revelation, according to court records obtained by AP that have not previously been reported.

Four years later, in December 2005, Cindy Grossman, Walker's ex-wife, secured a protective order against him, alleging violent and controlling behavior.

Grossman has said she was long a victim of Walker's impulses. When his book was released, she told ABC News that at one point during their marriage, her husband pointed a pistol at her head and said, "I'm going to blow your f'ing brains out." She filed for divorce in 2001, citing "physically abusive and extremely threatening behavior."

In seeking protection from a judge in Dallas County, Grossman filed an affidavit from her sister, which described Walker as unwilling to accept that his former wife had begun dating another man.

Grossman told the court she got calls during that period from her sister and father, both of whom had been contacted by Walker. He told family members that he would kill her and her new boyfriend, according to Maria Tsettos, Cindy Grossman's sister.

In an affidavit, Tsettos claimed Walker once called looking for his ex-wife while she was out with her boyfriend. Tsettos took the call and said Walker became "very threatening" when told of Grossman's whereabouts. In Tsettos' recollection, Walker "stated unequivocally that he was going to shoot my sister Cindy and her boyfriend in the head."

On another occasion, Tsettos said she talked to Walker "at length" after he'd reached out to her online. He "expressed to me that he was frustrated with (Cindy) and that he felt like he had 'had enough' and that he wanted to 'blow their f----- heads off,'" she recalled of the Dec. 9, 2005, exchange.

Two days later he called again and told Tsettos that he possessed a gun and planned that day to act on



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his threats, which he repeated in graphic language, she said.

Later that day, Walker confronted his ex-wife outside a mall when she was picking up their son from a party, according to her petition for a protective order.

In her account, she said Walker "slowly drove by in his vehicle, pointed his finger at (her) and traced (her) with his finger as he drove."

When officers in Irving, Texas, contacted Walker, he denied that he'd made the threats, according to a police report the AP obtained through a public records request. But the sister's account was concerning enough to police that they took for "safe keeping" a gun Walker had on the floor of his car, the report states.

A judge agreed, finding "good cause" to issue a protective order. He also barred Walker from possessing guns for a period of time.

Grossman, her divorce lawyer and Tsettos did not respond to multiple requests for comment from the AP. Walker's unpredictable behavior has carried into his chicken business, now known as Renaissance Man Food Services, according to court filings. His book itself was a shock.

The primary distributor of his products considered severing their relationship after Walker's book came out. Kristin Caffey, then a poultry manager for the food distributor Sysco, said the revelations in the book, as well as Walker's effort to publicize it, created "havoc" for the company.

"We weren't aware that it was coming out, and we were blindsided," Caffey, who worked directly with Walker, said in a 2019 deposition. "We had all kinds of people calling in about it, and we didn't have answers to it," she added, saying, "it was problematic for us being engaged with him at the time."

Ultimately, the company chose to stick with Walker after the negative publicity died down, Caffey said.

More recently, Walker has made outsize claims about his business record. In repeated media interviews, Walker claimed his company employed hundreds of people, included a chicken processing division in Arkansas and grossed \$70 million to \$80 million annually in sales.

However, when the company applied for a federal Paycheck Protection Program loan last year, it reported just eight employees. (It received about \$182,000 in COVID-19 aid.)

In a recent court case, Walker gave far more modest revenue figures, indicating that the company averaged about \$1.5 million a year in profit from 2008 to 2017. Meanwhile, Walker's business associates testified in the same case that he doesn't own chicken processing plants, as he claims. Instead, they described him as a licensing partner who lends his name to the enterprise — not unlike the kind of deals his friend Donald Trump has used to expand his brand for decades.

A wrongful termination lawsuit filed in 2018 by a friend and former manager of Walker's company created an extensive record of Walker's leadership. Although a judge ruled against the employee, John Staples, emails, documents and depositions in the case present Walker as a temperamental and unreliable business partner.

Walker persistently complained that his business partners were trying to cheat him out of money, the documents say. And they indicate he repeatedly fought with his associates over his focus on branching into frozen waffles, which he believed would be a future moneymaker for the company.

In 2017, an executive for the company that supplied chicken to Walker sent a concerned email, inquiring about \$7,200 in expenses he said Walker had incorrectly tried to bill the company from his efforts to secure the waffle deal. The executive, now Simmons Foods Chief Operating Officer and President David Jackson, also cited "concerning comments" he'd heard that "raise questions about how the business is being operated." The email does not detail the comments that raised alarms.

Staples did not respond to requests for comment. Jackson's office did not make him available for comment, and a message left with a spokesperson for Simmons Foods was not returned.

In a deposition, Walker dismissed Staples as a "puppy."

"I'm a big dog. I don't play with puppies," Walker said.

Since then, another business venture tied to Walker could also face trouble.

Last month, a Texas bank sued Walker and another business partner over an unpaid \$200,000 debt secured to help finance a pizza restaurant. According to court filings, Walker personally guaranteed the loan.

Walker has not yet filed his response to the suit.

## 'The greatest honor': Osaka lights Olympic cauldron

By ANDREW DAMPF AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — What a moment for Naomi Osaka. For the new Japan. For racial injustice. For female athletes. For tennis.

The four-time Grand Slam winner lit the cauldron at the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Olympics on Friday.

It was a choice that could be appreciated worldwide: In Japan, of course, the country where Osaka was born and the nation that she plays for; in embattled Haiti because that's where her father is from; and surely in the United States, because that's where the globe's highest-earning female athlete lives and where she has been outspoken about racial injustice.

Plus, everywhere in between, because Osaka is a superstar.

But she has often received an uncomfortable welcome in Japan because of her race, with her family having moved to the U.S. when she was 3. Her emergence as a top tennis player has challenged public attitudes about identity in a homogeneous culture that is being pushed to change.

It's always a mystery until the last moment who gets the honor of lighting the cauldron.

Sadaharu Oh, Shigeo Nagashima and Hideki Matsui were among the baseball greats who took part in bringing the flame into the stadium. And in a country where baseball is the No. 1 sport, Osaka was not necessarily expected to be given the ultimate honor.

But there she was at the center of the stage when a staircase emerged, the cauldron opened atop a peak inspired by Mount Fuji and Osaka ascended with the Olympic and Japanese flags blowing in the breeze off to her left. She dipped the flame in, the cauldron ignited and fireworks filled the sky.

"Undoubtedly the greatest athletic achievement and honor I will ever have in my life," Osaka wrote on Instagram next to a picture of her smiling while holding the flame. "I have no words to describe the feelings I have right now, but I do know I am currently filled with gratefulness and thankfulness."

It capped quite a series of events over the past two months for the 23-year-old Osaka.

Going into the French Open in late May, Osaka — who is ranked No. 2 — announced she wouldn't speak to reporters at the tournament, saying those interactions create doubts for her.

Then, after her first-round victory, she skipped the mandatory news conference.

Osaka was fined \$15,000 and — surprisingly — publicly reprimanded by those in charge of Grand Slam tournaments, who said she could be suspended if she kept avoiding the media.

The next day, Osaka withdrew from Roland Garros entirely to take a mental health break, revealing she has dealt with depression.

She sat out Wimbledon, too. So the Tokyo Games mark her return to competition.

"The Olympics are a special time, when the world comes together to celebrate sports. I am looking forward most to being with the athletes that had waited and trained for over 10 years, for celebrating a very hard year (2020) and having that happen in Japan makes it that much more special," Osaka wrote in an email interview when she was selected as the 2020 AP Female Athlete of the Year. "It's a special and beautiful country filled with culture, history and beauty. I cannot be more excited."

There was a big hint that Osaka might have an important role in the ceremony when her opening match in the Olympic tennis tournament was pushed back from Saturday to Sunday without an explanation earlier in the day.

She was originally scheduled to play 52nd-ranked Zheng Saisai of China in the very first match of the Games on center court Saturday morning. But clearly by lighting the flame as midnight approached, she wouldn't have had enough rest for an early morning match.

Osaka became the first tennis player to light the Olympic cauldron. She's also one of the few active athletes to be given the honor. Australian sprinter Cathy Freeman lit the cauldron for the 2000 Sydney Games

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and went on to win gold in the 400 meters.

Osaka — along with top-ranked Ash Barty — is a favorite to win the women's singles title in a tennis tournament that also features Novak Djokovic aiming to become the first man to win a Golden Slam by holding all four Grand Slam trophies and Olympic gold in the same year.

Whatever the final results on the court, Osaka has already become part of Olympic history.

## The Latest: Osaka lights cauldron at Tokyo opening ceremony

The Latest on the Tokyo Olympics, which are taking place under heavy restrictions after a year's delay because of the coronavirus pandemic:

Tennis star Naomi Osaka has lit the cauldron at the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Games, ending the flame's long journey from Greece to these delayed Olympics.

The cauldron sat atop a peak inspired by Mount Fuji. It's a sphere that opened like a flower, "to embody vitality and hope," organizers said. A second cauldron has been placed in Tokyo's waterfront area was to be lit after the opening ceremony.

It's always a mystery until the last moment who gets the honor of lighting the cauldron.

Sadaharu Oh, Shigeo Nagashima and Hideki Matsui were among the baseball greats who took part in bringing the flame into the stadium. They passed it to a doctor and nurse, Hiroko Oohashi and Junko Kitagawa, who ran a couple hundred yards with it.

Wakako Tsuchida, a Paralympic athlete, took it from them and began rolling it and his wheelchair closer to the stage as athletes and others on the floor for the ceremony rushed forward for a closer look.

A group of six students were next to bring it closer to the stage, and at the foot of the stage with the last torch was Osaka — the four-time Grand Slam winner who will compete at the Tokyo Games.

She brought it to the center of the stage. A staircase emerged, the cauldron opened and Osaka walked to the top, the Olympic and Japanese flags blowing in the breeze off to her left. She dipped the flame in, the cauldron ignited and fireworks filled the sky.

At long last, the Tokyo Olympics have officially been declared open by Japan's Emperor Naruhito.

The games, delayed for a year by the pandemic, have had competition taking place since earlier in the week, but are not considered officially having started until the opening ceremony.

Seiko Hashimoto is the president of the Tokyo Organizing Committee and told the athletes, "I greet you all from the bottom of my heart." She spoke of what Japan has been through during the planning for the Olympics, including the recovery from a devastating earthquake and the ongoing fight with the pandemic.

International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach also spoke, saying the Olympics are again showing the "unifying power of sport."

Bach began his remarks by telling those in the stadium, "Today is a moment of hope. Yes, it is very different from what all of us had imagined. But let us cherish this moment. Finally, we are all here together."

After Bach spoke and the Emperor made his declaration, the Olympic flag was carried into the stadium, with pandemic frontline workers being honored in that portion of the ceremony. The workers were from Tokyo, but represented all those who have been on the front lines globally.

From there, a choir of Japanese students sang as a prequel to the traditional release of doves, the Olympic gesture to express a desire for world peace.

An array of singers, including John Legend and Keith Urban, have performed "Imagine" at the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Olympics.

The song's inclusion was a nod to the song that John Lennon and Yoko Ono co-wrote 50 years ago. The singers appeared on video.

"We're not the first to say 'Imagine no countries' or 'Give peace a chance,' but we're carrying that torch, like the Olympic torch, passing it hand to hand, to each other, to each country, to each generation," Len-

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non once said. "And that's our job."

French President Emmanuel Macron says Japan was right to hold the Olympic Games despite a rise in coronavirus infections, now at a six-month high.

"These Olympic Games had to be held," said Macron, who was in Tokyo for the start of the games. "The Olympics is the spirit of cooperation and we need it ... in this time of COVID," he said in an interview on France Television, the public TV channel.

The 2024 games will take place in Paris.

Japan is holding the Games amid a state of emergency, and some have criticized the country's leaders for prioritizing the Olympics over the nation's health.

"Japan authorities were right to hold the Olympics because no one knows how the epidemic will evolve in the coming years" or if there will be others, Macron said, adding that this only shows that nations must adapt.

The U.S. Olympic team entered the opening ceremony for the Tokyo Games with first lady Jill Biden among those in the stadium to cheer the Americans' arrival.

Basketball's Sue Bird and baseball's Eddy Alvarez had the flagbearer duties for the U.S. It was a particularly emotional moment for Alvarez, a Cuban-American from Miami — given the current times in his home city.

Protests and demonstrations have been common in Miami for several days, a show of support for Cubans who have taken to the streets in the communist nation to air grievances about poor economic conditions and other complaints.

Most members of the U.S. basketball teams marched in the parade. The Americans were followed by only France and Japan in the 207-nation parade.

Biden's appearance at the opening ceremony is part of her first solo trip abroad as first lady. She is also expected to attend some events involving U.S. athletes before departing Japan.

Pita's back, and he brought back his oil.

The shirtless Tongan whose fame rocketed after entering the 2016 Olympics with his upper body glistening for all to see — his name is Pita Taufatofua, by the way — returned to the Tokyo Games as one of his nation's flagbearers again.

And yes, he was shirtless.

It's the third consecutive Olympics in which Taufatofua has competed as an athlete. He competed in taekwondo at the Rio Games, took part in skiing at Pyeongchang in 2018 — yes, shirtless for that one, too — and is back in Tokyo as part of his taekwondo team again. Taufatofua tried to qualify in kayaking, but didn't make the Tokyo cut in that sport.

He's also used his fame for good. Taufatofua is a UNICEF ambassador, works with homeless shelters and is busy raising money for sporting equipment for nations in need.

Sue Bird is one of the flagbearers for the U.S. in the opening ceremony for the Tokyo Olympics, sharing that role with baseball's Eddy Alvarez.

Bird is a five-time Olympian in women's basketball. She remembers 2004 when the U.S. women's basketball team got to walk at the front of the delegation along with flag bearer Dawn Staley, now the U.S. head coach in Tokyo. Bird says one of her favorite memories was walking in and hearing the crowd in Athens roar.

There was some noise for the athletes on Friday night. Just no roars; the stadium wasn't anywhere near filled enough for those.

Bird says "this Olympics are like no other."

The parade of athletes at the opening ceremony for the Tokyo Olympics has started.



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Organizers expect about 5,700 athletes to take part in the parade. Some will skip it because of early competitions on Saturday or to avoid risk of exposure to the coronavirus. And this parade differs from most others in the past because the nations are being spaced out — a nod to social distancing.

Hundreds of volunteers are on the stadium floor as well to greet the athletes as they walk through. Many athletes are waving; others are capturing their entrance on their phone cameras.

Moments before the parade, a wooden set of Olympic rings was displayed at the center of the stadium in a nod to the 1964 Tokyo Games. There, athletes from around the world were asked to bring seeds that could be planted and become trees.

Wood from 160 pines and spruces, seeds that came from Canada, Ireland and Northern Europe, were used to build the set of Olympic rings displayed Friday.

Japan's Emperor Naruhito and International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach have arrived for the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Games.

Naruhito attended the 1964 Tokyo Olympics as a 4-year-old, watching the marathon and equestrian events. Bach won a gold medal in fencing at the 1976 Montreal Games.

They were followed by a delegation chosen to carry the Japanese flag into the stadium, before the host nation's national anthem was performed by singer Misia.

Tributes were paid to those lost during the pandemic, and the Israeli delegation that was killed at the Munich Games in 1972. A moment of silence was offered inside the stadium.

With a blaze of indigo and white fireworks lighting the night sky, the Tokyo Olympics opening ceremony has started.

It began with a single female athlete at the center of the stadium, kneeling. As she stood, the shadow behind her took the shape of a seedling, growing as she walked. A number of athletes were featured in a video that started with the moment Tokyo won the Olympic bid in 2013, then eventually to images of a world silenced by the pandemic.

Then came the fireworks, a 20-second blast of light — as if to say these Olympics have finally emerged from dark times.

The International Olympic Committee has released the order of the parade of nations for the opening ceremony and the names of all the flagbearers.

Greece, per Olympic tradition, enters first. The host nation always enters last, so it'll likely take a couple hours or so before Japanese flagbearers Yui Susaki and Rui Hachimura lead their national contingent into the stadium.

The Refugee Olympic team goes second in the parade. The others are slotted by their order in the Japanese alphabet, so Iceland and Ireland precede Azerbaijan, for example.

The IOC says 206 teams — 205 nations and the refugee team — will be taking part in the opening ceremony. Some nations will have their flags carried by volunteers. Other nations will have only one flagbearer. Most will have two, with one male and one female athlete chosen for the role.

The Tokyo 2020 opening ceremony is about to begin, 364 days behind the original schedule and with a very different feel than what was originally intended before the pandemic changed everything.

The Olympic Stadium is largely empty. The Tokyo 2020 souvenir store outside the front gates is closed. But that doesn't mean fans have stayed away. Hundreds of fans gathered outside the gates and along the sidewalks of closed streets, waving at any person with an Olympic credential or any vehicle that went by with an Olympic logo.

Track and field events will be held in the stadium later in these games. The track itself is covered by a large black tarp for the opening ceremony and the infield is covered with a white tarp, one where graphics will be displayed over the course of the evening.

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Some dignitaries and invited guests will be in the stadium seats, including U.S. first lady Jill Biden.

Six Polish swimmers have returned home before the Olympics even started, their dreams scuttled by the country mistakenly sending too many athletes to Tokyo.

Only 17 swimmers from Poland qualified for the Tokyo Games. The country's swimming federation put 23 athletes on the plane to Japan, sparking outrage among those who were denied a chance to compete.

Two-time Olympian Alicja Tchorz was among those sent home. She griped on social media about all the sacrifices she had made to earn another trip to the Summer Games, only for it to result "in a total flop."

The team sent out a statement demanding the resignation of Polish Swimming Federation president Paweł Słomiński. He issued his own statement expressing "regret, sadness and bitterness" about the athletes' situation.

Słomiński said there was confusion over the qualifying rules and he was merely trying to "allow as many players and coaches as possible to take part" in the Olympics.

A bad weather forecast for Monday in Tokyo has prompted Olympic officials to move scheduled rowing events to Sunday.

Officials say rain, high winds and strong gusts could cause choppy and potentially unrowable conditions at the Sea Forest Waterway in Tokyo Bay.

The change affects men's and women's single and double sculls semifinals, and men's and women's fours repechage. The opening heats in the men's and women's eights also were moved from Sunday to Saturday.

Australian swimmer Kaylee McKeown has surprisingly withdrawn from one of her best events because of a busy schedule at the Tokyo Olympics.

McKeown dropped the 200-meter individual medley, where she's ranked No. 1 in the world and would have been a favorite to win a gold medal. She'll focus instead on her two backstroke events and the relays.

"You have a rookie coming into the Olympics — it is a new experience and a big call," Australian coach Rohan Taylor said.

The 200 IM semifinal heats are Monday night and the 100 back final is the next morning. Taylor says the timing "could be a challenge," so the decision was made to drop the individual medley.

McKeown set a world record in the 100 back last month at the Australian trials, and the 20-year-old swimmer will be a gold medal favorite in that event.

The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee says about 100 of the 613 U.S. athletes descending on Tokyo for the Olympics are unvaccinated.

Medical director Jonathan Finnoff says 567 of the American athletes had filled out their health histories as they prepared for the trip. He estimated 83% had replied they were vaccinated.

Finnoff says 83 percent is a substantial number and the committee is quite happy with it.

Nationally, 56.3% of Americans have received at least one dose of the vaccine.

The International Olympic Committee estimates that around 85% of residents of the Olympic Village are vaccinated. That's based that on what each country's Olympic committee reports but is not an independently verified number.

South Korea's An San has broken the women's Olympic archery record with a score of 680 in the qualifying round on a hot and humid day.

Her mark topped the score of 673 set by Lina Herasymenko of Ukraine in 1996. An San's teammates Jang Minhee (677) and Kang Chae Young (675) were second and third.

Russian Olympic Committee archer Svetlana Gomboeva collapsed in the intense heat and was treated by medical staff. The temperature soared above 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit).

In the men's qualifying round, Kim Je Deok of South Korea posted the top mark of 688, with Brady El-

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lison of the United States second (682) and Oh Jin Hyek of South Korea third (681).

The Olympic debut of the mixed team event will be Saturday. The women's individual competition is next Friday and the men's individual event the following day.

About 50 protesters have gathered in Tokyo to demand the cancellation of the Olympics.

The opening ceremony is set for Friday evening local time.

The protesters gathered outside the Tokyo Metropolitan Government building chanting "no to the Olympics" and "save people's lives." They held up signs reading "cancel the Olympics."

The Games, largely without spectators and opposed by much of the host nation, are going ahead a year later than planned.

A day earlier, Tokyo hit another six-month high in new COVID-19 cases as worries grew of worsening infections during the Games. Still, the number of cases and deaths as a share of the population in Japan are much lower than in many other countries.

The opening ceremony will be held mostly without spectators to prevent the spread of coronavirus infections, although some officials, guests and media will attend.

Jill Biden has held a virtual meet-and-greet with several U.S. athletes who will compete at the Tokyo Games.

The U.S. first lady is in Tokyo to support the athletes and attend the opening ceremony.

She spoke virtually with Eddy Alvarez, a baseball player and short track speed skater, and basketball player Sue Bird. Both will be flagbearers for the U.S. at the opening ceremony. She also spoke with Allison Schmitt, a four-time Olympic swimmer and mental health advocate.

Biden told the athletes that they'd given up a lot to be in Tokyo and relied on support from family and friends.

On Saturday, she'll dedicate a room in the residence of the U.S. chief of mission to former U.S. Sen. Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii, and his wife, Irene Hirano Inouye.

She will host a U.S.-vs.-Mexico softball watch party at the U.S. Embassy for staff and their families, and cheer U.S. athletes competing in several events before leaving Tokyo.

South African race walker Lebogang Shange has been banned for four years for doping and will miss the Tokyo Olympics.

The former African champion was entered in the men's 20-kilometer race on Aug. 5. The Court of Arbitration for Sport ruled on the case in Tokyo.

The 30-year-old Shange tested positive for the anabolic steroid trenbolone and was provisionally suspended in December 2019. His ban will expire before the 2024 Paris Olympics.

The Swiss Olympic team says 400-meter hurdler Kariem Hussein has accepted a nine-month ban after testing positive for a banned stimulant.

The 2014 European champion was entered in the event at the Tokyo Games. The heats start next Friday. It is unclear if Hussein will be replaced in the 40-athlete lineup.

The Swiss Olympic body's tribunal backdated the ban by one week from the time Hussein was provisionally suspended. That suspension had not been disclosed.

Tokyo Olympic organizers have reported 25 new COVID-19 cases. Three of them are athletes that were announced on Thursday.

There are 13 athletes among the 110 Olympic-accredited people that have tested positive in Japan since July 1.

Three media workers coming to Japan from abroad were included in the latest update.

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Naomi Osaka's opening match in the Olympic tennis tournament has been pushed back from Saturday to Sunday.

Organizers did not immediately provide a reason for the switch. They said only that the move came from the tournament referee.

Osaka was originally scheduled to play 52nd-ranked Zheng Saisai of China in the very first contest of the Games on center court Saturday morning.

One reason for the move could be that Osaka might have a role in the opening ceremony Friday night. That wouldn't leave her much time to rest before a Saturday morning match.

Osaka is returning to competition for the first time in nearly two months after she withdrew from the French Open following the first round to take a mental health break.

She is one of Japan's top athletes.

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The World Anti-Doping Agency says several Russian athletes have been kept away from the Tokyo Olympics because of doping suspicions based on evidence from a Moscow testing laboratory that was shut down in 2015.

WADA director general Olivier Niggli says it intervened with sports bodies to ensure those athletes — "not many, but there was a handful" — were not selected.

The team of 335 Russian athletes accredited for Tokyo is competing without a national flag and anthem as punishment for state tampering with the Moscow lab's database. The team name is ROC, the acronym for Russian Olympic Committee, without the word "Russia."

The identity ban for the Tokyo Olympics and 2022 Beijing Winter Games was imposed by the Court of Arbitration for Sport last December.

Giving WADA the database and samples from the lab was key to getting closure for the long-running Russian state-backed doping scandal.

WADA had a list of around 300 athletes under suspicion and gave evidence to Olympic sports bodies for possible disciplinary cases.

Niggli says "we cross-checked what we had from this long list" to ensure athletes were not selected for Tokyo.

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Russian archer Svetlana Gomboeva lost consciousness during a competition at the Tokyo Olympics in intense heat.

Coach Stanislav Popov says in comments via the Russian Olympic Committee that Gomboeva collapsed shortly after completing the qualifying round Friday.

Popov says "she couldn't stand it, a whole day in the heat" and adds that humidity made the problem worse. Temperatures in Tokyo were above 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit.)

The heat in Tokyo's summer months already prompted organizers to move the marathons and race-walking events to the cooler city of Sapporo.

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U.S. men's water polo captain Jesse Smith will skip the opening ceremony for the Tokyo Olympics on Friday after the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee limited how many players from his team could participate in the festivities.

Olympic water polo rosters consist of 13 players, and 12 are designated as available for each game. Smith said the team was told by the USOPC that it could have 12 credentialed athletes walk in the ceremony.

"We tried to keep our team together and change it with every constructive outlet, but no success, and now it's time to refocus on getting game ready," Smith wrote on Twitter. "So tonight I am sending my team out there to represent (the United States) proudly and soak up every moment. Let's go boys!"

The 38-year-old Smith is playing in his fifth Olympics, matching Tony Azevedo for most Olympic teams for a U.S. water polo athlete. He was under consideration to serve as the male U.S. flag bearer for the opening ceremony before that honor went to baseball player Eddy Alvarez.

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A map on the Olympic website has been changed after Ukraine protested that it included a border across the Crimean Peninsula.

The map is part of a "Cheer Zone" feature tracking how fans around the world have backed different teams at the Tokyo Games.

Late Thursday the map had a black line across the top of Crimea in the same style as national borders. On Friday morning, there was no line across the peninsula. Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014. Ukraine still considers it to be Ukrainian territory.

The Ukrainian embassy in Japan tells the Associated Press in an e-mail that "we have protested to the IOC and the map was corrected."

Road cyclist Michal Schlegel is the fourth Czech athlete from three different sports to test positive before their competition at the Tokyo Games.

Schlegel tested positive at the team's training base in Izu and will miss Saturday's road race.

The Czech Olympic Committee said in a statement Friday that Schlegel is in isolation, and that Michael Kukrle and Zdenek Stybar will be its only two riders lining up at Musashinonomori Park for one of the first medal events of the Summer Games.

Czech beach volleyball players Marketa Slukova and Ondrej Perusic and table tennis player Pavel Sirucek also tested positive earlier this week. That has prompted the Czech Olympic team to investigate whether the outbreak is linked to its chartered flight to Tokyo.

## Tokyo Olympics begin with muted ceremony and empty stadium

By FOSTER KLUG Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Belated and beleaguered, the virus-delayed Tokyo Summer Olympics finally opened Friday night with cascading fireworks and made-for-TV choreography that unfolded in a near-empty stadium, a colorful but strangely subdued ceremony that set a striking tone to match a unique pandemic Games.

As their opening played out, devoid of the usual crowd energy, the Olympics convened amid simmering anger and disbelief in much of the host country, but with hopes from organizers that the excitement of the sports to follow would offset the widespread opposition.

"Today is a moment of hope. Yes, it is very different from what all of us had imagined," IOC President Thomas Bach said. "But let us cherish this moment because finally we are all here together."

"This feeling of togetherness — this is the light at the end of the dark tunnel of the pandemic," Bach declared. Later, Japanese tennis star Naomi Osaka received the Olympic flame from a torch relay through the stadium and lit the Olympic cauldron.

Trepidations throughout Japan have threatened for months to drown out the usual packaged glitz of the opening. Inside the stadium after dusk Friday, however, a precisely calibrated ceremony sought to portray that the Games — and their spirit — are going on.

Early in the ceremony, an ethereal blue light bathed the empty seats as loud music muted the shouts of scattered protesters outside calling for the Games to be canceled. A single stage held an octagon shape meant to resemble the country's fabled Mount Fuji. Later, an orchestral medley of songs from iconic Japanese video games served as the soundtrack for athletes' entrances.

Mostly masked athletes waved enthusiastically to thousands of empty seats and to a world hungry to watch them compete but surely wondering what to make of it all. Some athletes marched socially distanced, while others clustered in ways utterly contrary to organizers' hopes. The Czech Republic entered with other countries even though its delegation has had several positive COVID tests since arriving.

"You had to face great challenges on your Olympic journey," Bach told the athletes. "Today you are making your Olympic dream come true."

Organizers held a moment of silence for those who had died in the pandemic; as it ticked off and the music paused, the sounds of the protests echoed in the distance.

Protesters' shouts gave voice to a fundamental question about these Games as Japan, and large parts

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of the world, reel from the continuing gut punch of a pandemic that is stretching well into its second year, with cases in Tokyo approaching record highs this week: Will the deep, intrinsic human attachment to the spectacle of sporting competition at the highest possible level be enough to salvage these Olympics?

Time and again, previous opening ceremonies have pulled off something that approaches magic. Scandals — bribery in Salt Lake City, censorship and pollution in Beijing, doping in Sochi — fade into the background when the sports begin.

But with people still falling ill and dying each day from the coronavirus, there's a particular urgency to the questions about whether the Olympic flame can burn away the fear or provide a measure of catharsis — and even awe — after a year of suffering and uncertainty in Japan and around the world.

"Today, with the world facing great challenges, some are again questioning the power of sport and the value of the Olympic Games," Seiko Hashimoto, president of the Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee, said in a speech. But, she said of the Games' possibilities, "This is the power of sport. ... This is its essence."

Japanese Emperor Naruhito declared the Games open, with fireworks bursting over the stadium after he spoke.

Outside, hundreds of curious Tokyo residents lined a barricade that separated them from those entering — but just barely: Some of those going in took selfies with the onlookers across the barricades, and there was an excited carnival feeling. Some pedestrians waved enthusiastically to approaching Olympic buses.

The sports have already begun, and some of the focus is turning toward the competition to come.

Can the U.S. women's soccer team, for instance, even after an early, shocking loss to Sweden, become the first to win an Olympics following a World Cup victory? Can Japan's Hideki Matsuyama win gold in golf after becoming the first Japanese player to win the Masters? Will Italy's Simona Quadarella challenge American standout Katie Ledecky in the 800- and 1,500-meter freestyle swimming races?

For now, however, it's hard to miss how unusual these Games promise to be. The lovely national stadium can seem like an isolated militarized zone, surrounded by huge barricades. Roads around it have been sealed and businesses closed.

Inside, the feeling of sanitized, locked-down quarantine carries over. Fans, who would normally be screaming for their countries and mixing with people from around the world, have been banned, leaving only a carefully screened contingent of journalists, officials, athletes and participants.

Olympics often face opposition, but there's also usually a pervasive feeling of national pride. Japan's resentment centers on the belief that it was strong-armed into hosting — forced to pay billions and risk the health of a largely unvaccinated, deeply weary public — so the IOC can collect its billions in media revenue.

"Sometimes people ask why the Olympics exist, and there are at least two answers. One is they are a peerless global showcase of the human spirit as it pertains to sport, and the other is they are a peerless global showcase of the human spirit as it pertains to aristocrats getting luxurious hotel rooms and generous per diems," Bruce Arthur, a sports columnist for the Toronto Star, wrote recently.

How did we get here? A quick review of the past year and a half seems operatic in its twists and turns.

A once-in-a-century pandemic forces the postponement of the 2020 version of the Games. A fusillade of scandals (sexism and other discrimination and bribery claims, overspending, ineptitude, bullying) unfolds. People in Japan, meanwhile, watch bewildered as an Olympics considered a bad idea by many scientists actually takes shape.

Japanese athletes, freed from onerous travel rules and able to train more normally, may enjoy a nice boost over their rivals in some cases, even without fans. Judo, a sport that Japan is traditionally a powerhouse in, will begin Saturday, giving the host nation a chance for early gold.

The reality, for now, is that the delta variant of the virus is still rising, straining the Japanese medical system in places, and raising fears of an avalanche of cases. Only a little over 20% of the population is fully vaccinated. And there have been near daily reports of positive virus cases within the so-called Olympic bubble that's meant to separate the Olympic participants from the worried, skeptical Japanese population.

For a night, at least, the glamor and message of hope of the opening ceremonies may distract many global viewers from the surrounding anguish and anger.

"After more than half a century, the Olympic Games have returned to Tokyo," Hashimoto said. "Now we

will do everything in our power to make this Games a source of pride for generations to come.”

## Free money for all? Mayors hope local tests bring big change

By SARA BURNETT Associated Press

By triggering \$1,400 stimulus checks for millions of people and expanding the child tax credit for many families, the pandemic offered a clear takeaway for some officials: That putting tax dollars in people's pockets is achievable and can be a lifeline to those struggling to get by.

Now a growing number of mayors and other leaders say they want to determine for sure whether programs like these are the best way to reduce poverty, lessen inequality and get people working.

In experiments across the country, dozens of cities and counties — some using money from the \$1.9 trillion COVID relief package approved in March — and the state of California are giving some low-income residents a guaranteed income of \$500 to \$1,000 each month to do with as they please, and tracking what happens. A coalition known as Mayors for a Guaranteed Income plans to use the data — collected alongside a University of Pennsylvania-based research center — to lobby the White House and Congress for a federal guaranteed income or, for starters, to make the new \$300 per month child tax credit that's set to expire after this year permanent.

The surge in interest in these so-called free money pilot programs shows how quickly the concept of just handing out cash, no strings attached, has shifted from far-fetched idea to serious policy proposal, even as critics blast the programs as unaffordable or discouraging people from going to work. Supporters say it's all due to COVID-19, which cost millions of people their jobs and prompted the federal government under both Presidents Donald Trump and Joe Biden to cut checks to rescue the economy — relief that was hugely popular politically.

“The pandemic showed us what is possible,” said Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, whose latest budget included a \$24 million guaranteed income program to give 2,000 poor families \$1,000 per month. “We're now going to be a pretty potent lobby to get the child tax credit permanent.”

The American Rescue Plan, which Biden signed in March, increased the child tax credit for one year to \$3,600 annually for children under 6 and \$3,000 for ages 6 to 17, with the first six months of the credit advanced via monthly payments that started this month. Last year the credit was \$2,000 per child, and only families that owed income taxes to the government could receive it. That excluded low-income families and those who generally have no income to report.

Biden is pushing to extend the credit through 2025, and ultimately make it permanent. Republicans argue doing so would create a disincentive for people to work, and lead to more poverty — an argument similar to what critics say about the guaranteed income programs. No Republicans voted in favor of the American Rescue Plan, which they said was too expensive and not focused specifically enough on COVID-19's health and economic crises.

Former Stockton Mayor Michael Tubbs, who started Mayors for a Guaranteed Income in June 2020, launched a guaranteed income program using private funds in his Northern California city in 2019. An independent study found full-time employment for participants grew in the first year of the program more quickly than it did for those not receiving cash, a finding Tubbs argues contradicts conservative arguments against them. Some recipients were able to complete classes or training and get full-time jobs that provided more economic stability than cobbling together gig employment.

Mayors for a Guaranteed Income started with 11 founding mayors and now has more than 50. Two dozen pilot programs have been approved, from Los Angeles County — the most populous county in the U.S. — to a county in upstate New York and the cities of Wausau, Wisconsin, and Gainesville, Florida.

Last week, California lawmakers approved a state-funded guaranteed income plan with a unanimous vote that showed bipartisan support. It will provide monthly payments to qualifying pregnant people and young adults who recently left foster care.

Some pilot programs have been funded privately — Twitter founder Jack Dorsey has donated over \$15 million to MGI. Other places, like Minneapolis, are using federal dollars from the American Rescue Plan.

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Matt Zwolinski, director of the Center for Ethics, Economics and Public Policy at the University of San Diego, has studied guaranteed income policy for over a decade and says the increased interest is remarkable.

But he says there's a flaw in using the pilot projects as a "proof of concept." Most are for one to two years and give money to a narrow slice of the population that knows the cash will eventually stop, so participants may be more likely to seek fulltime employment during that period than if they knew the cash was permanent.

Zwolinski also questions whether people in the U.S. are willing to support a national program that gives money to people who could work but aren't doing so.

"That really rubs a lot of people the wrong way," he said.

Even in the smaller pilots there have been hiccups. In many cases, waivers are needed to ensure the new income doesn't make recipients ineligible for other benefits they receive.

Wausau, Wisconsin, Mayor Katie Rosenberg said that snag has delayed the city's program from getting up and running.

"I don't want to hurt people," Rosenberg said.

Gary, Indiana, started its pilot program in April, providing \$500 per month to 125 households for one year. Burgess Peoples, the pilot's executive director, said recipients receive "wraparound services," including help with finding jobs. Already it's making a difference, she said.

Two women used their first checks to pay what they owed for college tuition, allowing them to keep working toward their degrees. One man got his car repaired so he could get to work without paying for a Lyft ride.

Peoples hopes more local experiments will pressure the federal government to change the way it assists poor people.

"That way they can get help the way they need it," she said, "not just the way the government thinks it should be."

## Olympic Games, Tokyo-style: The pandemic era, in miniature

By TED ANTHONY AP National Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Ghostly airports, devoid of bustle. Cavernous arenas where no crowds will roar. Stringent rules that are spottily enforced — and spottily ignored. Complaints over restrictions, including comparisons to Nazi Germany. Worries about outsiders causing superspreader events. And a general unease that life as we know it is upside down.

The coronavirus pandemic that interrupted the world and is digging in its heels once again in Asia? Or the seriously peculiar Olympic Games that are about to happen in its midst? Both, actually.

The Olympics are often billed, enthusiastically and with no small amount of self-interest, as a slice of the globalized 21st-century world in miniature — humanity's very best on display. But for these weeks in Tokyo, the entire affair instead feels more like an industrial-strength clip reel of humanity's last 18 months.

Like so many Olympics, the Games reflect the world in which they are taking place. This time, it's a microcosm of the pandemic with all its challenges and fears, all of its irritations and surreal landscapes, jammed into a single metropolitan area during a brief moment in history eyed warily by a COVID-wearied civilization.

"The Olympic movement is living in the middle of society, and we are not living in a tranquil world," said Thomas Bach, president of the International Olympic Committee. "We are living in a very fragile world, and therefore we have to react to this."

For those who have watched the pandemic unfold across the world during the past 18 months — and who among us hasn't? — the list of similarities between the Pandemic Olympics and the fragile world writ large is, in fact, a long one.

Among the shared traits, seen in recent days:

People talking past each other as they try to make their points more and more vehemently. Question-



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able information propagating and spreading. Sudden, unexpected positive tests that upend the best-laid plans. Inequities in vaccine distribution and access. Sporting events that should contain many thousands of people, instead brimming with empty seats and silence.

And did we mention “no high-fives,” as the signs that festoon Tokyo’s largely deserted Narita International Airport demand?

On Friday night, at the crowdless opening ceremony, athletes marched into Japan’s national stadium and milled around with each other in assorted states of masking and distancing — products of the planet’s many cultures, intermingling in a tiny if undeliberate metaphor of how COVID spread in the first place.

Why, then, is this pandemic microcosm taking place at all, despite the fact that virus spikes across Asia are shutting down much of the continent once again? Choose your reason — based on your level of cynicism.

There’s a case to be made, of course, for the idealistic storyline perpetually pushed by the IOC, which goes something like this: Even in a nonviral year, the gathering of disparate nations and their paragons of excellence is a necessary tonic for a complex, contentious, fragmented world. And during a pandemic? Maybe even more so.

Sure, yes, fine. But there have been other, more mercantile and tactical reasons to press forward. The media contracts that will richly reward the IOC and broadcast networks. The partnerships and sponsorships that help keep the gears of corporate endorsement grinding.

And the deep desire of some in Japan — in the face of significant public reluctance and sometimes outright anger — to “deliver,” as the newly fashionable word goes, an Olympics that reflects well upon the country despite repeated potholes of corruption, sexual harassment and offensive humor.

“The value of Tokyo 2020 is still exciting, and we want to send our messages to the world,” organizing committee President Seiko Hashimoto said Thursday.

Many such messages are being sent, just as they have been around the world during the pandemic. But not all of them might meet Hashimoto’s approval.

Like leaders elsewhere, she might not like the people in Tokyo who, beseeched not to go out to bars, took their drinking into the streets and complained of hypocrisy by luminaries arriving in town. And there’s the message of vaccinations: Only 22% of Japanese have been fully vaccinated, a strikingly low number despite massive efforts — and a source of worry in the runup to the Games.

Perhaps the most universal question, be it the Olympics or the pandemic overall, is the continuing and fundamental clash of values within families, companies and communities around the notion of risk-taking: Is plowing ahead and soldiering on with life the wiser choice, or is the ever-invoked “overabundance of caution” the way to go?

“There is no zero risk in life,” WHO director general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said this week, praising the Tokyo Games even as he took aim once again at the overall global pandemic response.

As with the larger pandemic, though, there is a lot of airspace between zero risk and reckless risk. The world has spent more than a year negotiating that transaction — globally, regionally, locally, within individual households. And it hasn’t always done well. Will these Olympics be any different?

Yes, almost all recent Games have been filled with risks, perceived and otherwise. Risks of terrorism (Sochi, Salt Lake City, London), of political and military unrest (Pyeongchang) and of general crime (Rio). But more than any other Olympics in memory, this Tokyo edition is an intricate exercise in risk management. That comes through in almost every statement from every official, in every question from every journalist, and out of the mouths of so many of the world’s athletes.

But if the Olympics are a microcosm of the pandemic, the small sliver reflecting the larger whole, could they ultimately have an effect on that larger whole? If nothing else, the next two weeks — the challenges they present to athletes and organizers, the dangerous things that are avoided and why — could offer some hints to the larger world on how to move forward, or how not to.

Over and over, the Olympics insist that they represent the world, a world condensed for a fleeting moment into cooperation and international comity and a common reach for excellence. Sounds like something that Pandemic Planet could really use right about now.

## Olympics ceremony uses music from Japanese video games

By WALSH GIARRUSSO Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — The athletes of the Tokyo Olympics were greeted by a few familiar notes Friday night. Those video game songs that get stuck in your head.

An orchestral medley of songs from iconic Japanese video games served as the soundtrack for the parade of countries at the opening ceremony. The arrangement included songs from games developed by SEGA, Capcom and Square Enix.

Video game themes are often maligned as annoying earworms, but in Japan, the music that accompanies games is considered an art form.

Video game composers are famous in Japan, and NieR, one of the series featured in the parade, has seen three of its soundtracks appear on Japanese music charts.

The first song played Friday was "Roto's Theme" from the Dragon Quest series. Dragon Quest was enormously influential as the first console role-playing game, launching a genre. The series became so popular in Japan that 300 students were arrested for truancy after they left school to purchase Dragon Quest III.

The music of the Final Fantasy series is among the most familiar to western audiences. The parade included the main Final Fantasy theme and "Victory Fanfare," the song that plays when a player wins an encounter. Both arrangements have been part of the series from its first to its fifteenth installments.

Another well-known song that was featured was "Star Light Zone," from the original Sonic the Hedgehog. In addition to appearing in the original game, a remixed version appeared in the DS version of Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games.

Many of the iconic themes from other Nintendo games, such as Mario Bros. and The Legend of Zelda, weren't played in the parade. And producers didn't include many of the shorter jingles from early video games, such as Pac-Man and Asteroids.

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, July 24, the 205th day of 2021. There are 160 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 24, 1969, the Apollo 11 astronauts — two of whom had been the first men to set foot on the moon — splashed down safely in the Pacific.

On this date:

On July 24, 1567, Mary, Queen of Scots was forced to abdicate by Scottish nobles in favor of her infant son James, who became King of Scotland at the age of one.

In 1847, Mormon leader Brigham Young and his followers arrived in the Great Salt Lake Valley in present-day Utah.

In 1858, Republican senatorial candidate Abraham Lincoln formally challenged Democrat Stephen A. Douglas to a series of political debates; the result was seven face-to-face encounters.

In 1862, Martin Van Buren, the eighth president of the United States, and the first to have been born a U.S. citizen, died at age 79 in Kinderhook, New York, the town where he was born in 1782.

In 1866, Tennessee became the first state to be readmitted to the Union after the Civil War.

In 1915, the SS Eastland, a passenger ship carrying more than 2,500 people, rolled onto its side while docked at the Clark Street Bridge on the Chicago River; an estimated 844 people died in the disaster.

In 1937, the state of Alabama dropped charges against four of the nine young Black men accused of raping two white women in the "Scottsboro Case."

In 1952, President Harry S. Truman announced a settlement in a 53-day steel strike. The Gary Cooper western "High Noon" had its U.S. premiere in New York.

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In 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled that President Richard Nixon had to turn over subpoenaed White House tape recordings to the Watergate special prosecutor.

In 1975, an Apollo spacecraft splashed down in the Pacific, completing a mission which included the first-ever docking with a Soyuz capsule from the Soviet Union.

In 2010, a stampede inside a tunnel crowded with techno music fans left 21 people dead and more than 500 injured at the famed Love Parade festival in western Germany.

In 2019, in a day of congressional testimony, Robert Mueller dismissed President Donald Trump's claim of "total exoneration" in Mueller's probe of Russia's 2016 election interference.

Ten years ago: Cadel (kuh-DEHL') Evans won the Tour de France, becoming the first Australian champion in cycling's greatest race.

Five years ago: Thousands of demonstrators took to Philadelphia's sweltering streets in the first major protests ahead of the Democratic National Convention. Ken Griffey Jr. and Mike Piazza were inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. British rider Chris Froome celebrated his third Tour de France title in four years. Hollywood "ghost singer" Marni Nixon, 86, died in New York.

One year ago: U.S. agents again used tear gas to try to disperse a large crowd of protesters outside the federal courthouse in Portland, Oregon, after fireworks were shot toward the building amid raucous demonstrations. A federal judge denied a request by Oregon's attorney general to restrict the actions of federal police who'd been deployed there amid weeks of protests over the death of George Floyd. President Donald Trump scrapped plans for a four-night Republican National Convention celebration in Florida, citing a "flare-up" of the coronavirus. Former Trump lawyer Michael Cohen was released from prison after a federal judge ruled that a move to revoke his home confinement was retaliation for his plan to release a book critical of Trump. Alec McKinney, 17, the younger of two teens charged in a fatal shooting at a suburban Denver school in 2019, was sentenced to life in prison plus 38 years. Television personality Regis Philbin, remembered for his syndicated morning show and for "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire," died at 88.

Today's Birthdays: Actor John Aniston is 88. Political cartoonist Pat Oliphant is 86. Comedian Ruth Buzzi is 85. Actor Mark Goddard is 85. Actor Dan Hedaya is 81. Actor Chris Sarandon is 79. Comedian Gallagher is 75. Actor Robert Hays is 74. Former Republican national chairman Marc Racicot (RAWS'-koh) is 73. Actor Michael Richards is 72. Actor Lynda Carter is 70. Movie director Gus Van Sant is 69. Former Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., is 68. Country singer Pam Tillis is 64. Actor Paul Ben-Victor is 59. Basketball Hall of Famer Karl Malone is 58. Retired MLB All-Star Barry Bonds is 57. Actor Kadeem Hardison is 56. Actor-singer Kristin Chenoweth is 53. Actor Laura Leighton is 53. Actor John P. Navin Jr. is 53. Actor-singer Jennifer Lopez is 52. Basketball player-turned-actor Rick Fox is 52. Director Patty Jenkins ("Wonder Woman") is 50. Actor Jamie Denbo (TV: "Orange is the New Black") is 48. Actor Eric Szmanda is 46. Actor Rose Byrne is 42. Country singer Jerrod Niemann is 42. Actor Summer Glau is 40. Actor Sheaun McKinney is 40. Actor Elisabeth Moss is 39. Actor Anna Paquin is 39. Actor Sarah Greene is 37. NHL center Patrice Bergeron is 36. Actor Megan Park is 35. Actor Mara Wilson is 34. Actor Sarah Steele is 33. Rock singer Jay McGuiness (The Wanted) is 31. Actor Emily Bett Rickards is 30. Actor Lucas Adams is 28. TV personality Bindi Irwin is 23.