

# Groton Daily Independent

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“Things are never quite as scary when you have a best friend.”  
-Bill Watterson



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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.

## **JAMES VALLEY TELECOMMUNICATIONS 64TH ANNUAL MEETING**

**Thursday, August 5th at 9am  
Groton Area High School**

Registration begins at 8:30am in the old gym.

All members who register for the meeting will receive a **\$20 credit** on their JVT account.

\$500, \$250 (2) and \$100 (2) JVT credits to be given away!



**JAMES  
VALLEY**  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS

## DANR Announces Air Quality Alert for Eastern South Dakota

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) issued an air quality alert for areas of eastern South Dakota where smoke from wildfires in Canada has settled. The smoke is causing low visibility and increased fine particulate matter (PM2.5) pollution to levels that may be a concern to public health.

The current air pollution levels exceed the National Ambient Air Quality Standard.

Elderly citizens, young children, and individuals with respiratory problems are the most susceptible. Individuals concerned about potential health impacts should consider avoiding excessive physical exertion, minimize outdoor activities during periods of low visibility caused by wildfire smoke, and keep indoor air clean by closing windows and doors.

Air pollution can aggravate heart and cardiovascular disease as well as lung diseases like asthma and COPD. When the air quality is unhealthy, people with these conditions may experience symptoms like chest pain, shortness of breath, wheezing, coughing, or fatigue. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, use your inhalers as directed and contact your health care provider.

DANR maintains air quality data on its website for locations in eastern South Dakota including Aberdeen, Watertown, Brookings, Sioux Falls, Union County and Pierre. Hourly PM2.5 values greater than 35 microgram per cubic meter (ug/m3) are a concern to public health. Individuals may track the PM2.5 concentrations by visiting DANR's website at <https://denravweb.sd.gov/AirVision/default.aspx> or AirNow's website at <https://www.airnow.gov>.



**The area has been engulfed with smoke which reduced visibility and created a very strong smell in the air from the Canadian fires. So much so that a poor air quality alert was issued, many outdoor activities were cancelled including various swimming pools in the state including Groton's.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

## Governor Noem Joins Amicus Brief in SCOTUS Abortion Case

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem and 240 women scholars, professionals, and pro-life feminist organizations filed an amicus brief in the most important pro-life case to be argued at the Supreme Court of the United States in at least a generation.

“For my entire life, women have been told that pregnancy is a barrier to a successful career. This lie has led to millions of abortions, despite women like me and countless others proving that successful careers and motherhood are not mutually exclusive,” Governor Kristi Noem said. “I was born a little over a year before the U.S. Supreme Court decided that abortion is necessary for women to succeed. I was eight months pregnant when I first took over our family ranch following my father’s tragic death. Today, as a former state legislator, congresswoman, and South Dakota’s first female governor, I stand in defiance of the lies perpetrated by the Roe decision.”

In *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, the Supreme Court will decide on the constitutionality of prohibiting abortion before the “viability” of the unborn child outside the womb. The Court has the opportunity to go further and recognize that the Constitution does not protect the so-called right to terminate unborn life, which would overturn *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* altogether.

The friend-of-the-court brief rejects the notion, set out in the *Roe* and *Casey* decisions, that the ability of women to achieve economic and social equality depends on abortion. For that reason and others, the High Court should overturn *Roe* and *Casey*.

The amicus brief cites empirical evidence pointing to the sustained economic and social achievements of American women regardless of abortion access. The brief notes that American women continued to make progress towards economic equality in the 90’s and 2000’s, even as abortion rates plummeted across the country.

“As a mother, I have led by example to show my daughters a life that balances family, education, and career. As a new grandmother, I want to ensure the next generation is reared in a country that cherishes life and an equal pursuit of happiness for all Americans,” continued Governor Noem.

The Women Scholars and Professionals amicus brief is supported by hundreds of pro-life women, along with pro-life feminist organizations including Feminists Choosing Life of New York, Feminists for Nonviolent Choices, New Wave Feminists, Pro-Life San Francisco, Secular Pro-Life, Siena Symposium, and Women Affirming Life. The brief is co-authored by Professors Helen Alvaré of Antonin Scalia Law School at George Mason University in Virginia and Teresa Collett of University of St. Thomas School of Law in Minnesota, the Director of that school’s Pro-Life Center.

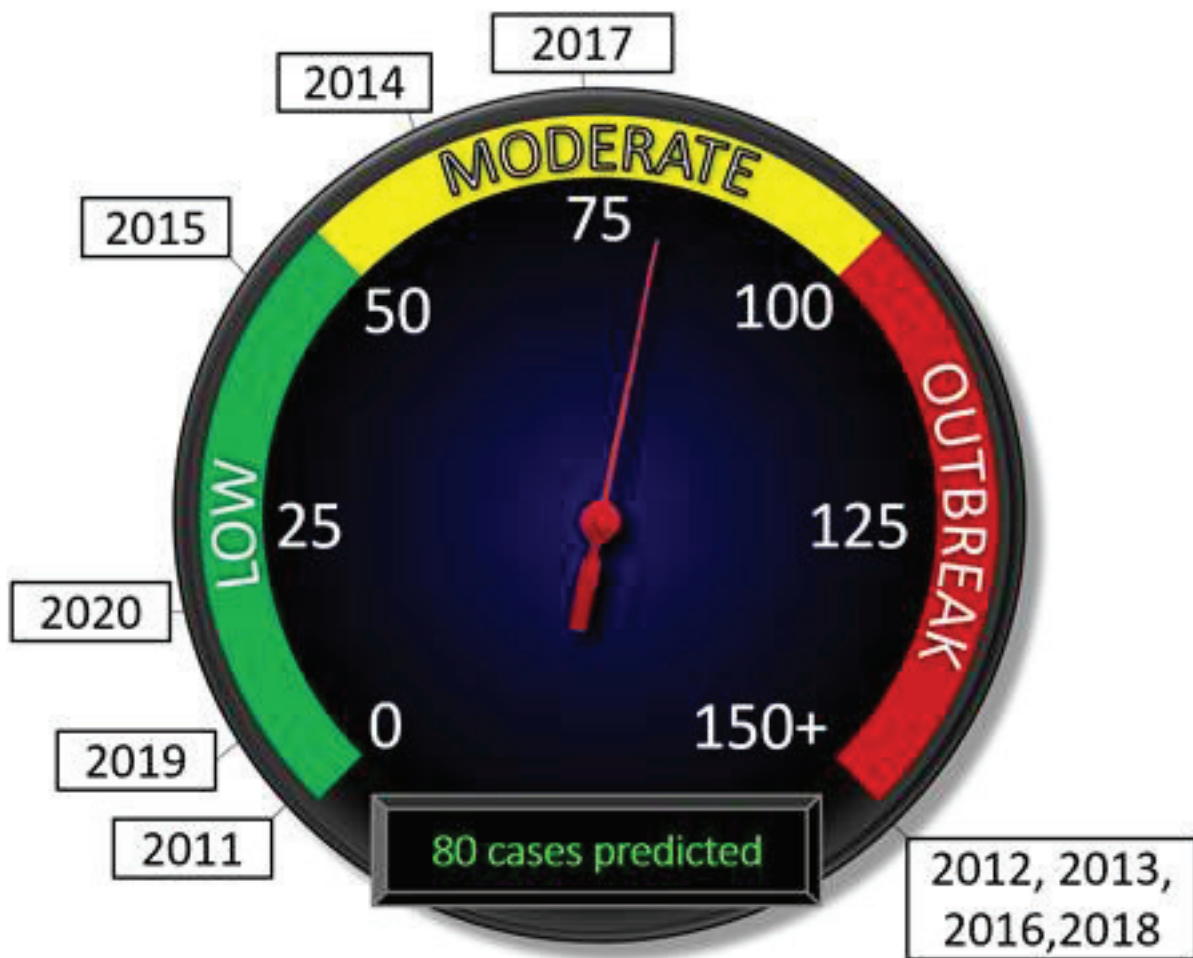
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## West Nile Update – South Dakota, 29 July 2021

SD WNV (as of July 26): 2 human cases reported (Walworth, Douglas)  
5 counties with positive mosquito pools (Brookings, Codington, Hughes, Lincoln, Brown)  
US WNV (as of July 27): 21 cases (AR, AZ, IA, ND, NE, CA, TX) and 2 deaths

WNV Prediction Model – Total Number of Cases Projected for 2021, South Dakota (as of July 26)



## **Department releases COVID-19 report; Aug. 4 Education Summit planned**

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Education has released a report about the impact of COVID-19 on the state’s K-12 education system, based on a survey the department distributed to school leaders last May. The report examines what the 2020-21 school year looked like, impacts of the pandemic, and how the department will address pressing needs going forward. The data from this report will be used to drive conversations during an Aug. 4 summit where education leaders and other stakeholders will discuss solutions for improving student and family engagement, addressing summer and after school programming, and bolstering the education workforce.

“Most South Dakota students were able to attend school in-person, thanks to the determination and efforts of our educators, staff, our nurses, and school boards last year,” said South Dakota Secretary of Education Tiffany Sanderson. “That was an extraordinary feat.”

The information gathered via the survey of school leaders and other stakeholder engagement will inform the department’s priorities over the next three years as it invests federal funds received through the American Rescue Plan.

Despite the successes of school year 2020-21, there are concerns that some students exhibited a lack of engagement and could be significantly impacted by lost instructional time. Attendance data indicates that certain groups of students were absent at rates disproportionate to their percentage of the total student population. These groups included high school students, students who are considered economically disadvantaged, Native American students, students with disabilities, and Hispanic students.

“By gathering educators and expert stakeholders at the Education Summit, we have the opportunity to address current needs, to make our schools better and stronger than ever before,” said Sanderson. “Our top priorities will be engaging students and families after the year of the pandemic and bolstering a strong, stable educator workforce.”

## Governor Noem Signs Executive Order Banning Federal Grants Tied to Critical Race Theory

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem signed Executive Order 2021-11, which directs the South Dakota Department of Education to refrain from applying for any federal grants tied to critical race theory.

“Critical race theory has no place in South Dakota schools. These ideas are un-American. We are ‘one nation, under God, indivisible,’ yet critical race theory seeks to divide us based on inaccurate revisions to our nation’s history,” said Governor Kristi Noem. “Our students should learn America’s true history by studying both our triumphs and our mistakes. Only then will students learn that America remains the shining example of exceptionalism throughout the history of the world.”

At the urging of South Dakota Secretary of Education Tiffany Sanderson, South Dakota State Historian Ben Jones, and others, the US Department of Education removed all references to the 1619 Project and Ibram Kendi from their American History and Civics-National Activities Grants. However, the grants’ priorities continue to allude to this divisive revisionist history.

“The revised proposals from the US Department of Education still advocate critical race theory in all but name,” continued Governor Noem. “We are the Mount Rushmore State, home to our nation’s greatest monument to our history. And we take the study of American history seriously. Our classrooms are meant for education, not indoctrination, and that is how we will continue to operate in South Dakota.”

Under the Executive Order, the South Dakota Department of Education is barred from applying for any federal grants in history or civics. The Board of Education Standards continues to work on revisions to South Dakota state history and civics standards. These revisions will be consistent with the civics initiative proposed by Governor Noem and passed by the legislature this past legislative session. Governor Noem had also earlier requested a review of policies by the South Dakota Board of Regents to ensure the state’s higher education system remains focused on honest, patriotic education.

## PURPLE HEART RECOGNITION DAY

PIERRE, S.D. – At the request of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, Gov. Kristi Noem has proclaimed Saturday, Aug. 7, 2021, as “Purple Heart Recognition Day,” calling on all South Dakotans to honor those men and women who are recipients of the Purple Heart Medal.

The Purple Heart is the nation’s oldest military honor, dating back to General George Washington and the American Revolution, and is awarded to those service men and women who have borne the battle, sacrificing life and limb.

“August 7th is also National Purple Heart Day, and is a day to honor those brave men and women who have earned the Purple Heart,” said Greg Whitlock, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. “It unites our country in recognizing the sacrifices of those who have risked everything in serving our great nation.”

The Governor encourages all South Dakotans to set aside time on August 7 to pay tribute to our heroes who have been honored with the Purple Heart. “It is important for all Americans to learn the history of this important military award and the sacrifices made by the recipients,” said Gov. Noem.

“Our military remains as strong as it has ever been. America’s veterans have been defined by the virtues of selfless service, sacrifice and devotion to duty,” said Whitlock. “These men and women, who serve and have served, are the flesh and blood of American exceptionalism.”

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## 2021 South Dakota American Legion State Class "B" Sr. Baseball Tournament

Friday - July 30, 2021

Saturday - July 31, 2021

Sunday - August 1, 2021

Monday - August 2, 2021

Tuesday - August 3, 2021

South Dakota American Legion  
State Class "B" Sr. Baseball Tournament  
Locke/Karst Field, Groton, SD  
July 30 - August 3, 2021

**Tabor Post 183**

Region 4 Champion

GAME 1  
10:00 AM

**Big Stone City Post 229**

Region 1 Champion

**Vermillion Post 1**

Region 3 Champion

GAME 3  
5:00 PM

**Redfield Post 92**

Region 6 Champion

**Winner/Colome Post 169**

Region 7 Champion

GAME 2  
30 Minutes after Game 1

**Madison Post 25**

Region 2 Champion

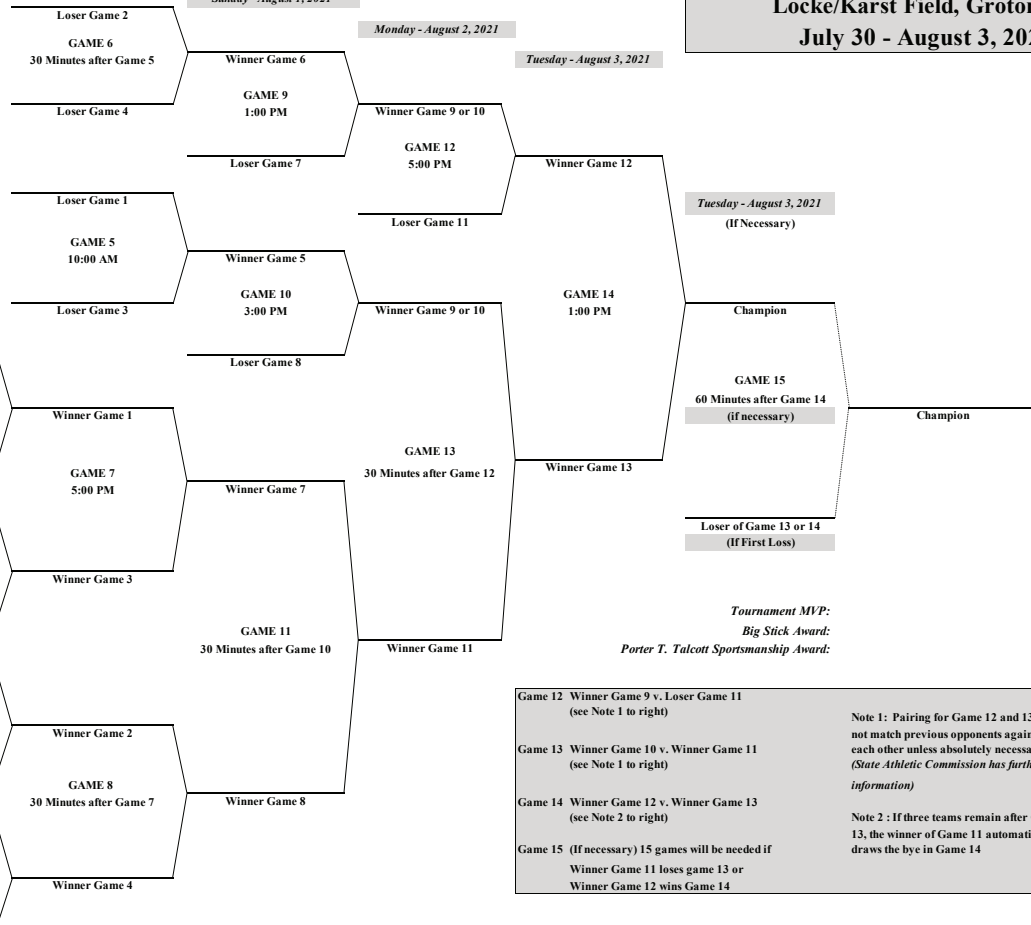
**Lake Norden/Badger Post 260**

Region 5 Champion

GAME 4  
30 Minutes after Game 3

**Groton Post 39**

Host



Tuesday - August 3, 2021  
(If Necessary)

Tournament MVP:  
Big Stick Award:  
Porter T. Talcott Sportsmanship Award:

Game 12 Winner Game 9 v. Loser Game 11  
(see Note 1 to right)

Game 13 Winner Game 10 v. Winner Game 11  
(see Note 1 to right)

Game 14 Winner Game 12 v. Winner Game 13  
(see Note 2 to right)

Game 15 (If necessary) 15 games will be needed if  
Winner Game 11 loses game 13 or  
Winner Game 12 wins Game 14

Note 1: Pairing for Game 12 and 13 will not match previous opponents against each other unless absolutely necessary. (State Athletic Commission has further information)

Note 2: If three teams remain after Game 13, the winner of Game 11 automatically draws the bye in Game 14



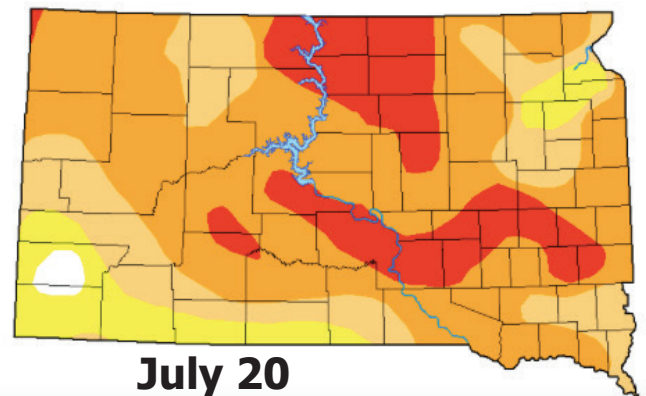
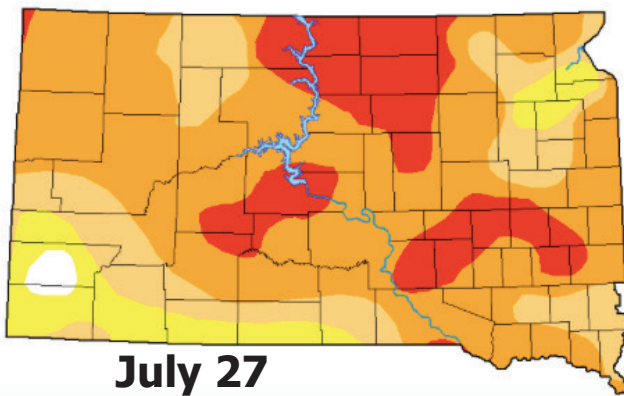
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## Drought Classification



## Drought Monitor



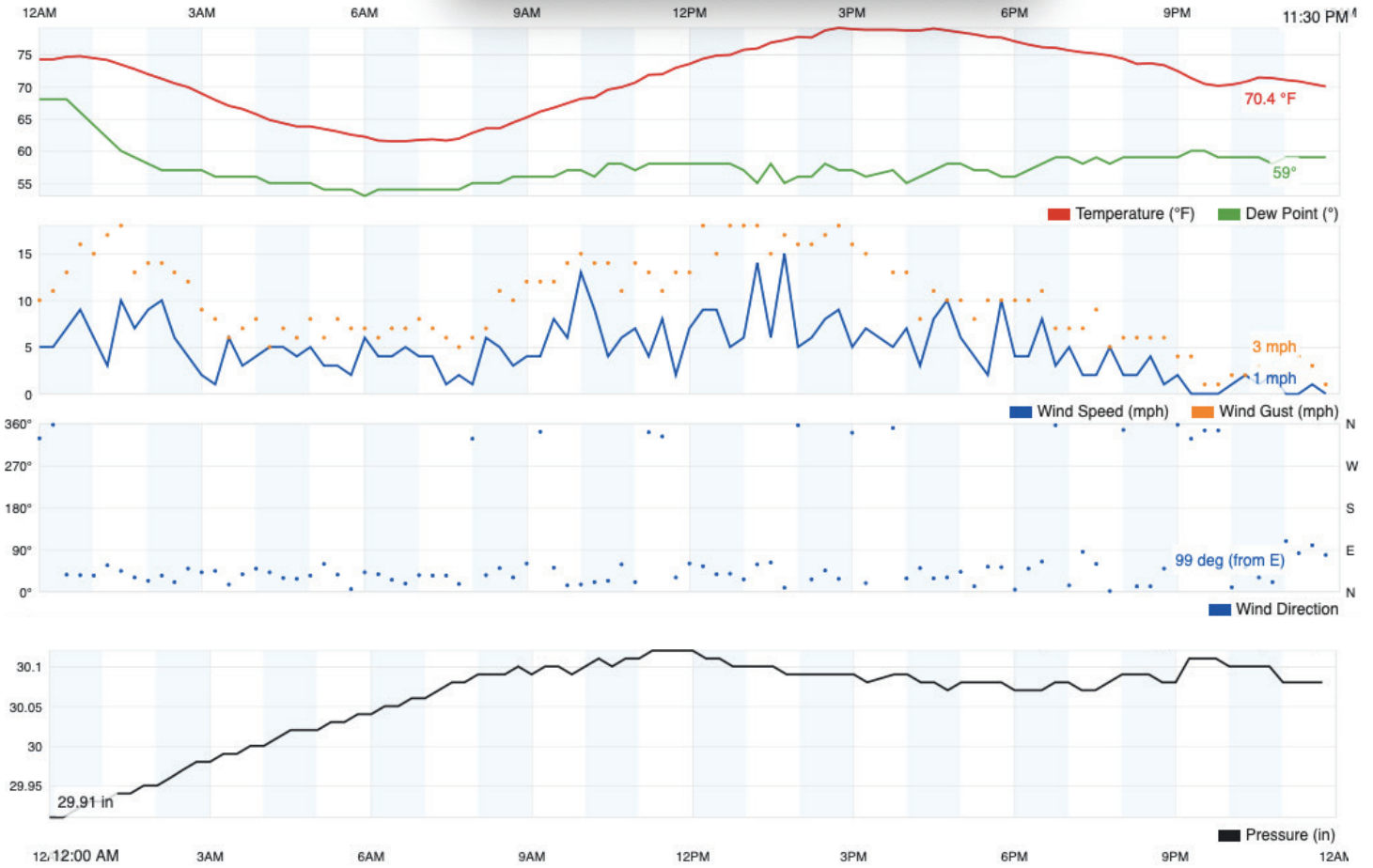
## High Plains

Drought's footprint remained rather limited across Kansas, eastern Colorado, and southern Nebraska. Farther north and west, however, worsening drought impacts were observed across much of Wyoming and the Dakotas. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, topsoil moisture on July 25 was rated 87% very short to short in North Dakota, along with 82% in South Dakota and 79% in Wyoming. Rangeland and pastures were rated at least 60% very poor to poor in Wyoming and the Dakotas, led by North Dakota at 85%. On July 25, North Dakota was the national leader in oats rated very poor to poor (56%), along with soybeans (41%) and corn (39%). South Dakota led the nation, among major production states, in sorghum rated very poor to poor (31%). Nationally, the U.S. spring wheat crop was rated just 9% good to excellent and 66% very poor to poor on July 25, the lowest overall condition at this time of year since July 25, 1988, when the crop was categorized as 4% good to excellent and 72% very poor to poor. Harvest was underway for drought-ravaged crops on the High Plains; 3% of the spring wheat had been cut by July 25. Periodic extreme heat on the northern Plains has greatly aggravated drought impacts. During the most recent heat wave, high temperatures in South Dakota on July 27 soared to 108°F in Pierre and 107°F in Rapid City. In the latter location, that represented the highest temperature since August 29, 2012.

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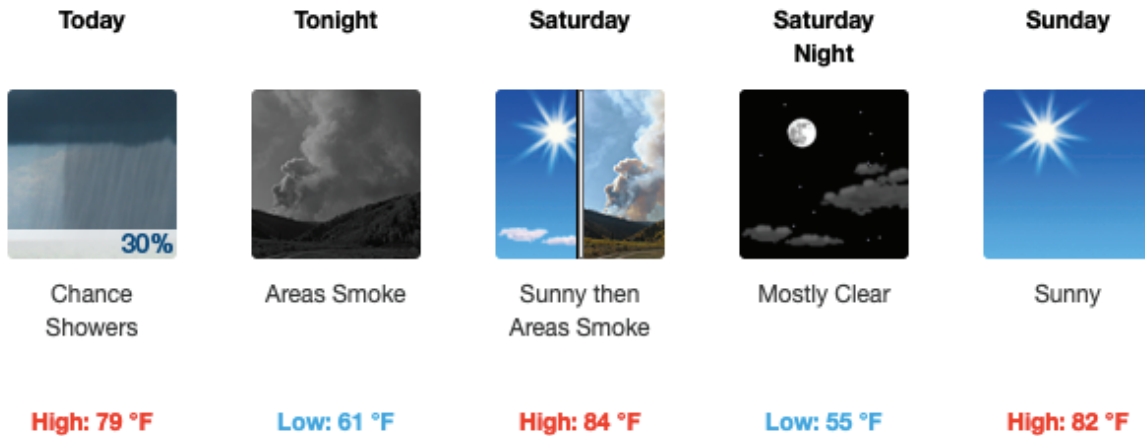
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

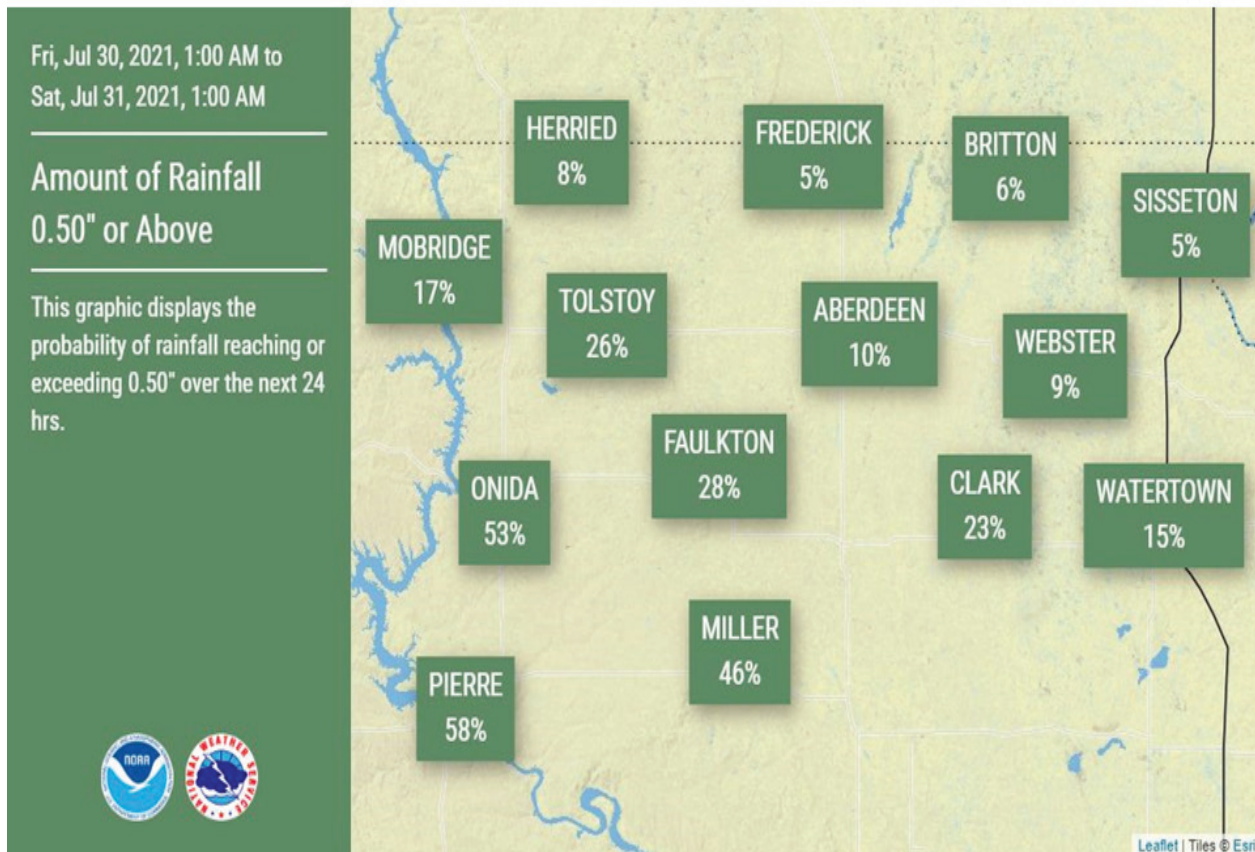


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## Some Locations Will Get Measurable Rainfall Today



A system will move across the region today and into this evening. The highest rainfall amounts are expected to be over the southern half of South Dakota. #sdwx #mnwx

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## Smoke Across Eastern South Dakota

ISSUED: 7:32 PM - Thursday, July 29, 2021

US-12 - MRM 349 - Waubay - 07/29/21 07:14:08 PM CDT

### Waubay on US12



I-29 - MRM 234 - Sisseton 07/29/21 07:15:04 PM CDT

### Sisseton on I-29



US212/SD15 - MRM 398 - Altamont - 07/29/21 07:17:21 PM CDT

### Altamont on US212



I-29 - MRM 178 - Watertown 07/29/21 07:10:42 PM CDT

### Watertown on I-29



Obs from SDDOT, Update from NWS Aberdeen, SD



Smoke is producing a reduction in visibility across northeastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. Visibility below one mile can be expected at times throughout tonight and into the morning hours on Friday.

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## Today in Weather History

July 30, 1981: Operation Skywarn organized by the National Weather Service in Bismarck four years ago had a perfect opportunity to put the training into operation on this day. A spotter 20 miles west of Bismarck identified a rotating wall cloud 10 minutes before a tornado touchdown. The strong tornado was rated as having F3 strength, leaving behind an 18-mile long path of destruction. The force of the storm drove a stick between a tire and rim. A 6-inch steel beam was twisted and found near the high tension tower which had been toppled.

July 30, 2001: Strong winds of 81 mph blew much of the roof off of the bowling alley in Mobridge. Some flying debris also damaged a trailer home. Many trees were snapped in two or uprooted, and many power lines were downed. High winds brought down tree branches and also knocked the power out for several hours in Pollock.

July 30, 2010: Very heavy rains of 5 to 10 inches caused the Rosehill Dam to break in the early morning hours in southeast Hand County. Flash flooding began around 1 am CDT with two campers being swept up around 130 am CDT. The two campers clung to a tree until they could be rescued about 6 am CDT. They were both injured with one camper being treated for hypothermia and other airlifted to Sioux Falls for broken ribs and head trauma. The dam broke at 330 am CDT with the spillway breaking at 420 am CDT. There was between a 100 to the 150-foot hole left by the dam break. The flash flooding continued downstream on Sand Creek causing damage to area farms, filling basements, and flooding many roads.

1949 - The state record for Connecticut was established when the town of Greenville registered an afternoon high of 102 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1965 - The temperature at Portland, OR, reached 107 degrees to equal their all-time record high. (The Weather Channel)

1970: Hurricane Celia was born in the northwest of the Caribbean Sea on this day. The hurricane would be one of the worst ever to hit Texas and would reach Texas late on August 3. The storm reached its peak as it made landfall near Corpus Christi, Texas, as a strong Category 3 hurricane. Hurricane Celia is currently the last major hurricane to make landfall on the middle Texas Coast until Hurricane Harvey in 2017.

1979 - A forty-minute hailstorm bombed Fort Collins, CO, with baseball to softball size hail. Two thousand homes and 2500 automobiles were damaged, and about 25 persons were injured, mainly when hit on the head by the huge stones. A three month old baby died later of injuries. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Afternoon highs of 105 degrees at Aberdeen SD, 102 degrees at Bismarck, ND, and 102 degrees at Pueblo, CO, were records for the date. Pueblo, CO, reported just .09 inch of rain for the first thirty days of the month. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - A dozen cities in the north central and northeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Downtown Baltimore, MD, hit 103 degrees, marking a record eight days of 100 degree heat for the month, and ten for the year. The high of 101 degrees at Billings, MT, marked a record seventeen days of 100 degree heat for the year. Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the northeast, with nearly fifty reports of large hail or damaging winds in Pennsylvania and New York State. A tree fell on a car at Erie, PA, injuring four persons. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Morning thunderstorms over central Missouri deluged Columbia with 5.98 inches of rain causing flash flooding. Daytime thunderstorms in Kentucky drenched Paducah with 1.73 inches of rain in less than half an hour. Evening thunderstorms in the north central U.S. produced wind gusts to 78 mph east of Moccasin, MT. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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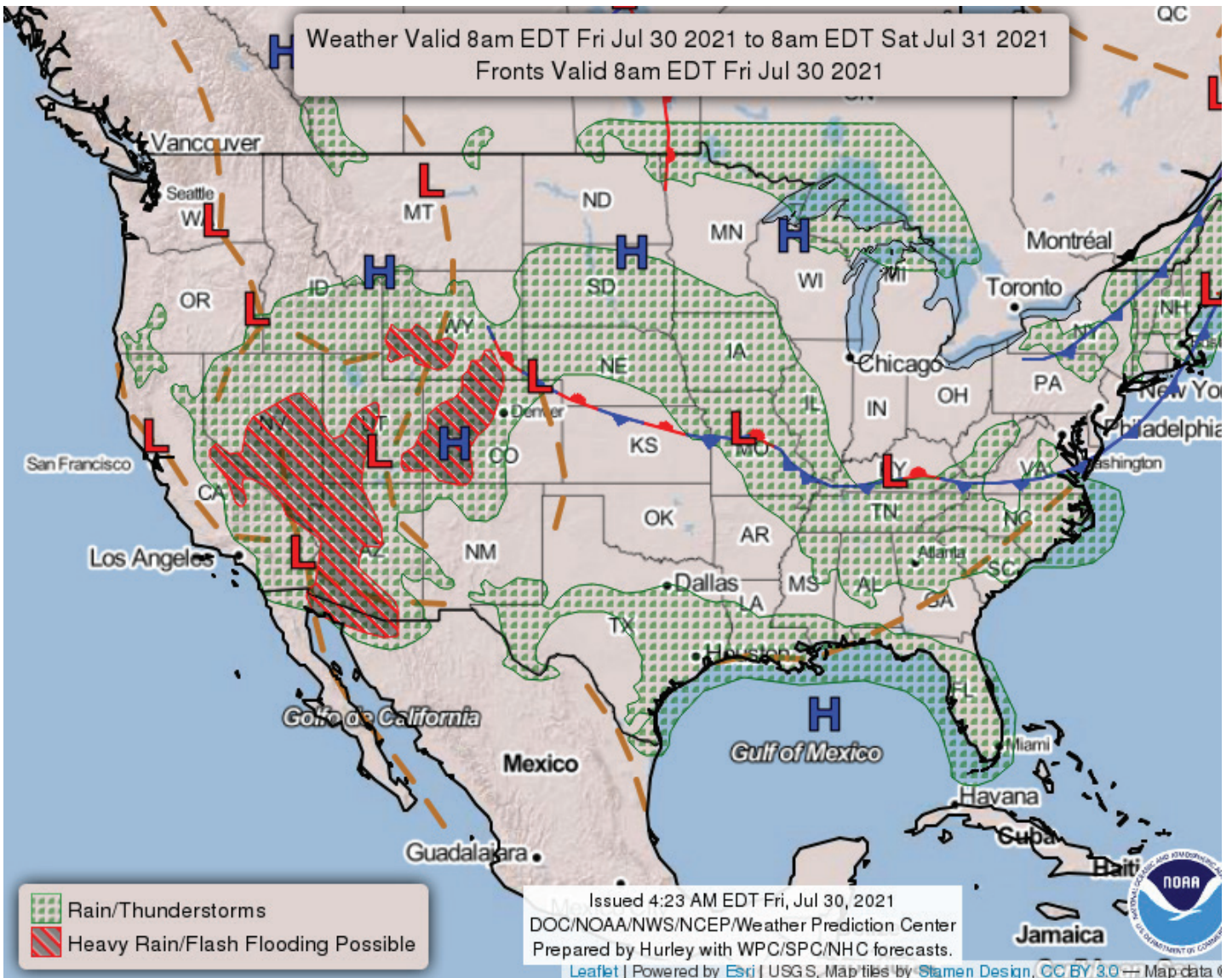
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 79.1 °F at 2:45 PM**  
**Low Temp: 61.5 °F at 6:45 AM**  
**Wind: 18 mph at 2:45 PM**  
**Precip: 0.00**

## Today's Info

**Record High:** 109° in 1917, 1933  
**Record Low:** 42° in 1899, 2014  
**Average High:** 85°F  
**Average Low:** 60°F  
**Average Precip in July.:** 2.84  
**Precip to date in July.:** 2.50  
**Average Precip to date:** 13.85  
**Precip Year to Date:** 7.25  
**Sunset Tonight:** 9:05 p.m.  
**Sunrise Tomorrow:** 6:16 a.m.





## **A LOVELY DWELLING PLACE**

It was Sunday morning and James said to his mother, "I don't feel good." Worried she asked, "Where don't you feel good?" Quickly he replied, "When I'm in church."

One psalmist wrote, "How lovely is Your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God!"

What was it that made the "dwelling place" lovely? It was the presence of the Lord. But anywhere a believer is can be a dwelling place where we can find the presence of the Lord. Wherever we are He is, and we can commune with Him and express the desires of our heart.

Many believe that God can only be found in church when they "report" for worship. For some it may be once a week or twice a month. For a few, worship only happens on special days or occasions. Every attempt is made to "discharge" all of their obligations by making one or two trips to church in any given year.

But if God is not worshiped seven days a week, it does not seem reasonable that we will truly worship Him one day a week or once a year. Worship that is worthy of Him is something we who are His children are to do consciously and constantly every moment of every day. It does not matter where we are or what we are doing. We are to offer our words and our work, our hearts and our habits to Him as gestures of love and adoration.

Worship is not something we do; it is the way we live. Worship is presenting all that we do as a sacrifice to Him.

Prayer: Lord, may we gladly present all of us – whatever we do, wherever we are – as a gift of ourselves to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: How lovely is Your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Psalm 84:1-2

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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)  
12/04/2021 Olive Grove Tour of Homes  
12/11/2021 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-Noon



## News from the Associated Press

### **CDC mask guidance met with hostility by leading Republicans**

By JILL COLVIN and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — One of the Republican Party's most prominent rising stars is mocking new government recommendations calling for more widespread use of masks to blunt a coronavirus surge.

"Did you not get the CDC's memo?" Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis joked Wednesday before an almost entirely unmasked audience of activists and lawmakers crammed into an indoor hotel ballroom in Salt Lake City. "I don't see you guys complying."

From Texas to South Dakota, Republican leaders responded with hostility and defiance to updated masking guidance from public health officials, who advise that even fully vaccinated people return to wearing masks indoors if they live in areas with high rates of virus transmission. The backlash reopened the culture war over pandemic restrictions just as efforts to persuade unvaccinated Americans to get shots appeared to be making headway.

Egged on by former President Donald Trump, the response reflects deep resistance among many GOP voters to restrictions aimed at containing a virus they feel poses minimal personal threat. The party is also tapping into growing frustration and confusion over ever-shifting rules and guidance.

But the resistance has real implications for a country desperate to emerge from the pandemic. Beyond vaccinations, there are few tools other than mask-wearing and social distancing to contain the spread of the delta variant, which studies have shown to be far more contagious than the original strain.

Many Republican leaders, however, are blocking preventative measures, potentially making it harder to tame virus outbreaks in conservative communities.

At least 18 Republican-led states have moved to prohibit vaccine passports or to ban public entities from requiring proof of vaccination. And some have prohibited schools from requiring any student or teacher to wear a mask or be vaccinated.

In its announcement, the CDC cited troubling new — thus far unpublished — research that found that fully vaccinated people can spread the delta variant just like the unvaccinated, putting those who haven't received the shots or who have compromised immune systems at heightened risk. The CDC also recommended that all teachers, staff and students wear masks inside school buildings, regardless of vaccination status.

The backlash was swift.

"We won't go back. We won't mask our children," declared Trump, who routinely cast doubt on the value of mask-wearing and rarely wore one in public while he was in office. "Why do Democrats distrust the science?"

Missouri Gov. Mike Parson called the new guidance "disappointing and concerning" and "inconsistent with the overwhelming evidence surrounding the efficacy of the vaccines and their proven results."

He, like others, warned that the measure would undermine efforts to encourage vaccine holdouts to get their shots by casting further doubt on the efficacy of approved vaccines, which have been shown to dramatically decrease the risk of death or hospitalization, despite the occurrence of breakthrough cases.

Last week, White House officials reported that vaccination rates were on the rise in some states where COVID-19 cases were soaring, as more Republican leaders implored their constituents to lay lingering doubts aside and get the shots to protect themselves. That includes Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey, who has pleaded with unvaccinated residents, saying they are the ones "letting us down."

"This self-inflicted setback encourages skepticism and vaccine hesitancy at a time when the goal is to prevent serious illnesses and deaths from COVID-19 through vaccination," Parson tweeted. "This decision only promotes fear & further division among our citizens."

The announcement "will unfortunately only diminish confidence in the vaccine and create more challenges for public health officials □ people who have worked tirelessly to increase vaccination rates," echoed

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Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, who has banned mask and vaccine mandates in his state.

In his Wednesday speech, DeSantis took particular aim at the CDC's call for kids to wear masks in the classroom.

"It's not healthy for these students to be sitting there all day, 6-year-old kids in kindergarten covered in masks," he said — though there is no evidence that wearing masks is harmful to children older than toddler age.

And in South Dakota, Gov. Kristi Noem called out the CDC for shifting its position on masking "AGAIN." She said that those who are worried about the virus can get vaccinated, wear a mask or stay home, but that "Changing CDC guidelines don't help ensure the public's trust."

On Capitol Hill, some Republicans were in revolt after the Capitol's attending physician sent a memo informing members that masks would again have to be worn inside the House at all times.

The change set off a round robin of insults, with Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi calling Republican House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy "a moron" after McCarthy tweeted, "The threat of bringing masks back is not a decision based on science, but a decision conjured up by liberal government officials who want to continue to live in a perpetual pandemic state."

The mandate also prompted an angry confrontation, as Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., verbally assailed Rep. Burgess Owens, R-Utah, who exited the House chamber and walked past her without a face covering.

Conservatives also forced a vote to adjourn the chamber in protest to the mandate, which was defeated along mostly party lines.

"We have a crisis at our border, and we're playing footsie with mask mandates in the people's House," railed Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, the motion's sponsor. "The American people are fed up. They want to go back to life. They want to go back to business. They want to go back to school without their children being forced to wear masks."

The nation is averaging nearly 62,000 new COVID-19 cases a day, and the vast majority of those hospitalized and dying haven't been vaccinated. As of Sunday, 69% of American adults had received one vaccine dose, and 60% had been fully vaccinated, according to the CDC.

Last year, early on in the pandemic, public health officials told Americans that masks offered little protection against the virus (and could even increase the risk of infection). The guidance was driven by a lack of knowledge about how the novel virus spread and a desire to save limited mask supplies for medical workers. But the CDC soon changed course and advised Americans to wear masks indoors and outdoors if they were within 6 feet (1.8 meters) of one another.

Then in April of this year, as vaccination rates rose sharply, the agency eased its guidelines, saying fully vaccinated Americans no longer needed to wear masks outdoors unless they were in big crowds of strangers. In May, the guidance was eased further, saying fully vaccinated people could safely stop wearing masks outdoors in crowds and in most indoor settings.

Subsequent CDC guidance said fully vaccinated people no longer needed to wear masks at schools, either.

Karine Jean-Pierre, the White House principal deputy press secretary, on Wednesday defended the changes, saying the CDC "did exactly what it was supposed to do."

"The CDC has to adapt to the virus," she said, "and unfortunately because not enough Americans have stepped up to get vaccinated, they had to provide new guidance to help save lives."

## Noem bars S. Dakota from applying for federal history grants

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem on Thursday barred the state's Department of Education from applying for federal grants in history or civics over concerns about how certain teachings on systemic racism would be tied to the grants.

The U.S. Department of Education this month backed away from proposed grant guidelines that suggested using curricula that teach racism is embedded into the country's institutions. After releasing proposed rules for the \$3 million American History and Civics Education grant program in April that included references

to the New York Times' "1619 Project" and "anti-racism" teaching, the U.S. Department of Education had faced backlash from conservatives, who argued it was an example of critical race theory making its way into elementary and high school classrooms.

Critical race theory is an academic framework that examines history through the lens of racism. There is little to no evidence that critical race theory itself is being taught to K-12 public school students, though some ideas central to it, such as lingering consequences of slavery, have been.

But even with the U.S. Department of Education's changes, South Dakota's Republican governor still wanted no part in the grants. She argued the grant proposals "still advocate critical race theory in all but name." Noem has pushed to remake the state's history and civics curriculum this year with a focus on "patriotic" education.

"Our students should learn America's true history by studying both our triumphs and our mistakes," she said in a statement. "Only then will students learn that America remains the shining example of exceptionalism throughout the history of the world."

Before the U.S. Department of Education changed the guidelines, Noem's Education Secretary Tiffany Sanderson had criticized the proposed guidelines and said that she had not planned to apply for the grants. South Dakota's Legislature had also instructed her not to apply.

The U.S. Department of Education's finalized application notice, published this month, encourages curricula that reflect "the diversity, identities, histories, contributions, and experiences of all students" and creates "inclusive, supportive, and identity-safe learning environments."

President Joe Biden's Education Secretary Miguel Cardona had explained in a blog run by the department that the grants would not come with specific strings attached. He wrote that the program was aimed at promoting "a more active, engaged society," but added, "This program, however, has not, does not, and will not dictate or recommend specific curriculum be introduced or taught in classrooms. Those decisions are — and will continue to be — made at the local level."

South Dakota lawmakers plan next month to consider instructing the state's public universities to refrain from applying for federal grants for history or civics teaching.

## COVID-19 rates a worry as 1 million head for Iowa State Fair

By DAVID PITT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — With coronavirus cases rising throughout Iowa and around the nation, health experts are becoming increasingly worried about next month's Iowa State Fair, which will bring more than 1 million people to Des Moines from around the state, including many from counties with low vaccination rates and increasing prevalence of the disease.

Iowa's biggest annual event comes at a time when giant summer events will draw crowds throughout the nation, including in states that are experiencing more virus infections due to low vaccination rates and growth of the delta variant. They range from the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota to the Minnesota State Fair, which typically draws more than 2 million people.

In Iowa, officials have encouraged people to get vaccinated, but the state's Republican-majority legislature and governor have blocked local governments from imposing vaccination or mask requirements, so there will be no limits on who can attend the fair when the event begins its 11-day run on Aug. 12.

"Unfortunately our current leadership has turned their back on science and turned their back on what's available to us to fight this pandemic and leaving Iowans struggling against what could be prevented," said Dr. Megan Srinivas, an Iowa-based infectious disease physician nationally recognized for her research, which includes COVID-19.

She said people have the misconception that being outdoors ensures safety, when the virus actually can spread in large dense crowds such as state fairs and large concert venues.

"Anytime we see a large congregation of people especially with the mixed vaccination status, we're going to see high risk for transmission and increases in transmission," she said.

In addition, the delta variant is two to three times more transmissible than prior virus strains, creating

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an additional risk among fairgoers as they stand in line for food, share condiment dispensers and hop into carnival rides, Srinivas said.

The Iowa State Fair will be in Polk County, where health department spokeswoman Nola Aigner Davis expressed concern about the state's virus trends and a reluctance to get vaccinated or wear masks.

"We know what the numbers say. We know that our cases are going up. We know trends are going up. What is the safe thing to do when people can't get vaccinated? They need to wear a mask," Davis said.

Asked Wednesday if she was concerned about infections at the Iowa State Fair, Gov. Kim Reynolds didn't directly answer but advised potential fairgoers to get vaccinated and noted most people hospitalized with COVID-19 have not been vaccinated.

"So it's a decision that they've made," she said. "They've made the calculation on whether to do it or not and so I don't feel that we should punish everybody because some have made the decision not to."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Wednesday that 49% of Iowans were fully vaccinated, ranking the state 21st in the nation. In at least 18 of Iowa's 99 counties, fewer than 40% of the population is vaccinated, and CDC data shows 35 counties with a high rate of spread and 12 counties with substantial spread of the virus.

Iowa also has the sixth-lowest testing rates in the nation among states reporting the data, which could make it difficult to pinpoint an outbreak if one occurs.

Srinivas said she's also concerned by RAGBRAI, an annual week-long bike ride across Iowa that continues through Saturday, drawing about 15,000 cyclists from around the country to small towns in counties with some of the state's lowest vaccination rates.

She called it the "perfect environment for outbreaks to occur."

In South Dakota, the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally is expected to attract over 700,000 people. The event went forward last year amid the pandemic, leading to 463 infections traced among rallygoers. Many health experts labeled the event "a superspreader." Cell phone data shows that, for two weeks in August, the rally turns the normally-sleepy city of Sturgis into a travel hub comparable to a major U.S. city. The event is scheduled this year for Aug. 6-15.

"It's sort of the perfect storm for pandemic spread," said Dr. Doug Lehmann, a doctor who runs a health clinic in Rapid City.

While South Dakota this summer has seen significantly lower case rates compared to last year, local doctors are still worried the massive crowds could lead to a fresh surge.

"This year, there's a lot of forces that are coming together to make it potentially worse (than last year)," said Dr. Jim Buchanan, a retired physician.

Only about 37% of people in Meade County -- where the rally will be held -- have been fully vaccinated, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In Chicago, the city's top public health officials said Tuesday that she's still comfortable with the four-day Lollapalooza music festival set to begin Thursday. Organizers are requiring attendees to show proof of full vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test result, Dr. Allison Arwady said Tuesday. People attending all four days will have to be tested at least twice.

The festival — the city's largest music event — is expected to draw 100,000 people each day to Chicago's Grant Park. Those who are not fully vaccinated must wear face masks when they are attending the festival.

The Minnesota State Fair will be back starting Aug. 26 after a one-year hiatus due to the pandemic. It typically draws more than 2 million visitors during its 12-day run, which ends on Labor Day.

Nearly all of Minnesota's pandemic restrictions have been lifted, so fair officials don't anticipate daily attendance limits. As things currently stand, masks will not be required for guests but are "strongly encouraged" for anyone not fully vaccinated. Proof of vaccination will not be required. Hand sanitizer will be provided at locations throughout the 322-acre fairgrounds in the St. Paul suburb of Falcon Heights.

Garth Brooks fans will have a chance to be vaccinated against COVID-19 when the country music star performs at Arrowhead Stadium on Aug. 7. Chiefs president Mark Donovan said Monday the team plans to take every opportunity to offer vaccinations at Arrowhead, The Kansas City Star reported.

## EY Announces Winners for the Entrepreneur Of The Year® 2021 Heartland Award

MINNEAPOLIS--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Jul 29, 2021--

Ernst & Young LLP (EY US) is pleased to announce the winners of the Entrepreneur Of The Year ® Heartland Award. Entrepreneur Of The Year is one of the preeminent competitive business awards for entrepreneurs and leaders of high-growth companies. The Heartland program celebrates entrepreneurs from Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota. This group of audacious entrepreneurial leaders was selected by an independent judging panel made up of previous award winners, leading CEOs, investors and other regional business leaders. Heartland award winners were unveiled during a special virtual celebration on Tuesday, July 27, 2021 to honor and celebrate these business leaders who test the limits of what's possible and find ways to catapult us from now to next and beyond.

"EY is proud to celebrate these unstoppable entrepreneurs and welcome them into our global Entrepreneur Of The Year alumni community," said Dominic Iannazzo, EY Heartland Entrepreneur Of The Year Program co-director. "Despite the unprecedented challenges of the past year, these heroic leaders have inspired us all with their unrivaled courage, ambition and unwavering commitment to their companies, clients and communities."

The winners for the Entrepreneur Of The Year 2021 Heartland Award are:

Brian NeSmith | Arctic Wolf Networks, Inc. | Eden Prairie, Minnesota  
Janet Johanson | BevSource and The Lab | Little Canada, Minnesota  
Tony Miller | Bind Benefits | Minneapolis, Minnesota  
Nathan McKean | BMC Enterprises, Inc. | St. Louis, Missouri  
Jamie Candee | Edmentum | Bloomington, Minnesota  
Todd Wilkinson | Entrust Corporation | Shakopee, Minnesota  
Scott Leiendecker | KNOWiNK LLC | St. Louis, Missouri  
Nicole Atchison | PURIS | Minneapolis, Minnesota  
Tyler Lorenzen | PURIS | Minneapolis, Minnesota  
Eddie Sullivan, PhD | SAB Biotherapeutics | Sioux Falls, South Dakota  
Charlie Youakim | Sezzle | Minneapolis, Minnesota

Nominees were evaluated based on six criteria: entrepreneurial leadership; talent management; degree of difficulty; financial performance; societal impact and building a values-based company; and originality, innovation and future plans. Since its launch, the program has expanded to recognize business leaders in more than 145 cities in over 60 countries throughout the world.

Regional award winners are eligible for consideration for the Entrepreneur Of The Year National Awards, to be announced in November 2021 at the Strategic Growth Forum ®, one of the nation's most prestigious gatherings of high-growth, market-leading companies. The Entrepreneur Of The Year National Overall Award winner will then move on to compete for the EY World Entrepreneur Of The Year™ Award in June 2022.

Entrepreneur Of The Year Award winners become lifetime members of a global, multi-industry community of entrepreneurs, with exclusive, ongoing access to the experience, insight and wisdom of program alumni and other ecosystem members in over 60 countries — all supported by vast EY resources. Since 1986, the Entrepreneur Of The Year program has recognized more than 10,000 U.S. executives.

Sponsors

Founded and produced by Ernst & Young LLP, the Entrepreneur Of The Year Awards are nationally sponsored by SAP America and the Kauffman Foundation. In Heartland, sponsors also include Colliers International, Padilla Co., PNC Bank, SALO LLC, Twin Cities Business and Donnelley Financial Solutions.

## Djokovic loses to Zverev at Olympics, ending Golden Slam bid

By ANDREW DAMPF AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — There will be no Golden Slam for Novak Djokovic.

The top-ranked Serb lost to Alexander Zverev of Germany 1-6, 6-3, 6-1 Friday in the semifinals of the tennis tournament at the Tokyo Olympics.

Djokovic was attempting to become the first man to win all four Grand Slam tournaments and Olympic gold in the same year. He won the Australian Open, the French Open and Wimbledon this year and needed

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the Olympic and U.S. Open titles to complete the collection.

Steffi Graf in 1988 remains the only tennis player to achieve the Golden Slam.

"He won 20 Grand Slams," Zverev said. "So you can't have everything."

Zverev's opponent in the gold-medal match will be Karen Khachanov. The Russian beat Pablo Carreno Busta of Spain 6-3, 6-3.

Djokovic, who hadn't lost since getting beaten by Rafael Nadal at the Italian Open final 2½ months ago, will play Carreno Busta for bronze.

On a humid and muggy evening at the Ariake Tennis Park, Djokovic committed a series of uncharacteristic errors after a strong start as the 6-foot-6 (1.98-meter) Zverev started to win free points with his big serve.

When Zverev hit a backhand winner down the line that Djokovic didn't move for to close it out, Djokovic walked to the net where he was embraced by Zverev. Djokovic responded by resting his head on Zverev's shoulder as the pair exchanged some words.

"I told him that he's the greatest of all time," Zverev said. "I know that he was chasing history, he was chasing (the) Golden Slam. ... We're very close. ... So of course I'm happy that I've won, but in the end of the day I also know (how) he feels."

Djokovic's only Olympic medal was bronze in singles at the 2008 Beijing Games — his first. He could still win a gold at the Tokyo Games in mixed doubles.

Djokovic was due back on the court almost immediately to play with Serbian partner Nina Stojanovic in the mixed doubles semifinals against the Russian duo of Elena Vesnina and Aslan Karatsev.

It's the third consecutive day that Djokovic was playing two matches.

Viktor Troicki, Serbia's Olympic team coach, told The Associated Press on Thursday that the entire team was against Djokovic playing mixed doubles because they didn't want the event to tire him out with so much on the line in singles.

Without Djokovic, the gold-medal match in singles will be lacking star power. Zverev's best career result was reaching the final of last year's U.S. Open, while the 25th-ranked Khachanov is coming off a quarter-final appearance at Wimbledon and is now in the biggest final of his career.

Zverev called it "maybe the proudest moment of my career so far.

"Because I'm not only playing for myself I'm not only playing for my parents, for my brother, for my family," he added. "But I'm also playing for everybody, all the (German) athletes here back at the base and everybody back at home watching."

Later, there's an all-Croatian gold-medal match in men's doubles featuring the top-seeded pair of Nikola Pietrangeli and Mate Pavic against Marin Cilic and Ivan Dodig.

The first medal of the tennis competition went to the New Zealand team of Marcus Daniell and Michael Venus, who took bronze in men's doubles by beating Austin Krajicek and Tennys Sandgren of the United States 7-6 (3), 6-2.

Daniell and Venus became the first New Zealand players to win a medal in tennis since 1912, when Anthony Wilding took bronze in singles while representing Australasia. Wilding, New Zealand's only Grand Slam singles champion with six titles, was killed during World War I in 1915 at the age of 31.

## 'Welcome home': Evacuation flight brings 200 Afghans to US

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, LOLITA C. BALDOR and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The first flight evacuating Afghans who worked alongside Americans in Afghanistan brought more than 200 people, including scores of children and babies in arms, to resettlement in the United States on Friday, and President Joe Biden welcomed them home.

The evacuation flights, bringing out former interpreters and others who fear retaliation from Afghanistan's Taliban for having worked with American servicemembers and civilians, highlight American uncertainty about how Afghanistan's government and military will fare after the last U.S. combat forces leave that country in the coming weeks.

Family members are accompanying the interpreters, translators and others on the flights out.

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The commercial airliner carrying the 221 Afghans in the special visa program, including 57 children and 15 babies, according to an internal U.S. government document obtained by The Associated Press, touched down in Dulles, Virginia, just outside Washington, D.C., according to the FlightAware tracking service.

Biden called the flight "an important milestone as we continue to fulfill our promise to the thousands of Afghan nationals who served shoulder-to-shoulder with American troops and diplomats over the last 20 years in Afghanistan." He said he wanted to honor the military veterans, diplomats and others in the U.S. who have advocated for the Afghans.

"Most of all," Biden said in a statement, "I want to thank these brave Afghans for standing with the United States, and today, I am proud to say to them: 'Welcome home.'"

Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin lauded the Afghans for their work alongside Americans and said their arrival demonstrates the U.S. government's commitment to them.

The Biden administration calls the effort Operation Allies Refuge. The operation has broad backing from Republican and Democratic lawmakers and from veterans groups. Supporters cite repeated instances of Taliban forces targeting Afghans who worked with Americans or with the Afghan government.

Congress on Thursday overwhelmingly approved legislation that would allow an additional 8,000 visas and \$500 million in funding for the Afghan visa program.

Biden announced earlier this year the U.S. would withdraw all its troops from Afghanistan by Sept. 11, honoring a withdrawal agreement struck by former President Donald Trump. He later said the U.S. military operation would end on Aug. 31, calling it "overdue." Some administration officials have expressed surprise at the extent and speed of Taliban gains of territory in the countryside since then.

Biden said that although U.S. troops are leaving Afghanistan, the U.S. will keep supporting Afghanistan through security assistance to Afghan forces and humanitarian and development aid to the Afghan people.

The newly arrived Afghan people will join 70,000 others who have resettled in the United States since 2008 under the special visa program.

Subsequent flights are due to bring more of the roughly 700 applicants who are farthest along in the process of getting visas, having already won approval and cleared security screening.

The first arrivals were screened for the coronavirus and received vaccines if they wanted them, said Tracey Jacobson, the U.S. diplomat running the effort. They were expected to stay at Fort Lee, Virginia, for about seven days, completing medical exams and other final steps, Jacobson said. Resettlement organizations will help them as they travel to communities around the United States, with some bound for family members already here, she said.

## Doping talk rears its head after Russian swimmers win

By PAUL NEWBERRY and BETH HARRIS AP Sports Writers

TOKYO (AP) — After losing to Russian swimmers in two races at the Olympics, American backstroke star Ryan Murphy said Friday that doping remains a huge problem in the sport and he wonders if all his competitors are clean.

Seeming to take aim at a country that has repeatedly run afoul of doping rules, Murphy revealed his frustration after taking the silver medal behind Evgeny Rylov in the 200-meter backstroke.

That came three days after Murphy — who swept the backstroke events at the 2016 Rio Games — settled for a bronze in the 100 back. In that race, he touched after both Rylov and another Russian, Kliment Kolesnikov.

"It is a huge mental drain on me to hear I'm swimming in a race that's probably not clean," Murphy said. "That is what it is."

But later, at a news conference with fellow medalists Rylov and third-place finisher Luke Greenbank of Britain, Murphy said he was not accusing the Russian of doping.

"I need to be clear," he said. "My intention is not to make any allegations here. Congratulations to Evgeny, congratulations to Luke. They both did an incredible job. They're both very talented swimmers. They both train real hard and they've got great technique."

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Rylov, who has long been one of the world's top backstrokers, denied being involved in any doping schemes.

"I have always been for clean competition," he said through a translator. "I'm tested. I fill out all the forms. I'm for clean sport. I've been devoting my whole life to this (sport)."

Rylov didn't feel like he was the target of Murphy's frustration, even after beating him twice in Tokyo. The Russian is a two-time world champion in the 200 back, and he also pulled off a 100-200 sweep at the 2019 championships.

"Ryan has all the right to think the way he does and say what he does," Rylov said. "He did not accuse me of anything. That's why I don't have anything against him."

Russia has been the most prominent target of the anti-doping movement after revelations that it launched a massive state-sponsored program to elude testers ahead of the 2014 Sochi Winter Games.

The country was forced to send depleted squads to the last two Olympics, and those that did compete at the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Games were referred to as OAR — Olympic Athletes From Russia.

Then, just when Russia appeared to be patching up its relationship with the rest of the world, more anomalies emerged from the files at Moscow's anti-doping lab.

Investigators from the World Anti-Doping Agency found evidence had been deleted and spurious information added, including fake messages designed to tarnish the name of WADA's star witness, former lab director Grigory Rodchenkov.

The new revelations resulted in a four-year sanction against the country, but Russia denied any wrongdoing and the penalty was cut in half by the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

After Murphy's comments, the Russian Olympic Committee issued a scathing statement on social media saying their country was the victim of "English-language propaganda" spread by "athletes offended by defeats."

"Yes, we are here at the Olympic Games. Absolutely by right. Whether someone likes it or not," the statement said.

"You need to be able to lose. Not everyone has that gift."

Most Russian athletes were allowed to compete at Tokyo, even though they officially represent the Russian Olympic Committee — not their country.

Critics have pointed out that the punishment lacks any real bite, since Russian teams are wearing full national colors. Their flag is banned and their national anthem can't be played during medal ceremonies, but they do get music from Russian composer Tchaikovsky.

Two Russian swimmers, Alexandr Kudashev and Veronika Andrusenko, were initially banned from competing in Tokyo by world governing body FINA because of evidence gathered from the Moscow lab.

But, just days before the opening ceremony, CAS cleared both swimmers to take part in the Olympics. Andrusenko has competed in four events at Tokyo, while Kudashev took part in two races. Neither won a medal.

After his victory in the 200 individual medley, China's Wang Shun was asked about the doping issue. His country's swimmers were involved in a massing doping scandal in the 1990s, and China's best-known swimmer, Sun Yang, was banned from the Tokyo Games because of a doping violation.

"The Chinese are against doping," Wang said through a translator. "We adopt a zero tolerance towards that."

Asked if the penalties against the Russians were sufficient, Murphy said, "When I'm asked a question like that, I've got like 15 different thoughts — and 13 of them would get me into a lot of trouble."

"I do believe there's doping in swimming," he added.

## Hong Kong protester given 9-year term in 1st security case

By KATIE TAM and JANICE LO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — A pro-democracy protester was sentenced Friday to nine years in prison in the closely watched first prosecution under Hong Kong's national security law as the ruling Communist Party



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tightens control over the territory.

Tong Ying-kit, 24, was convicted of inciting secession and terrorism for driving his motorcycle into a group of police officers at a July 1, 2020, rally. He carried a flag bearing the banned slogan, "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times."

President Xi Jinping's government imposed the law on the former British colony last year following protests that erupted in mid-2019. Beijing has rolled back the territory's Western-style civil liberties and tried to crush a pro-democracy movement by jailing activists. The public's role in picking Hong Kong's legislators has been reduced.

Critics accuse Beijing of violating the autonomy promised when Hong Kong returned to China in 1997 and wrecking its status as a global business center. Human rights activists say the security law is being abused to attack legitimate dissent.

Tong's sentence was longer than the three years requested by the prosecution. He faced a possible maximum of life in prison.

Tong's sentence is a "hammer blow to free speech" and shows the law is "a tool to instill terror" in government critics, Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific regional director, Yamini Mishra, said in a statement.

The law "lacks any exemption for legitimate expression or protest," Mishra said. "The judgment at no point considered Tong's rights to freedom of expression and protest."

The U.S. government, in a statement, criticized the "unjust outcome" of Tong's trial and said the security law was used "as a political weapon to silence dissenting voices." It said China is undermining rights guaranteed by Hong Kong's mini-constitution, the Basic Law, and by the 1984 Chinese-British Joint Declaration on the territory's return.

It called on Beijing to "stop targeting individuals exercising their rights and freedoms."

Chinese officials reject the criticism and say Beijing is restoring order and instituting security protections like those of other countries. More than 100 people have been arrested under the security law.

Defense lawyers said Tong's penalty should be light because the court hadn't found the attack was deliberate, no one was injured and the secession-related offense qualified as minor under the law.

Tong nodded but said nothing after Judge Esther Toh announced the sentence for a three-judge panel in the Hong Kong High Court. The former restaurant waiter wore a black shirt and tie with a blue blazer as he had throughout his trial.

As Tong was led out of the courtroom, spectators yelled, "We will wait for you!"

After the court adjourned, a spectator yelled to lead defense lawyer Clive Grossman, "Mr. Grossman, appeal!" Another lawyer, Lawrence Lau, said Tong expressed thanks to the Hong Kong public for their support.

The judges convicted Tong on Tuesday, ruling his actions were aimed at intimidating the government and public. It said carrying the flag was an act of incitement to secession, rejecting defense arguments that Tong couldn't be proven to be inciting secession just by using the slogan.

Tong was sentenced to eight years for incitement to secession and 6 1/2 years for terrorism, with some time to be served concurrently for a total of nine years, said Toh, the judge.

Tong expressed remorse but that didn't count toward reducing his sentence because he failed to plead guilty, the judges said in a written ruling. They said he had "good character" and no criminal record but due to the "serious offenses" those would not mitigate the penalty.

The sentence reflects "the abhorrence of society," the ruling said.

Tong's trial was conducted without a jury under rules that allow an exception to Hong Kong's British-style common law system if state secrets need to be protected or foreign forces are involved. The judges were picked by Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam.

The protests began over an extradition law proposed by Lam's government and expanded to include other grievances and demands for more democracy. At their height, thousands of people held marches and rallies every weekend.

The last pro-democracy Hong Kong newspaper, Apple Daily, shut down last month after journalists and

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executives were arrested. Its owner, Jimmy Lai, is serving a 20-month prison term and faces charges of colluding with foreigners to endanger national security.

Also last year, Hong Kong's Legislative Council was rearranged to guarantee a majority to Beijing-allied figures. Rules for elected officials were tightened to require them to be deemed patriotic.

Last November, the remaining 15 pro-democracy legislators resigned after four were expelled for urging foreign governments to impose sanctions on China and Hong Kong over Beijing's crackdown.

The United States stopped treating Hong Kong as a separate territory for trade, citing its reduced autonomy. Washington imposed travel and financial sanctions on leaders of China's ceremonial legislature. Canada, Australia and other governments suspended extradition treaties with the territory due to the security law.

In December, 10 pro-democracy activists and protesters who tried to flee to Taiwan by speedboat were sentenced by a mainland court in the southern city of Shenzhen to prison terms ranging from seven months to three years.

## **EXPLAINER: How 'the twisties' stopped Simone Biles cold**

By WILL GRAVES AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Maybe Simone Biles made soaring through the air look too easy. It's not — a fact she and other gymnasts who constantly negotiate with the laws of physics have long understood.

Every leap, no matter how routine, requires an innate sense of time and space. You have to know how many fractions of a second you have to make your body do what it needs to do. Just as crucially, you need to know you've got enough room to do it before the ground renders a verdict one way or another.

Simone Biles went undefeated for eight years. Gravity is forever-and-0.

Sometime after qualifying at the Tokyo Olympics on Sunday, the four-time Olympic gold medalist lost her way. She kept telling her body to twist. It kept saying, "How about no."

The "twisties," as they're known within the gymnastics community, were back. And Biles knew it, leading her to withdraw from the team final after one rotation and skip the all-around final. She watched from the stands on Thursday as U.S. teammate and good friend Sunisa Lee claimed the gold.

Biles hasn't ruled out competing in the event finals — she's qualified for all four — starting on Sunday. Yet even a minibreak from the competition floor hasn't cured her. During a series of social media posts on Friday, the 24-year-old provided an inside look at the "twisties."

SO WHAT ARE THEY?

The "twisties" are the sudden inability for a gymnast to make the requisite spins — or sometimes any spins — for a particular maneuver.

Biles posted a video — which she later deleted — of her doing a dismount on the uneven bars during training. She kept trying and failing to do 2 1/2 twists, just as she failed to do a full Amanar vault during the team finals on Tuesday night, coming up one full twist short, leading her to step away from the competition to protect herself.

"Sometimes I can't even fathom twisting," Biles posted. "I seriously cannot comprehend how to twist."

She called it the "strangest and weirdest thing."

WHY DO THEY POP UP?

No one knows. Not even the greatest of all time. Despite some sloppy — by her unparalleled standards — moments during qualifying, Biles said the "twisties" didn't pop up until Monday.

She's dealt with them before. The difference this time? They're not just affecting her on vault and floor exercise, as they have in the past. Now, they're following her to bars and beam, too.

"It's honestly petrifying," she wrote, "trying to do a skill but not having your mind and body in sync."

HOW LONG DO THEY LAST?

It depends on the athlete. For Biles, they can hang around for two weeks or more, making her availability for event finals seemingly a long shot at best.

Two-time Olympic gold medal trampolinist Rosie MacLennan of Canada struggled with her own version

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of “the twisties” while training for the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro. She recovered in time to top the podium in Brazil, but only after painstakingly relearning her skills over time.

“There (are) mental pieces to all sports, but in aerial sports where you’re slipping and twisting, there’s a huge mental component,” MacLennan said Friday after finishing fourth. “And when you get lost in the air, it’s one of the most terrifying experiences you can have.”

A terror that never really fully goes away.

“It sticks with you,” the 32-year-old MacLennan said. “So it’s something that like even to this day that you second guess yourself sometimes and it just takes a lot of really diligent work and a lot of patience and a lot of support around you.”

ARE THERE OTHER VERSIONS OF THE TWISTIES?

Turns out, yes. American trampolinist Nicole Ahsinger was a 12-year-old prodigy in southern California when she developed a case of what she calls “the flippies.” She would over-rotate time and again. Ground would become sky and vice versa.

It got to the point where Ahsinger, now 23, became too afraid to do one flip let alone the two — or more — required for a sport that sends athletes three stories into the air.

“I would cry every day,” said the now 23-year-old Ahsinger, who came in sixth in the finals in her second Olympics.

She ended up moving from San Diego to Louisiana in an effort to recalibrate. The “flippies” eventually eased, but only after she rebuilt her skills literally from the ground up. Biles doesn’t have that kind of time.

SO WHAT’S NEXT?

The vault and uneven bars finals are on Sunday. Biles is the defending Olympic champion on vault, and she unveiled the harrowing Yurchenko Double Pike in May.

Biles has four maneuvers named after her already in the sport’s Code of Points. If she wants to make it five, she needs to do the Yurchenko Double Pike in Tokyo. Considering the vault’s difficulty and her current issues, it seems highly unlikely she’ll attempt it. She’s not really a medal threat on uneven bars — where Lee and Belgium’s Nina Derwael are poised for an epic showdown — so it might not be worth the risk.

Beam, where she earned bronze in Rio, and floor exercise are later in the week. Maybe she somehow regains her confidence in herself and her surroundings.

Big, big maybe.

## Japan expands virus emergency after record spikes amid Games

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan expanded a coronavirus state of emergency to four more areas in addition to Tokyo on Friday following record spikes in infections as the capital hosts the Olympics.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga declared an emergency in Saitama, Kanagawa and Chiba, near Tokyo, as well as in the western city of Osaka, effective Monday until Aug. 31. Emergency measures already in place in Tokyo and the southern island of Okinawa will be extended until the end of August, after the Olympics and well into the Paralympics which start Aug. 24.

The upsurge in cases in Tokyo despite more than two weeks of emergency measures is raising doubts that they can effectively slow infections.

Five other areas, including Hokkaido, Kyoto, Hyogo and Fukuoka, will be placed under less-stringent emergency restrictions.

Tokyo has reported a record increase in cases for three days in a row, including 3,865 on Thursday, before logging another 3,300 on Friday. The cases have doubled since last week, although officials say the surge is unrelated to the Olympics.

“Infections are expanding in the Tokyo and western metropolitan areas at an enormous speed that we have never experienced before,” Suga said as he declared the expansion of the state of emergency. If the spike continues at the current pace with the spread of the more contagious delta variant, Japan’s medical system could collapse, he said.

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Japan has kept its cases and deaths lower than many other countries, but its seven-day rolling average is growing and now stands at 28 per 100,000 people nationwide and 88 per 100,000 in Tokyo, according to the Health Ministry. This compares to 18.5 in the United States, 48 in Britain and 2.8 in India, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

Officials said 2,995 are hospitalized in Tokyo, about half the current capacity of 6,000 beds, with some hospitals already full. More than 10,000 others are isolating at home or in designated hotels, with nearly 5,600 waiting at home while health centers decide where they will be treated. Tokyo is also setting up a facility for those requiring oxygen while waiting for hospital beds.

Nationwide, Japan reported 10,687 cases Thursday, exceeding 10,000 for the first time. It has recorded 15,166 fatalities from COVID-19, including 2,288 in Tokyo, since the pandemic began.

The emergency measures focus on an alcohol ban at eateries and karaoke bars and their shortened hours, but have become less effective because people are only requested to remain and work at home. Many have been defying the measures as they become tired of restrictive life.

Suga said his key strategy will be largely unchanged — to target dining. He said subsidies will be paid faster to business owners who cooperate, and local authorities will patrol “to increase the effectiveness of the measures.”

Earlier Friday, Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike noted that people in their 30s or younger account for many recent cases and urged them to “share the sense of crisis” and follow basic measures such as mask wearing and avoiding having parties.

As of Thursday, 27% of the Japanese population has been fully vaccinated. The percentage of the elderly who are fully vaccinated is 71.5%.

## Brutal killing spotlights violence against women in Pakistan

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Noor Mukadam’s last hours were terror-filled. Beaten repeatedly, the 27-year-old jumped from a window but was dragged back, beaten again and finally beheaded. A childhood friend has been charged with her killing.

The gruesome death last week in an upscale neighborhood of the Pakistani capital, Islamabad, is the latest in a series of attacks on women in Pakistan, where rights activists say such gender-based assaults are on the rise as the country barrels toward greater religious extremism.

Mukadam was the daughter of a diplomat, and her status as a member of the country’s elite has shone a spotlight on the relentless and growing violence against women in Pakistan, said prominent rights activist Tahira Abdullah. But the majority of women who are victims of such violence are among the country’s poor and middle classes, and their deaths are often not reported or, when they are, often ignored.

“I could give you a list longer than my arm, only in one week” of attacks against women, said Abdullah. “The epidemic of sexual crimes and violence against women in Pakistan is a silent epidemic. No one sees it. No one is talking about it.”

Still, Pakistan’s Parliament this month failed to pass a bill that seeks to protect women from violence in the home, including attacks by a husband. Instead, it asked an Islamic ideology council to weigh in on the measure — the same council that previously said it was OK for a husband to beat his wife.

Data collected from domestic violence hotlines across the country showed a 200% increase in domestic violence between January and March last year, according to a Human Rights Watch report released earlier this year. The numbers were even worse after March, when COVID-19 lockdowns began, according to the report.

In 2020, Pakistan was near the bottom of the World Economic Forum’s global gender index, coming in at 153 of 156 countries, ahead of only Iraq, Yemen and Afghanistan, which held the last spot despite billions of dollars spent and 20 years of international attention on gender issues there.

Many of the attacks in Pakistan are so-called honor killings, where the perpetrator is a brother, father or other male relative. Each year, more than 1,000 women are killed in this way, many of them unreported,

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say human rights workers.

"The authorities have failed to establish adequate protection or accountability for abuses against women and girls, including so-called 'honor killings' and forced marriage," according to the HRW report.

Rights groups have been sharply critical of Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan and his government, saying he panders to the religious right and excuses the perpetrators of attacks on women.

A former cricket star who has married three times, Khan once had a reputation as a womanizer but has now embraced a conservative Islam. He keeps close ties with a religious cleric who blamed COVID-19 on "the wrongdoing of women." He once appeared to blame women for attacks by men saying, "if you raise temptation in society ... all these young guys have nowhere to go, it has consequences in the society."

His information minister, Fawad Chaudhry, says Khan's statements have been taken out of context and denied violence against women is on the rise, without offering evidence. He said his government encourages women in politics and sports and in provinces where Khan's party dominates human rights legislation has been strengthened.

"I think this perception is not really close to reality, that in Pakistan women are not safe or maybe that there's a misogyny in practice in Pakistan," Chaudhry said in an interview.

Yet last week, one of Khan's Cabinet ministers, Ali Amin Gandapur, told a rally of thousands of mostly male supporters, that he would "slap and slap" a female opposition political leader.

Last September, a senior police officer blamed a woman who was ambushed and gang raped in front of her two children, saying she should not have been travelling at night and without a man.

Such remarks reflect an increase in ultraconservative and even extremist religious values in Pakistan, said Amir Rana of the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies.

The country has seen an explosion of religious organizations and religious political parties, many with extreme beliefs, said Rana, whose organization tracks and documents extremism in Pakistan.

These organizations have tremendous reach in most cities and towns, where they provide services from education to health care, and thus have extensive ability to influence social values, said Rana.

The history of religious extremism in Pakistan is complicated, and Chaudhry, the information minister, argued that America shares responsibility for the role it played in the region in the 1980s. At that time, Pakistan's military dictator aided by the U.S. used religious fervor to inspire Afghans to fight an invading Soviet Union. Many of those Afghans ended up in Pakistan as refugees.

"And very conveniently now, the U.S. media and U.S. authorities ... blame everything on Pakistan and have left the region," he said.

But Abdullah, the rights activist, said Pakistan cannot shirk its own responsibility, noting that same dictator, Gen. Mohammad Zia-ul Haq, introduced Islamic laws that, among other things, reduced women's rights to inheritance, limited the value of their testimony in court and made reporting a rape almost impossible by requiring four male witnesses.

In Mukadam's assault, police have charged Zahir Jaffar, the son of a wealthy industrialist, with murder. Initial reports say she was killed after spurning his marriage proposal. It's not clear whether Jaffar has a lawyer.

The brutality of the assault — the attacker used so-called brass knuckles — and the fear that his high social status means he could be freed, galvanized many in Pakistan to speak out. They have held protests and a candlelight vigil and launched a social media campaign #justicefornoor to preempt attempts to use influence and money to whisk the accused out of the country.

In one petition circulating online, the author demanded the country's judicial system "hold perpetrators of violence responsible. We demand justice. We demand it swiftly. We demand it for Noor. We demand it for all women."

Zarqa Khan, a student who attended a candlelight vigil for Mukadam, bemoaned how religion now pervades so much of life in Pakistan and how today she fears walking alone on the streets.

"I just didn't feel safe outside anymore," said Khan. "And that shouldn't be the scenario."

## Robotic police dogs: Useful hounds or dehumanizing machines?

By MATT O'BRIEN and JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — If you're homeless and looking for temporary shelter in Hawaii's capital, expect a visit from a robotic police dog that will scan your eye to make sure you don't have a fever.

That's just one of the ways public safety agencies are starting to use Spot, the best-known of a new commercial category of robots that trot around with animal-like agility.

The handful of police officials experimenting with the four-legged machines say they're just another tool, like existing drones and simple wheeled robots, to keep emergency responders out of harm's way as they scout for dangers. But privacy watchdogs — the human kind — warn that police are secretly rushing to buy the robots without setting safeguards against aggressive, invasive or dehumanizing uses.

In Honolulu, the police department spent about \$150,000 in federal pandemic relief money to buy their Spot from robotics firm Boston Dynamics for use at a government-run tent city near the airport.

"Because these people are houseless it's considered OK to do that," said Jongwook Kim, legal director at the American Civil Liberties Union of Hawaii. "At some point it will come out again for some different use after the pandemic is over."

Acting Lt. Joseph O'Neal of the Honolulu Police Department's community outreach unit defended the robot's use in a media demonstration earlier this year. He said it has protected officers, shelter staff and residents by scanning body temperatures between meal times at a shelter where homeless people could quarantine and get tested for COVID-19. The robot is also used to remotely interview individuals who have tested positive.

"We have not had a single person out there that said, 'That's scary, that's worrisome,'" O'Neal said. "We don't just walk around and arbitrarily scan people."

Police use of such robots is still rare and largely untested — and hasn't always gone over well with the public. Honolulu officials faced a backlash when a local news organization, Honolulu Civil Beat, revealed that the Spot purchase was made with federal relief money.

Late last year, the New York Police Department starting using Spot after painting it blue and renaming it "Digidog." It went mostly unnoticed until New Yorkers starting spotting it in the wild and posting videos to social media. Spot quickly became a sensation, drawing a public outcry that led the police department to abruptly return Digidog to its maker.

"This is some Robocop stuff, this is crazy," was the reaction in April from Democratic U.S. Rep. Jamaal Bowman. He was one of several New York politicians to speak out after a widely shared video showed the robot strutting with police officers responding to a domestic-violence report at a high-rise public housing building in Manhattan.

Days later, after further scrutiny from elected city officials, the department said it was terminating its lease and returning the robot. The expensive machine arrived with little public notice or explanation, public officials said, and was deployed to already over-policed public housing. Use of the high-tech canine also clashed with Black Lives Matter calls to defund police operations and reinvest in other priorities.

The company that makes the robots, Boston Dynamics, says it's learned from the New York fiasco and is trying to do a better job of explaining to the public — and its customers — what Spot can and cannot do. That's become increasingly important as Boston Dynamics becomes part of South Korean carmaker Hyundai Motor Company, which in June closed an \$880 million deal for a controlling stake in the robotics firm.

"One of the big challenges is accurately describing the state of the technology to people who have never had personal experience with it," Michael Perry, vice president of business development at Boston Dynamics, said in an interview. "Most people are applying notions from science fiction to what the robot's doing."

For one of its customers, the Dutch national police, explaining the technology includes emphasizing that Spot is a very good robot — well-behaved and not so smart after all.

"It doesn't think for itself," Marjolein Smit, director of the special operations unit of the Dutch national police, said of the remote-controlled robot. "If you tell it to go to the left, it will go to the left. If you tell it to stop, it will stop."

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Earlier this year, her police division sent its Spot into the site of a deadly drug lab explosion near the Belgian border to check for dangerous chemicals and other hazards.

Perry said the company's acceptable use guidelines prohibit Spot's weaponization or anything that would violate privacy or civil rights laws, which he said puts the Honolulu police in the clear. It's all part of a year-long effort by Boston Dynamics, which for decades relied on military research grants, to make its robots seem friendlier and thus more palatable to local governments and consumer-oriented businesses.

By contrast, a lesser-known rival, Philadelphia-based Ghost Robotics, has no qualms about weaponization and supplies its dog-like robots to several branches of the U.S. military and its allies.

"It's just plug and play, anything you want," said Ghost Robotics CEO Jiren Parikh, who was critical of Boston Dynamics' stated ethical principles as "selective morality" because of the company's past involvement with the military.

Parikh added that his company doesn't market its four-legged robots to police departments, though he said it would make sense for police to use them. "It's basically a camera on a mobile device," he said.

There are roughly 500 Spot robots now in the wild. Perry said they're commonly used by utility companies to inspect high-voltage zones and other hazardous areas. Spot is also used to monitor construction sites, mines and factories, equipped with whatever sensor is needed for the job.

It's still mostly controlled by humans, though all they have to do is tell it which direction to go and it can intuitively climb stairs or cross over rough terrain. It can also operate autonomously, but only if it's already memorized an assigned route and there aren't too many surprise obstacles.

"The first value that most people see in the robot is taking a person out of a hazardous situation," Perry said.

Kim, of the ACLU in Hawaii, acknowledged that there might be many legitimate uses for such machines, but said opening the door for police robots that interact with people is probably not a good idea. He pointed to how Dallas police in 2016 stuck explosives on a wheeled robot to kill a sniper, fueling an ongoing debate about "killer robots" in policing and warfighting.

"There's the potential for these robots to increase the militarization of police departments and use it in ways that are unacceptable," Kim said. "Maybe it's not something we even want to let law enforcement have."

## **GLIMPSES: Olympic swimmers, reaching for victory**

By The Associated Press undefined

TOKYO (AP) — At the beginning of the race, all is hopeful. And all is possible.

Part of storytelling, be it photography or anything else, is to show the tension of what might happen. That's what comes through in this image taken at the Tokyo Olympics on Friday by Associated Press photographer David Goldman.

It shows swimmers — Australia's Emily Seebohm most prominent among them, in her yellow cap — leaping to begin the women's 200-meter backstroke. Their backs are arched, Their fingers are reaching for the water. Some are closer than others.

But like so many evocative action photographs, it also depicts ambition and determination and trajectory.

What was Goldman going for? In fact, capturing this kinetic frame as he did was the result of an adjustment he made after photographing another, earlier backstroke event. He wanted to make sure the swimmers didn't jump out of the frame of his camera.

"I prefocused on Seebohm wearing a yellow cap, where I thought she would enter the water and made sure to keep enough space on the left side of the frame to allow for the arch of all the swimmers' arms," he said. "After that, it was all luck that she didn't get blocked by the swimmer next to her. There's no telling where their arms might go or who might push off the blocks a fraction of a second off in comparison to the others."

Added Goldman: "This was just one of those cases of a little planning, and whole lot of luck."

## Carl Levin, Michigan's longest-serving senator, dies at 87

By MIKE HOUSEHOLDER, COREY WILLIAMS and DAVID EGGERT Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Famous for gazing over eyeglasses worn on the end of his nose, Carl Levin seemed at ease wherever he went, whether attending a college football game back home in Michigan or taking on a multibillion-dollar corporation before cameras on Capitol Hill.

Michigan's longest-serving U.S. senator had a slightly ruffled, down-to-earth demeanor that helped him win over voters throughout his 36-year career, as did his staunch support for the hometown auto industry. But the Harvard-educated attorney also was a respected voice on military issues, spending years leading the powerful Senate Armed Services Committee.

Despite his record tenure and status, he kept his role in perspective. At his direction, the portraits of all 38 senators who had served before or with him since Michigan's statehood in 1837 were hung in his office conference room. Two empty spaces were reserved for future senators.

"I'm part of a long trail of people who have represented Michigan," Levin said in 2008. "I'm just part of that history. The people coming after me ... can pick up where I leave off, whoever they might be."

The former taxi driver and auto-line worker, who for decades kept his faded 1953 union card in his wallet, died Thursday at 87. His family and the Levin Center at Wayne State University's law school did not release a cause of death in an evening statement. He had been living with lung cancer since age 83.

"We are all devastated by his loss. But we are filled with gratitude for all of the support that Carl received throughout his extraordinary life and career, enabling him to touch so many people and accomplish so much good," the statement said.

First elected to the Senate in 1978, Levin represented Michigan longer than any other senator, targeting tax shelters, supporting manufacturing jobs and pushing for military funding. His tenure was a testament to voters' approval of the slightly ruffled, down-to-earth Detroit native whom Time magazine ranked among the nation's 10 best senators in 2006.

"He's just a very decent person," Democratic Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, a fellow Senate Armed Services Committee member, said in 2008. "He's unpretentious, unassuming. He never forgets that what we're doing is enmeshed with the lives of the people he represents."

A Washington insider and former prosecutor known for his professorial bearing, Levin took a civil but straightforward approach that allowed him to work effectively with Republicans and fellow Democrats. He was especially astute on defense matters thanks to his years as the top Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

And he didn't fear speaking his mind.

He was in the minority — even among his Democratic Senate colleagues — when he voted against sending U.S. troops to Iraq in 2002, and two years later he said President George W. Bush's administration had "written the book on how to mismanage a war." He gave a cautious endorsement to President Barack Obama's 2009 buildup of troops in Afghanistan, but later warned of "the beginnings of fraying" of Democratic support.

He was also critical of President Ronald Reagan's buildup of nuclear weapons, saying it came at the expense of conventional weapons needed to maintain military readiness.

But, colleagues said, he almost always engendered a feeling of respect.

"We've always had a very trusting and respectful relationship," the late-Republican Sen. John Warner, who worked closely for years with Levin on the Armed Services Committee, once said. "We do not try to pull surprises on each other. The security of the nation and the welfare of the armed services come first."

Famous for wearing his eyeglasses down on his nose, Levin seemed to be the same candid, hardworking guy wherever he went, whether he was in front of cameras on Capitol Hill, on an overseas fact-finding mission or lost in the crowd of a college football stadium on game day.

"No one would accuse Carl Levin of looking like Hollywood's version of a U.S. Senator. He's pudgy, balding and occasionally ruffled, and he constantly wears his glasses at the very tip of his nose," Time magazine said in its 2006 article ranking the senator among the country's best. "Still, the Michigan Democrat has



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gained respect from both parties for his attention to detail and deep knowledge of policy, especially in his role as a vigilant monitor of businesses and federal agencies.”

A foe of fraud and waste, Levin led an investigation in 2002 into Enron Corp., which had declared bankruptcy the previous year amid financial scandals. The probe contributed to a new federal law that requires executives to sign off on financial statements so they could be criminally liable for posting phony numbers.

Levin pushed legislation designed to crack down on offshore tax havens, which he said cost the U.S. government at least \$100 billion a year in lost taxes. He also was an advocate for stem cell research and gun control.

Closer to home, Levin promoted policies benefiting the auto industry and supported giving \$25 billion in loan guarantees to General Motors and Chrysler. He argued that a vibrant domestic auto industry was crucial to rebuilding the economy after the Great Recession. He also was a member of a task force supporting efforts to fight pollution and other environmental problems affecting the Great Lakes.

“If you’ve ever worn the uniform, worked a shift on an assembly line, or sacrificed to make ends meet, then you’ve had a voice and a vote in Sen. Carl Levin,” Obama said in 2013. “No one has worked harder to bring manufacturing jobs back to our shores, close unfair tax loopholes and ensure that everyone plays by the same set of rules.”

Carl Milton Levin was born in Detroit on June 28, 1934, and he stayed in the Motor City for most of his life. After high school, he spent time as a taxi driver and worked on auto assembly plant lines to help put himself through school.

Always proud of having helped build the DeSoto and Ford trucks at a plant in Highland Park, he held onto his United Auto Workers union membership card for decades. That ended when his wallet was stolen.

He earned a bachelor’s degree in political science from Swarthmore College in 1956, and a law degree from Harvard in 1959. He married his wife, Barbara, two years later, and together they raised three daughters.

Levin fell in line with his family’s strong sense of civic duty in 1964, when he was named an assistant state attorney general and the first general counsel for the Michigan Civil Rights Commission. His older brother, former longtime U.S. Rep. Sander “Sandy” Levin, had a liberal voting record on many social issues, while their father served on the Michigan Corrections Commission, a citizens’ group that oversaw prison operations, and their mother volunteered for a Jewish organization.

Carl Levin was Michigan’s only Jewish senator. He once said that public service was in his DNA, and politics often was discussed at the dinner table when he was a boy.

He dove into public office when Detroit voters elected him to the City Council in 1969, and he served as its president before ousting a Republican to win the 1978 Senate race. He won the seat five more times but decided against running for a seventh term in 2014.

Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer called Levin a “champion for Michigan.”

“He saw what we were capable of when we came to the table as Michiganders, as Americans, to get things done,” she said. “Carl devoted his life to public service, and it us up to us to follow his example.”

After his retirement, the Levin Center at Wayne Law was established to promote fact-based, bipartisan oversight by Congress and state legislatures and to encourage civil dialogue on public policy issues. He chaired the center and co-taught law courses. He also was a partner and distinguished counsel at the Honigman law firm in Detroit.

His memoir, “Getting to the Heart of the Matter: My 36 Years in the Senate,” was published in March. The Navy named a destroyer for him to honor his years of public service.

His nephew, Andy Levin, was reelected in 2020 to his father’s 9th Congressional District seat that represents parts of suburban Detroit.

“Carl Levin personified integrity and the notion of putting the public good above self-interest,” Andy Levin said, calling him “the very picture of sober purpose and rectitude. In truth, he wasn’t unfun. In fact, he often pierced tense situations with self-deprecating humor, and he privately shared incisive observations about others with staff and colleagues.”

Carl Levin is survived by his wife, their three adult daughters, Kate, Laura and Erica, and several grandchildren. There will be a private funeral. Information about a public memorial will be forthcoming.

## **EXPLAINER: Detailing Japan's new COVID state of emergency**

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Coronavirus infection cases have reached daily records in Tokyo, which is now playing host to the Olympics. The Japanese government has declared the capital and several other regions under a "state of emergency" during the entire Games. With such a global sporting event unfolding, what does that mean? Here's a rundown.

### **WHAT IS JAPAN'S STATE OF EMERGENCY?**

It doesn't mean a lockdown. In fact, Japan has never had a lockdown. Its "emergency" measures are centered around having bars and restaurants close early.

Under the latest emergency, extended through the end of August, serving alcohol is restricted. The measures have been widely criticized as arbitrarily targeting a sector without scientific foundation. Some establishments are ignoring requests and staying open. Theaters and clubs limit crowd size.

### **SO THE MEASURES AREN'T WORKING?**

Some would say so. The state of emergency, Japan's fourth, has lasted through much of this year. Some cynics are wondering how a supposed emergency has become the new normal. Although violating businesses can technically be penalized with fines, such action has been rare.

The government has urged people to stay home, socially distance and wear masks. Japan is generally an extremely orderly and conformist nation. But commuter trains are still packed, and the streets of Tokyo are bustling with throngs of mask-wearing people. Remote work isn't a viable option for many Japanese "salarymen" and "salarywomen."

The Olympics hasn't exactly helped. With Japan on its way to possibly winning more gold medals than ever, people are flocking to sports bars to cheer for their teams en masse, and to stores to buy Olympic goods.

### **BUT THE GAMES MUST GO ON?**

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has said the recent surge in cases isn't related to the Olympics. Olympic athletes are getting tested daily. No fans are allowed in the stands at the Games, just team members, media and guests.

Suga's ratings have been plunging as doubts grow over his apparent decision to hold the Olympics, despite repeated warnings from medical experts about health risks.

### **WHAT ARE THE HEALTH RISKS?**

The vaccine rollout in Japan has lagged among developed nations, with about a fourth of the population fully vaccinated so far. That rate is lower for Tokyo.

Japan relies totally on imported vaccines. Japan has had about 15,000 COVID-related deaths. Daily reported new cases in Tokyo reached 3,865 people Thursday, a record for the third straight day.

### **CAN JAPANESE CHEER FOR OLYMPIANS?**

Critics say the government's message is confusing. Even as people are being told to stay home, Japan is going ahead with a big festival that gathers tens of thousands of athletes, corporate sponsors and other dignitaries from more than 200 nations.

Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike rejected notions that the Olympics may contribute to growing infections, and she urged people to watch the Games on TV with family and close friends. "The Olympics," she said, "are helping boost the rate of those staying home."

## **In effort to curb COVID, Tokyo Olympics collect lots of spit**

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — They spit. They wait. They hope.

About 30,000 people from scores of nations are spitting into tiny plastic vials at the Olympics in a daily routine that's grown crucial in going ahead with the pandemic-era Games, according to organizers.

If you do the math for the two-week duration of the Olympics, that adds up to a half million saliva

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samples collected for athletes, who get tested daily, as well as other venues, in an extraordinary effort to curb the spread of COVID-19 infections. At about 1 milliliter per sample, that would be ... well, a lot of spit.

In contrast, such tests have long been hard to find for the general Japanese public. Japan is unique among developed nations in having discouraged widespread testing for the coronavirus.

The thousands of samples of collected spit are stored in tubes and identified by a barcode then all go through preliminary tests. Those with dubious results go through another round of testing, according to Olympic organizers' "Playbook," which outlines anti-COVID-19 measures.

The tests are being done at a facility called the Fever Clinic, which also cares for and isolates infected people within the so-called "Olympic bubble." Once a COVID-19 infection is identified or suspected, "close contacts" also are tested to identify others who may be ill — a whack-a-mole process done under controlled conditions. Organizers wouldn't comment on the number of people working at the clinic or the specific arrangements.

These tests don't require sticking a swab up one's nose, another widespread method of testing for the coronavirus.

The tests for athletes, team officials, media and others affiliated with the Games are free to those submitting them, although they are estimated to cost about 10,000 yen (\$100) each, medical say experts. Tests for members of the Japanese public generally cost about that much, sometimes more.

Some medical experts have expressed worries about the Olympics turning into a "super-spreader" event. Daily coronavirus cases surged in Tokyo to a record, topping 3,000 people this week.

Takanori Teshima, professor at Hokkaido University, who helped develop the tests used in Japan, including those at airports, says the constant and careful testing of Olympians means the risks lie mostly in the general public making the athletes sick, not the other way around.

"As you know, not all people are going to listen and stay isolated. And so doing tests upon tests is the best way," he said. "But this is possible only because it's the Olympics. It's unrealistic to think this method can continue as a routine."

Shosuke Takeuchi, a doctor and director of Take Clinic Shimbashi, one of Tokyo's biggest coronavirus testing locations, acknowledged voluntary testing can be limited in stopping the sickness from spreading because people whose living habits make them the most contagious are precisely the kind of people who won't seek testing.

The avid testing at the Olympics has led to shortages and some national teams recently complained their testing kits hadn't arrived. Organizers scrambled to provide additional kits.

So far, 23 athletes, as well as others working at the Games, including Japanese residents, such as security officials, have tested positive, totaling 225 people overall, as of Friday. But the rate for testing positive at the Olympics has still been relatively low, at 0.02% for July, because more than 340,000 tests have been carried out so far, according to the Tokyo organizers.

And the places where COVID-19 appear to be spreading the most are the crowded streets of Tokyo, not the zealously tested Olympic venues, Teshima and other medical experts say.

Masaharu Isobe, professor at the Laboratory of Molecular and Cellular Biology at the University of Toyama, who has developed a speedy COVID antigen test, says regular testing may eventually become more common for everyone.

"The point is to locate infected people as soon as possible and prevent them from spreading it around everywhere," he said.

Still, reflecting widespread opinion, Masaru Kaneko, an economist and honorary professor at Keio University, says it's unfair such tests are being given by the day to Olympians but remain hard to get for regular people.

Japanese Olympians and staff have also been given priority in getting vaccinated, while the rollout for regular people has lagged, at about a fourth of the population fully vaccinated so far, Kaneko said on his Twitter account.

"Equality as far as the right to life is not guaranteed in Japan," he said.

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Testing someone every day is a troublesome and costly effort, and, at the Olympics, it's a special government-backed endeavor, Teshima said.

"It is a big contradiction," he said. "Why just the athletes?"

## South African sets world swim record; Aussies add 6th gold

By PAUL NEWBERRY AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — South Africa's Tatjana Schoenmaker was the star of the day, setting the first individual swimming world record at the Tokyo Olympics.

Others shined, too.

Evgeny Rylov completed a backstroke double for Russia, Emma McKeon gave the Aussie women another gold, and China earned a return trip to the top of the medal podium.

The mighty Americans? For the first time in the meet, they spent the entire session Friday watching others win gold.

Schoenmaker, a 24-year-old South African, won the women's 200-meter breaststroke with a time of 2 minutes, 18.95 seconds, breaking the mark of 2:19.11 set by Denmark's Rikke Moller Pedersen at the 2013 world championships in Barcelona.

It was the third world record at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre, with the first two coming in women's relays.

"I wasn't expecting that at all," said Schoenmaker, who added to her silver in the 100 breast. "It couldn't have been a better race. It still just doesn't sink in, maybe one day."

Rylov thoroughly snuffed out America's dominance in the backstroke, adding the 200 title to his victory in the 100 back.

Rylov won with an Olympic-record time of 1:53.29, while American Ryan Murphy wound up with the silver (1:54.15).

Murphy was a double-gold medalist at the 2016 Rio Olympics, where he extended an American winning streak that began at the 1996 Atlanta Games.

The U.S. won 12 straight men's backstroke events over six Olympics, but that streak ended with Rylov's victory in the 100. He made it 2-for-2 in the longer race, while Murphy settled for bronze and silver in the two events.

Britain's Luke Greenbank grabbed the 200 bronze in 1:54.72.

McKeon touched first in the 100 freestyle with an Olympic-record time of 51.96, becoming only the second woman to break 52 seconds in the sprint.

Hong Kong's Siobhan Haughey earned the silver in 52.27, while another Aussie, Cate Campbell, took the bronze in 52.52. American Abbey Weitzeil was last in the eight-woman field.

The Australians have won four individual women's events at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre, in addition to setting a world record in a 4x100 free relay that included both McKeon and Campbell.

The team from Down Under has six golds overall, tied with the Americans, though the U.S. has the lead in the overall medal count.

The Americans won three medals Friday, also claiming the other two spots on the podium behind Schoenmaker.

But it was the first time the U.S. team went through an entire sessions of finals in Tokyo without winning at least one gold.

Lilly King set a blistering pace early in the 200 breast and held on for a silver in 2:19.92, adding to her bronze in the 100 event. Annie Lazor nabbed the bronze in 2:20.84.

"I don't come from behind, that's for sure, so I just wanted to put it out there and see where it goes," King said. "I thought I did great."

A day after winning its first two golds at the pool, China picked up another victory when Wang Shun touched first in the men's 200 individual medley.

Wang edged Britain's Duncan Scott with a time of 1:55.00. Scott took the silver in 1:55.28, while the bronze went to Switzerland's Jeremy Desplanches in 1:56.17.

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It was another disappointment for hometown star Daiya Seto, who didn't even qualify for the final of his first two events. He got through in the 200 IM, but just missed out on a medal with a fourth-place finish -- a mere five-hundredths of a second behind the Swiss bronze medalist.

American Michael Andrew led after the third leg, powering to the top spot on the breaststroke. But he faded badly on the freestyle to wind up in fifth, more than 2 seconds behind the winner.

"I think it hurt worse than it looked, and it looked pretty bad," Andrew said. "I knew I had to be fast at the 150 and I was praying for some Holy Spirit power to get me home in that (final) 50, but it wasn't all there."

But the U.S. has several good chances to claim gold over the last two days of the swimming competition. Caeleb Dressel has two individual finals remaining, and Katie Ledecky is a big favorite in the 800 free. Dressel set another Olympic record in the semifinals of the 100 butterfly.

Minutes after Hungary's Kristof Milak took down the mark in the first semifinal heat, Dressel went even faster with a time of 49.71 in the second heat.

"I feel fine," Dressel said. "I'm not worried about the schedule. I've had it written down for a couple weeks now. I know what's coming. I know how to pace it correctly. I know how to take care of my body."

It was the third-fastest time in history and left Milak as the second-fastest qualifier at 50.31.

In the preliminaries, Dressel tied the former Olympic record of 50.39 set by Singapore's Joseph Schooling to win gold at the 2016 Rio Games.

Dressel will be a big favorite in Saturday morning's final, though he could get pushed by Milak. The Hungarian already won the 200 fly with a dominating victory.

Dressel picked up the first individual gold medal of his career with a win in the 100 freestyle.

## The Latest: Saudi Arabia will reopen to tourists on Sunday

By The Associated Press undefined

Saudi Arabia will reopen its borders to tourists on Sunday for the first time in 18 months after imposing restrictions at the start of the pandemic to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

The historically closed-off kingdom introduced electronic visas for tourists in late 2019, just before the pandemic struck.

Saudi Arabia is looking to rebrand itself as a unique tourist destination for nature lovers and curious travelers as a way to boost non-oil revenue and create more jobs.

Citizens of 49 mostly European countries, as well as the U.S. and China among others, will be allowed to enter the kingdom under the new rules without quarantine if they provide a negative PCR test before travel and have vaccine certificates proving two doses of the Oxford/Astra Zeneca, Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna vaccines, or a single dose of the vaccine produced by Johnson & Johnson.

Travelers vaccinated with the Chinese Sinopharm or Sinovac vaccine must have received a third dose of one of the other vaccines.

Earlier this week, the kingdom warned that any citizen who travels to red-listed countries, such as the neighboring emirate of Dubai where the delta variant is present, could face a three-year travel ban.

### MORE ON THE PANDEMIC:

— Allegations grow that Myanmar government is using pandemic to consolidate power and crush opposition

— Biden orders tough new vaccination rules for federal workers, aiming to boost rates and set an example

— Japan is set to expand its emergency beyond Tokyo amid record surge in infections while the capital hosts the Olympics

— US ban on housing evictions to expire Saturday, with legislation to extend it facing uncertainty

— States race to use COVID-19 vaccines before they expire

— Olympics collects vial after vial of spit to ensure against virus spread, but such tests are hard to find elsewhere in Tokyo

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— Find more AP coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic> and <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-vaccine>

## HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

**NEW YORK** — U.S. health officials are expected to release new data about the spread of COVID-19 on Friday that led to their decision to recommend that vaccinated people wear masks in some situations, a reversal of previous guidance.

The report, to be released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, comes from a recent investigation of a coronavirus outbreak in Provincetown, Massachusetts, according to a federal official who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to disclose the plan.

Earlier this week, the CDC changed its masking guidelines, recommending that even vaccinated people return to wearing masks indoors in parts of the U.S. where the delta variant of the coronavirus is fueling surges in new cases.

Citing new – but unreleased — information about the variant's ability to spread among vaccinated people, the CDC also recommended indoor masks for all teachers, staff, students and visitors at schools nationwide, regardless of vaccination status.

**CHARLESTON, W.Va.** — West Virginia will offer free antibody tests to some fully vaccinated people to study whether some elderly and immunocompromised individuals should receive a booster shot.

State officials said they are following the lead of Israel, which said Thursday fully vaccinated people older than 60 would be offered a booster.

West Virginia will offer the testing for residents age 60 and older, particularly those living in nursing homes, who received their final vaccine dose at least six months ago.

If their antibody levels are low, a booster shot may be recommended. The move comes as the more contagious delta variant takes a hold in the United States, leading to the return of mask mandates in some parts of the country.

**LITTLE ROCK, Ark.** — Arkansas' Republican governor is calling lawmakers back to the Capitol to lift the state's ban on mask requirements in public schools.

Gov. Asa Hutchinson on Thursday said he'll call the majority-Republican Legislature into session likely next week to amend a state law that prohibits state and local government entities from requiring face masks. Hutchinson said he'll propose giving local school boards the power to decide whether to require masks in K-12 schools.

"This is not a debate about mask mandates for those that can make their own decisions and have the means to get vaccinated," Hutchinson said at a news conference at the state Capitol. "This is a discussion about the school environment where schools can make decisions about the public health for their school environment and the children they have responsibility to protect."

Hutchinson also declared a new emergency, two months after ending the declaration he'd put in place at the start of the pandemic last year.

Arkansas' coronavirus cases have skyrocketed because of the delta variant and the state's low vaccination rate. The state reported more than 2,800 new cases on Thursday.

**ATLANTA** — Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp sought to shift blame to President Joe Biden for Georgia's poor vaccination rate Thursday as COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations continued to sprint upward.

The Republican, speaking to reporters, blamed the Democratic president for not doing enough to push the Food and Drug Administration to upgrade their emergency authorization for the vaccines to a permanent authorization. Kemp said urging people to use masks again is a "mixed message" that could discourage vaccination.

The governor reiterated his call for people to get vaccinated against the disease, saying he would only seek other solutions if Georgia hospitals began to get overwhelmed. Georgia ranks in the bottom 10 states

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for vaccination rates.

"We know that the vaccines work," Kemp said. "I want to encourage people to get vaccinated if you're comfortable doing that."

Democratic state Sen. Michelle Au, an anesthesiologist with a master's degree in public health, said Kemp's approach to increasing vaccination rates is unimaginative and passive.

Georgia recorded more than 4,800 cases of COVID-19 on Thursday, the worst number since Feb. 5. The state peaked on Jan. 8, with nearly 13,000 recorded cases.

## Fukushima laments a recovery without Olympic witnesses

By JAKE SEINER AP Sports Writer

FUKUSHIMA, Japan (AP) — The bus transporting Olympic officials and media from downtown Fukushima to the suburban Azuma Baseball Stadium features a slickly produced video boasting of the region's recovery from a devastating 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown.

It includes images of ruin and reconstruction, recognition of the more than 30,000 people still evacuated from their homes, an elaborate dance number and an anime segment where a scientist helps a cartoon garlic bulb convince an ill-tempered alien that the region's food is delicious — and free of nuclear contaminants.

The video is entirely in English. The riders are almost entirely Japanese.

Such is the difficulty for Japan in telling a story to an audience barred from entering its borders.

The coronavirus has left venues eerily empty of spectators and prompted concern over an Olympic-driven COVID-19 surge. But in the northern prefectures of Japan's biggest island, Honshu, these Pandemic Games represent a missed chance to tout restoration following the earthquake of 2011 and the ensuing tsunami and nuclear disaster that ravaged the area.

"I thought the Olympic Games would be a great opportunity to convey these lessons to the world," said Yoshinobu Harada, executive director for the 3.11 Densho Road memorial program. He spoke to The Associated Press via translator.

"After the disaster, we received generous donations from all over the world, which was a great encouragement to our recovery efforts," he said. "I am very disappointed because I thought that during the Olympics, we would be able to return the favor by showing the restored and reconstructed disaster areas."

Nearly 20,000 people died and roughly 470,000 were forced into evacuation by the earthquake, a magnitude 9.0 that was the largest ever recorded in Japan. Three reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear facility about 60 kilometers (36 miles) from the city melted down, contaminating water and soil in a region that specializes in fishing and agriculture. Areas closest to the nuclear plant remain no-go zones.

Japan's Reconstruction Agency has estimated the cost of rebuilding the region will approach 32 trillion yen (\$290 billion), and Olympic organizers scheduled some events in the Fukushima and Miyagi prefectures hoping to lure tourists there to observe the rebirth.

"Surely it would have been a great healing experience for the residents of the affected areas," Harada said.

Harada's 3.11 Densho Road is a network of museums, parks and preserved disaster sites across the Aomori, Iwate, Miyagi, Fukushima and Sendai prefectures.

Among them is Sendai Arahama Elementary School, where 320 children, teachers and locals were trapped as flooding reached the second floor of the four-story building. All 320 people were evacuated from the roof.

The building was preserved and turned into a harrowing memorial that opened to visitors in 2017. Guests can tour classrooms where blackboards, walls and ceilings were warped by the water. Wall-sized photos depict wreckage from the disaster, like a teacher's car that was swept from the parking lot into a classroom. A clock from the gymnasium, stuck at 3:55 p.m., is on display in an exhibition room that also has photos and models showing damage throughout the Arahama region.

It's one of 46 official sites in the 3.11 Densho Road network that organizers hoped foreigners would get to see during the Games.

The Olympic events themselves were hoped to be a celebration for those who survived the catastrophe, too. Without access to the venues, there hasn't been much rejoicing.

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Efforts were made to tie in the local population. At Fukushima Azuma Baseball Stadium prior to Wednesday's baseball tournament opener, dozens of potted flowers and peach trees — the latter a regional specialty — were placed along the concourse, each with a hand-drawn note of encouragement from a local child.

The Japanese baseball team enjoyed some of those peaches prior to the game, a thrilling walk-off victory over the Dominican Republic that would have produced raucous cheers from fans — if any were allowed in the stadium. Japan manager Atsunori Inaba brought up the people of Fukushima unprompted in his postgame press conference.

"In playing our match today in Fukushima, I am really hoping our victory will give motivational methods to the people here," he said.

Among the handful of locals lucky enough to attend was 14-year-old Yuma Takara, who threw out the ceremonial first pitch standing feet from Japanese baseball great Sadaharu Oh.

Takara was 4 when he and his mother fled their home in Haramachi and ended up in Yamagata. His father, a student counselor named Shinichi Takara, stayed behind to ensure the safety of those at nearby schools.

Shinichi Takara said sports have been crucial for healing and normalcy in Yuma's life.

"I feel like through baseball, he has had various experiences and connected with many people," Shinichi Takara said.

The hope was that the Olympics could do the same for many more in the region. Instead there are disappointments, tempered by the hope that Fukushima — and all it has been through — will still be remembered long after the Recovery Games have ended.

"I would like to think," Harada said, "that the time for people to see the recovery and reconstruction has just been delayed a little."

## Biden to allow eviction moratorium to expire Saturday

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — The Biden administration announced Thursday it will allow a nationwide ban on evictions to expire Saturday, arguing that its hands are tied after the Supreme Court signaled the moratorium would only be extended until the end of the month.

The White House said President Joe Biden would have liked to extend the federal eviction moratorium due to spread of the highly contagious delta variant of the coronavirus. Instead, Biden called on "Congress to extend the eviction moratorium to protect such vulnerable renters and their families without delay."

"Given the recent spread of the delta variant, including among those Americans both most likely to face evictions and lacking vaccinations, President Biden would have strongly supported a decision by the CDC to further extend this eviction moratorium to protect renters at this moment of heightened vulnerability," the White House said in a statement. "Unfortunately, the Supreme Court has made clear that this option is no longer available."

Aides to Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Sen. Sherrod Brown, the chairman of the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, said the two are working on legislation to extend the moratorium. Democrats will try to pass a bill as soon as possible and are urging Republicans not to block it.

In the House, a bill was introduced Thursday to extend the moratorium until the end of the year. But the prospect of a legislative solution remained unclear.

The court mustered a bare 5-4 majority last month, to allow the eviction ban to continue through the end of July. One of those in the majority, Justice Brett Kavanaugh, made clear he would block any additional extensions unless there was "clear and specific congressional authorization."

By the end of March, 6.4 million American households were behind on their rent, according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development. As of July 5, roughly 3.6 million people in the U.S. said they faced eviction in the next two months, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey.

Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said in June this would be the last time the moratorium would be extended when she set the deadline for July 31. It was initially put in place to prevent further spread of COVID-19 by people put out on the streets and into shelters.



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Housing advocates and some lawmakers have called for the moratorium to be extended due to the increase in coronavirus cases and the fact so little rental assistance has been distributed.

Congress has allocated nearly \$47 billion in assistance that is supposed to go to help tenants pay off months of back rent. But so far, only about \$3 billion of the first tranche of \$25 billion has been distributed through June by states and localities. Some states like New York have distributed almost nothing, while several have only approved a few million dollars.

"The confluence of the surging delta variant with 6.5 million families behind on rent and at risk of eviction when the moratorium expires demands immediate action," said Diane Yentel, executive director of the National Low Income Housing Coalition.

"The public health necessity of extended protections for renters is obvious. If federal court cases made a broad extension impossible, the Biden administration should implement all possible alternatives, including a more limited moratorium on federally backed properties."

Gene Sperling, who is charged with overseeing implementation of Biden's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus rescue package, said it was key that states and local authorities speed up the rental assistance distribution.

"The message is that there are no excuses," he told The Associated Press.

"States and cities across the country have shown these programs can work, that they can get money out the door effectively and efficiently," he continued. "The fact that some states and cities are showing they can do this efficiently and effectively makes clear that there is no reason that every state and city shouldn't be accelerating their funds to landlords and tenants, particularly in light of the end of the CDC eviction moratorium."

The trouble getting rental assistance to those who need it has prompted the Biden administration to hold several events in the past month aimed at pressuring states and cities to increase their distribution, coax landlords to participate and make it easier for tenants to get money directly.

Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta also has released an open letter to state courts around the country encouraging them to pursue measures that would keep eviction cases out of the courts. On Wednesday, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau unveiled a tool that allows tenants to find information about rental assistance in their area.

Despite these efforts, some Democratic lawmakers had demanded the administration extend the moratorium.

"This pandemic is not behind us, and our federal housing policies should reflect that stark reality. With the United States facing the most severe eviction crisis in its history, our local and state governments still need more time to distribute critical rental assistance to help keep a roof over the heads of our constituents," Democratic U.S. Reps. Cori Bush of Missouri, Jimmy Gomez of California and Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts said in a joint statement.

But landlords, who have opposed the moratorium and challenged it repeatedly in court, were against any extension. They have argued the focus should be on speeding up the distribution of rental assistance.

This week, the National Apartment Association and several others this week filed a federal lawsuit asking for \$26 billion in damages due to the impact of the moratorium.

"Any extension of the eviction moratorium equates to an unfunded government mandate that forces housing providers to deliver a costly service without compensation and saddles renters with insurmountable debt," association president and CEO Bob Pinnegar said, adding that the current crisis highlights the need for more affordable housing.

"Our nation faces an alarming housing affordability disaster on the horizon — it's past time for the government to enact responsible and sustainable solutions that ultimately prioritize making both renters and housing providers whole," he added.

## **Detroit Pistons grab Cade Cunningham at No. 1 in NBA draft**

By AARON BEARD AP Basketball Writer

Cade Cunningham sure looked like the No. 1 overall draft pick all year at Oklahoma State with his fluid game, scoring ability and passing — all in a 6-foot-8 frame.

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So it was no surprise the Detroit Pistons would grab the freshman All-American with the top pick as they did to open the draft Thursday night in New York. And it was the start of multiple teams spending high picks on playmakers with size, including Florida State forward Scottie Barnes and Australian teenager Josh Giddey climbing a bit higher than expected as top-six picks.

It comes at a time when the game has evolved to a more position-free flow, making players like Cunningham, Barnes and Giddey more valuable than ever with their ability to roam all over the court.

Cunningham had been widely expected to be the first name called in New York, though Pistons general manager Troy Weaver wouldn't reveal plans earlier this week and said the team would look at every scenario, including trades. In the end, Detroit stuck with the 19-year-old mentioned as a potential top pick before ever stepping foot on the Oklahoma State campus.

The point guard from Arlington, Texas, lived up to expectations to become a first-team Associated Press All-American. He averaged 20.1 points, 6.2 rebounds and 3.5 assists with a game that allowed him to hit from 3-point range, score off the dribble or find teammates out of traps.

"It's still pretty surreal to me," Cunningham said. "I know how much responsibility comes with being the No. 1 pick. I know how much responsibility a city will put on the guy that they take No. 1. I'm more than excited to take on those tasks and try to deliver to the city of Detroit."

Barnes had risen mock drafts but offered the first surprise by going to Toronto with the No. 4 pick ahead of Gonzaga freshman point guard Jalen Suggs. Barnes is a long-armed 6-8 forward who ran the Seminoles' offense and has the capability to be an elite defender with his length and ability to chase smaller ball handlers on the perimeter.

That's why Barnes felt he could "fit right in doing different things" with the Raptors.

"A lot of what we like is his versatility," Toronto coach Nick Nurse said. "He'll rebound it, he can guard, he can switch and guard multiple positions and he's big enough to guard bigs down inside. He's big enough to rebound with bigs. And we like to get out and go with the guys who are grabbing the rebound a lot."

Two picks later, Oklahoma City grabbed Giddey, who was considered a potential lottery pick as a 6-8 floor leader known for his passing touch. He had played in Australia's National Basketball League with an all-around game (10.7 points, 7.1 rebounds and 7.2 assists) and has been part of the NBA Academy program designed to develop elite international prospects.

"It was really something I wanted to be a part of and kind of start from the bottom and move our way up in the league," Giddey said. "It's a great young team and I can't wait to get down there and get started."

The draft included numerous trades, including one set to send All-Star Russell Westbrook from Washington to the Los Angeles Lakers in the biggest move of the night.

The draft started with Cunningham, who attended the draft wearing a dark suit, shirt and tie with sparkles on his collars and cuffs. When the pick was announced, Cunningham kissed 2-year-old daughter Riley, sitting on his lap, then hugged family members and took the stage alongside NBA Commissioner Adam Silver to don a blue Pistons hat.

Houston followed at No. 2 by grabbing preps-to-pros teenager Jalen Green, who bypassed college basketball to play in the G League. The 6-foot-6 Green averaged 17.9 points on 46% shooting 15 games, showing off high-flying dunks, a willingness to attack the rim and a promising shooting touch.

Next up was Southern California freshman big man Evan Mobley, who went to Cleveland at No. 3. Suggs and G League forward Jonathan Kuminga were the other players considered to be in the draft's top tier, with Suggs going fifth to Orlando and Kuminga seventh to Golden State.

Michigan forward Franz Wagner (to Orlando), point guard Davion Mitchell (Sacramento) of NCAA champion Baylor and Stanford forward Ziaire Williams (New Orleans) rounded out the top 10. And by the mid-way point, Gonzaga (Suggs and forward Corey Kispert) and Tennessee (guards Keon Johnson and Jaden Springer) were the only two schools to produce multiple first-round picks.

The second round included three AP first-team All-Americans in Illinois guard Ayo Dosunmu (No. 38 pick by Chicago), Baylor point guard Jared Butler (No. 40 by New Orleans), and Iowa high-scoring big man Luka Garza (No. 52 by Detroit) after he was named AP national player of the year.

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There also was a tribute to Kentucky freshman guard Terrence Clarke, who died after an April car accident after declaring for the draft. Silver announced Clarke as an honorary draft pick midway through the first round, bringing Clarke's mother, sister and brother to the stage.

## States race to use COVID-19 vaccines before they expire

By MIKE CATALINI Associated Press

Hundreds of thousands of COVID-19 vaccine doses have been saved from the trash after U.S. regulators extended their expiration date for a second time, part of a nationwide effort to salvage expiring shots to battle the nation's summer surge in infections.

The Food and Drug Administration on Wednesday sent a letter to shot maker Johnson & Johnson declaring that the doses remain safe and effective for at least six months when properly stored. The FDA's move gives the shots an extra six weeks as public officials press more Americans to get inoculated.

Similar efforts are happening in multiple states as public health officials try to ensure that soon-to-expire shots are put into arms before they must be discarded.

The surge in infections is largely due to the highly contagious delta variant of the coronavirus, which has spread rapidly, particularly among unvaccinated people. Inoculation rates have climbed only slightly after a steep fall from their April peak.

"It's a critically important time — we have children headed back to school in just a few weeks' time," said Juliann Van Liew, director of the public health department in Wyandotte County, Kansas.

Federal health officials have shipped an additional 8 million doses of the J&J shot to states that have not yet been used, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's vaccine-tracking website. The company did not share specific expiration dates.

The J&J vaccine is not the only one facing expiration. States also report that many Pfizer and Moderna doses are approaching expiration, which is set at six months from the manufacturing date. In Louisiana, about 100,000 Pfizer doses are set to expire in about a week, for example.

Governors are pleading with the public to get vaccinated, and some are offering cash incentives — \$100 payments in New Mexico and New York City, among other places.

Some states have set up marketplaces for shot providers or dedicated staff to redistributing about-to-expire vaccines to places that need them. Such efforts are underway in New Jersey, Washington and Wisconsin.

In Iowa and North Dakota, officials say they send vaccines approaching expiration to locations where they are most likely to be used.

"We have a lot of interest from the public in receiving J&J, so if we find doses that may go unused, we will transfer them to providers in need," said Molly Howell, North Dakota's immunization director.

Lacy Fehrenbach, deputy director for COVID-19 response for the Washington state Department of Health, said officials want the doses used as efficiently as possible.

"Otherwise, we're working with our providers to move them around, or, of course, the federal government to get them to other places that need it," she said.

Dr. Clarence Lam, interim executive medical director of occupational health services at Johns Hopkins University, was encouraged by the extension for the J&J shots.

"We hate to see this supply go to waste, especially when there are areas of the world where this is needed," Lam said. "But now I think we'll be able to better utilize the supply that's already been distributed here in the U.S."

The J&J vaccine was eagerly anticipated because it involves just one shot and has easy refrigeration requirements.

But use of the vaccine has been hurt by several rare possible side effects. This month, U.S. health regulators added a warning about links to a potentially dangerous neurological reaction. That followed a break in its use in April after the shot was linked to a rare blood clot disorder. Government health advisers said the overall benefits of the shot still greatly outweigh the risks.

Also in April, a Baltimore vaccine factory was shut down by the FDA due to contamination problems,

forcing the company to trash the equivalent of tens of millions of doses being made under contract for Johnson & Johnson.

Pfizer and Moderna have already supplied more than enough doses to vaccinate all eligible Americans. More than 150 million Americans have been fully vaccinated with the companies' two-dose shots. By comparison, just 13 million, or 9%, have been vaccinated with the J&J shot.

All told, nearly 164 million people have been vaccinated, according to the CDC, or just over 49% of the U.S. population.

## **Do I need to get tested for COVID-19 if I'm vaccinated?**

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

Do I need to get tested for COVID-19 if I'm vaccinated?

Yes, if you've been around someone who has COVID-19.

The latest guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says people who are fully vaccinated should get tested three to five days after a potential exposure, even if they don't have symptoms.

That change comes two months after the agency eased its initial testing guidance. In May, the CDC said vaccinated people face very little risk of serious illness and don't need to be tested in most cases, even if exposed to someone who was sick. The thinking was that vaccinated people also weren't likely to spread it to others.

But the agency says it's reversing that guidance because of the more contagious delta variant, which now accounts for most COVID-19 infections.

The COVID-19 vaccines are still very good at protecting people from getting seriously ill, but the CDC says new data shows vaccinated people infected with the delta variant could spread it to others.

Doctors, nurses and other health care workers should consult with their employers, some of whom may require routine testing for their staff. People working in prisons and homeless shelters are also generally subject to stepped-up testing requirements.

U.S. citizens returning from abroad still have to present a negative COVID-19 test before boarding their flights home, regardless of their vaccination status. Anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 should still isolate for 10 days, the CDC says.

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## **China flooding brought fear, then washed away livelihoods**

By DAKE KANG Associated Press

XINXIANG, China (AP) — The night the rains came, all Yu Ruiping could do was huddle in her market stall. The electricity went out. Her phone went dead. And the water just kept rising.

When the skies cleared, the market was surrounded by chest-high water — trapping Yu and her husband for two days with nothing to eat but a few packages of instant noodles.

"It was the most water I'd ever seen," Yu said, standing in her family warehouse in a neighborhood of Xinxiang, a city of six million people in the heart of central China's Henan province.

The torrent of rain last week burst dams and collapsed bridges, immersing large swaths of Henan in water. In the provincial capital of Zhengzhou, a year's worth of rain fell in just three days. Authorities announced a sharp rise in the death toll Thursday to 99 people.

After drenching Zhengzhou, where people drowned in subway trains and their cars, the clouds headed north to Xinxiang. On July 21, the heaviest rains pounded the city overnight, turning roads into rivers and carving the city into islands.

Between their spoiled pickled vegetables and their damaged electric wagon, Yu estimates their losses could run into the tens of thousands of dollars, a princely sum in a city where the average annual income is about \$8,000.

Authorities estimate overall economic losses at nearly 90 billion yuan (\$14 billion), a devastating blow to the province's heavily agrarian economy.

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"If the water at the market had been drained the next day after the rain, our losses would not have been this huge. It's been a week, and the water has not been pumped out," said Yu, as she leaned her elbow on cases of pickled mustard greens she and her husband managed to save.

Her husband, Lu Jinlin, recalled his mother recounting a similar downpour in 1963. Though the rains weren't as bad, their homes made of earth were easily swept away by the waters, he said. There were no rescue teams back then.

This time, the price paid in lives lost was lower because they live now in squat and sturdy concrete homes. No deaths have been confirmed in Xinxiang so far, but many surrounding villages remain underwater. Recovery work continues. Pumps chug out dirt-colored floodwater, while bulldozers transport people down flooded roads, ferrying them over the waters in the maws of their shovels.

Though rescue efforts have won widespread praise, there are lingering questions about the government's storm preparedness and why many people were caught off-guard.

Authorities have carefully controlled reporting on the floods. Censors swiftly deleted some critical reports from Chinese media, while a vicious social-media campaign targeted foreign journalists.

One shopkeeper declined to be interviewed with a nervous chuckle. "I don't dare," he said.

The waters in the Yubei Agricultural and Aquatic Products World market, where Yu has her stall, are still still knee-deep. Shopkeepers fortunate enough to have stalls elevated above the waters washed them out and wiped down their fridges and tables. Those less fortunate salvaged what they could of their ruined goods.

One vendor wrapped a bundle of cups in a white plastic bag in the back of a half-submerged pickup truck. A young man then hoisted it over to a nearby cart carrying what remains of her merchandise. Cigarette butts and chunks of plastic foam swirled around her legs in murky water that reeked of rotting fish.

She estimated her losses at tens of thousands dollars — the second time she's facing ruin from a flood, as heavy rains in 2016 also spoiled her goods.

"I've had terrible luck, let me tell you," she said. "All our family fortune is soaked in water."

She gave only her last name, Xing, after a man standing next to her discouraged her from speaking further to media.

Just down the road, Sun Jiayun, 72, hangs rubber gloves from the branches of trees and fans the soles of shoes on the sweltering asphalt. The pages of once-pristine notebooks curl in the afternoon sun as they dry.

"Nobody will want it," Sun said of her goods. "Who'd pay for these things?" Still, she's drying the items out in the hopes that she can give them to friends and family.

Several blocks up the road, Mr. Bao's Fried Chicken survived nearly unscathed since it's slightly elevated. A cashier there, who would only give her last name, Wang, out of concern for her personal privacy, recalled the panicked days she spent coordinating her niece and nephew's rescue.

They were home alone, huddling in the darkness as the waters rose, their parents stuck in their store surrounded by neck-high water. An anxious Wang traded messages with rescuers online as she coordinated their lift to safety.

For days, more than a dozen friends and relatives packed into Wang's house, unable to return to their own flooded homes. They slept four or five to a bed — crowded but lively, she said, and an enormous relief after the panic of the floods.

"I can't describe what it felt like," she said, tears welling in her eyes. "It's okay as long as I can see the children, as long as they are alive."

## Biden push to vaccinate feds forces uncomfortable questions

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's requirement for federal workers to reveal their COVID-19 vaccination status is likely to force uncomfortable questions not only at government agencies but at private companies as well.

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Right now, there's a lack of clear answers.

Getting the policy right will take time, and vary across government agencies. The same holds for private companies, for which the White House is trying to provide a guide. It's not like there's a cheat sheet. Nothing on this scale has been attempted before in the face of a virus morphing in real time to become a bigger threat.

"We developed a miracle vaccine in a very short period of time, and there has been a lot hesitancy from the government and from businesses to run with a top-down approach," said Andrew Challenger, senior vice president at the workforce consulting firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas. "Now we've reached a point where it's become very clear the individual incentive people have to protect themselves has not been strong enough to protect the country, and we're seeing the government take this first step."

Biden's plan for the federal workforce, announced Thursday, stopped short of a direct order for feds to roll up their sleeves.

Instead, workers will have to attest to whether they're vaccinated. Although employees will not be required to produce a vaccination card, "attest" is a loaded word in the federal workplace, minutely governed by rules and regulations. It implies consequences for providing false or misleading information. How that will be enforced remains unclear, but employees who voluntarily provide valid proof of vaccination will likely settle potential questions upfront.

The unvaccinated will have to put up with regular testing, required masking and social distancing, and they will be barred from official travel. Similar rules will be applied to federal contractors.

Continual testing raises other issues. For most people, health insurance has been paying. But will that continue if someone refuses to be vaccinated and is not eligible for medical or religious exemptions?

Masking has been a perennially touchy subject. But how will agencies enforce a masking policy if not everyone is required to be vaccinated? Will supervisors patrol the cubicles with lists of the unvaccinated?

There are many reasons why translating Biden's order to the workplace may not go smoothly. Government agencies tend to have their own unique cultures, and their missions run the gamut. Doctors at the National Institutes of Health are probably already vaccinated, but some law enforcement agents may be wary of getting a shot not yet fully approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

The largest union representing federal workers, the American Federation of Government Employees, already served notice it expects any changes to working conditions will be "properly negotiated with our bargaining units prior to implementation."

As for the Pentagon, it's been ordered to study how and when COVID-19 vaccines will become mandatory for military personnel. Service members are already required to get as many as 17 vaccines, depending on where they are based around the world.

Even as Biden laid out his federal plan, some companies like Google were already ahead, saying they will simply require vaccination. But the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the country's largest business organization, seconded Biden's actions as "prudent steps to protect public health and our economic recovery."

For public or private employees, the first and most important questions revolve around proving their vaccination status and qualifying for exceptions, said Jeff Hyman, a business author and recruitment expert.

"Are they going to take it on faith?" asked Hyman. There is no central database that records vaccinations.

"What is the exceptions policy?" he continued. "There have got to be exceptions for religious and medical reasons, and that asterisk is going to be really important."

But if workers seek a religious exemption, will they have to submit a note from a clergy person?

The federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission says an employer must provide "reasonable accommodation" for medical or religious reasons "that does not pose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer's business."

But companies can legally require vaccination as a "condition of employment," the Justice Department said in a recent opinion.

Biden is taking a risk here, said Hyman, but doing nothing in the face of rising cases driven by the aggressive delta variant was not an option.

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"This is super-easy to second-guess because you only find out in hindsight if you were right," Hyman said. "We're not going to know for awhile whether this was the optimal decision, but at least he is doing something."

News that the economy has surpassed its pre-pandemic size only underscores the significance of Biden's move. More outbreaks and shutdowns could dampen hiring and production, creating a new political narrative for Republicans trying to regain control of Congress next year.

Then there's the often delicate issue of workplace etiquette. How will unvaccinated employees interact with their peers who have gotten their shots? Will work units have to be split apart?

Challenger, the workforce consultant, said his company has developed a system for everyone to discreetly signal their comfort level with interaction during the workplace reentry. It involves wrist bands colored green, yellow and red.

Green means a person is comfortable with things going back to the way they were before. Red signals others to stay 6 feet away. Yellow is an in-between zone, implying some hesitancy about chumminess.

"This is such a novel situation, there are not a lot of best practices for us to follow," he said.

## Lawyers say China using Interpol to seek dissident's return

By NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorneys are asking the Biden administration to release from immigration custody a Chinese democracy advocate who could be deported to his homeland to face what they say are false charges — despite the lack of an extradition treaty between the United States and China.

Human rights advocates say this is one of a handful of cases in which China has used the Interpol "red notice" system to try to force the return of fugitives from the United States. Under this system, a member country of the international police consortium can ask other countries to arrest and return fugitives living abroad. It's not clear how often, if ever, this tactic has resulted in the U.S. turning over detainees to Chinese authorities.

The man was arrested in June and is being held in a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention center. The Associated Press is withholding the man's name because a sibling still living in China has reported being threatened by government agents with criminal charges unless his brother returns to the country.

ICE says it arrested the man for overstaying his visa and has not commented on whether the Chinese charges led to his detention. But the man's attorneys say China is exploiting the U.S. immigration system to bypass American efforts to fight Beijing's targeting of dissidents. The man and his immediate family are seeking asylum in the U.S.

A red notice issued in January accuses the man of being the ringleader of a conspiracy to make illegal profits through a mining business and recruit former prisoners to attack a supposed enemy. The man's advocates say other documents from China's legal system show he is being framed for crimes that have already been linked to others.

"There are countries that abuse the Interpol red notice system, especially including China," said John Sandweg, one of the man's attorneys. Sandweg, a former acting director of ICE, said the agency risked being manipulated by red notices and becoming "a tool to continue the persecution of law abiding activists and dissidents."

ICE says the man was detained for overstaying his visa after entering the country in September. The agency did not directly answer a question about whether it arrested the man because of the red notice or how this would affect his case. It said that "in some instances, the interest of another law enforcement agency" in the U.S. or abroad "may inform the analysis" of whether someone is deported or released.

China's embassy in Washington and Interpol did not respond to requests for comment.

According to his attorneys, the man served as a village chief when Chinese authorities sought to seize a friend's home for a planned industrial park. The man says he allowed villagers to protest peacefully and helped the friend protest the central government directly.

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The man says he was jailed for 30 days in retaliation and eventually fled with his family to Hong Kong, where he joined in the territory's protests amid Beijing's efforts to tighten control. Fearing that he would be arrested again, he says he and his family entered the United States last year on a visa that gave them six months' legal permission.

The man's attorneys say he first learned of the Interpol red notice against him when an ICE attorney notified him following an immigration court hearing. The red notice says an arrest warrant was issued last August, and he faces a possible life sentence.

"What ICE doesn't understand well is that (an) Interpol Red Notice from China is highly political and not a reliable indicator for real criminal activities," said Yaqiu Wang, a China researcher at the advocacy group Human Rights Watch.

China aggressively pursues the repatriation of people it considers opponents of Communist Party leadership, including people living in the United States in what American authorities have alleged are extralegal campaigns to harass and stalk targets.

A federal grand jury this month indicted nine people on allegations they served as agents in "Operation Fox Hunt," which the Chinese government has characterized as an effort to track down corrupt officials and criminals abroad. The Justice Department called Operation Fox Hunt "extralegal" and alleges the indicted people "conducted surveillance of and engaged in a campaign to harass, stalk and coerce" people wanted by Beijing to return to China.

Interpol was criticized in 2016 after a top Chinese official, Meng Hongwei, was elected as its president, with some warning that China would be newly assertive.

Meng's four-year term would be cut short when he vanished in 2018 during a visit to China from France, where he and his family had moved.

Meng eventually resurfaced to plead guilty to fraud charges and was sentenced to 13 years in prison. His wife, who eventually received asylum in France along with their children, has said she believes Meng was a victim of political persecution.

## After mudslide, priest gets narcos' help to build new town

By ALBERTO ARCE and RODRIGO ABD Associated Press

MISSION SAN FRANCISCO DE ASIS, Honduras (AP) — First came Hurricane Eta. Then, Hurricane Iota, unleashing rains of biblical proportions on the hillside community of La Reina.

As Iota hammered La Reina for four days, residents kept watch on the mountain above their 300 homes for signs that they should flee. Some left quickly when the downpour ceased. Ivan Varela resisted, hoping to protect the seven houses he and his brothers had built over the years with money they earned in the United States.

On the last night, as his parents prayed, Varela shot his pistol into the air to scare off thieves stalking the properties of those who already had evacuated. But soon he realized the battle was lost. Water was gushing out of the ground and the earth was starting to tremble. He called his brother in Florida.

"The town is going to disappear. We are losing everything," Varela said.

"The important thing is that you survive," his brother responded. "Leave!"

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This story is part of a series, *After the Deluge*, produced with support from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

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Varela hid his tools in the hopes he would be able to recover them one day. He released his farm animals and the family dog and joined the exodus.

By nightfall, La Reina was gone, buried in an epic mudslide, its families among nearly half a million Central Americans displaced by the hurricanes. Bathed in tears and shaking with cold, the frightened and disoriented residents of La Reina wandered the main road at the bottom of the valley looking for help.

That's when Friar Leopoldo Serrano arrived in his Franciscan robes like an answer to their prayers, ready



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to take charge -- and ready, it would turn out, to make a deal with the devil to save the people of La Reina. Serrano, a missionary who ran a nearby drug rehabilitation center, understood they would have to act quickly if they were to keep families intact and the community from disintegrating. Something had to be done for the more than 1,000 people stranded in a valley marked by the poverty and drug violence that have driven so many Hondurans to the United States.

As often happens in Latin America, the priest stepped into the void.

"I don't want people to go to the United States. Families are broken, the suffering is immense," Serrano said. "Rebuilding the community helps to stop migration".

Serrano turned schools into shelters, looked for borrowed houses and organized a census of victims. He made hundreds of phone calls looking for help. Bags of food, clothes and medicine trickled in from relatives and churches abroad, but "the Honduran government did not even give us a tent," Serrano said.

In any case, they would need more than tents. To rebuild their houses and replant their crops, the villagers needed land -- and Serrano knew that much of that land was in the hands of drug traffickers.

So, the agent of God became a broker with agents of the underworld, many of whom were fighting each other for control of the land and lucrative drug routes from South America to Mexico and the United States. The pastor of souls turned into a project manager and construction foreman for the families of La Reina, building them a new town at Mission San Francisco de Asís.

"If we had to wait for the government to act, it could take forever, it may never happen and these people would be forced to leave," Serrano said. "Eight months later, they haven't built a house."

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This was a ravaged land long before Hurricanes Eta and Iota washed away La Reina in November 2020 -- the first time in recorded history that successive Category 4 and 5 Atlantic hurricanes slammed the same place.

It was a slow-moving devastation. Ivan Ríos, 70, remembers how deer used to eat grass in front of their houses when he was a boy. Back then, they planted coffee without cutting the trees in keeping with Mayan teaching passed down through generations that severed roots rotted in tropical soil and would no longer hold it to the slopes.

But the cedar and cinnamon trees high in the surrounding mountains were as valuable as coffee, and outsiders started cutting the trees. Those who complained -- "whoever had a long tongue" --were killed, Ríos said.

Residents of La Reina soon followed suit, cutting more trees to expand their coffee plantations and get timber to build their homes. The population grew and land prices rose. Husbands and sons began heading north about 20 years ago, so that today about 15% of the population of La Reina lives in the United States, most of them sending money back to buy land and houses.

As the trees came down and houses went up, climate change increased the rainfall in La Reina. Eta and Iota each dumped six times the average annual rainfall on the area.

There is an old tale that grandparents here tell: A snake living in a mountain cavern drinks rainwater. It grows and grows and grows until it is too large for the cave, and the mountain cracks open -- unleashing a flood.

No snake was responsible for what happened in La Reina. When the Earth gave way, humans were at fault.

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Serrano arrived here in 2009, after spiritual missions in New York and the Mosquitia region of Honduras. He found himself in a cursed and disputed land where violent drug traffickers ruled with impunity. In the area around his first house, corpses appeared hanging from trees.

Located on the border of the departments of Santa Barbara and Copan, his sprawling mission straddles the road that is one of the main drug trafficking corridors in the region. It starts in San Pedro Sula, on the Caribbean coast, where drugs from Venezuela and Colombia arrive in Central America, and ends at the border with Guatemala, en route to Mexico and the United States.

In between, it winds through a tropical green valley full of sugar cane, beneath the mountains that pro-

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duce the best coffee in Honduras; dozens of little roads spread out like capillaries to Guatemala.

These routes have long been used by convoys belonging to various capos, the local mafia run by the Valle family and other cartels run by Alexander Ardón and Tony Hernández -- the brother of President Juan Orlando Hernández. All of the leaders have been arrested, extradited, convicted and imprisoned in the United States since 2014, and now there is a battle for succession.

Serrano surveyed the landscape from a lookout over the valley. "Half of all the land and businesses you see from here belong to drug traffickers," he said.

Since moving to the mission, Serrano has preached the Bible, organized protest marches against violence, negotiated drug-free events such as soccer matches, and promoted religious celebrations and social work.

Serrano built the rehab center for addicts in 2014 on land that was donated to him from a person related to illicit activities, he said. "I tell drug traffickers to convert to the faith, to use the money earned by destroying lives to rebuild them ... Drug addicts are used as a money-making machine by drug traffickers. Let them convert, repent and ask for forgiveness."

He convinced at least one young man to join his crusade, 21-year-old Oveniel Garcia, a recovered addict once close to the traffickers who would turn out to be key to their pursuit of land for the residents of La Reina.

But Serrano's message is not widely popular. He has sought protection for his mission, which is routinely observed by men passing by in oversized SUVs with tinted windows. Honduran police and military units also stop by several times a week, and Serrano's complaints to the prosecutor's office led to the installation of surveillance systems.

"They tell me that they are going to finish me off, one by one, killing the Franciscan brothers working with me," said Serrano, who is in poor health after heart surgery.

Several of the Franciscan friars living in the rehabilitation center are visibly traumatized by the threats. A year ago, Brother Santos, who used to go out to pray on the road, was kidnapped, beaten, doused with gasoline and subjected to a simulated hanging. He still is not able to talk about it.

But that has not deterred Serrano, who disparages the narcos and the government in equal measure. The people of La Reina needed help, and he didn't trust Honduran officials to do the job. He knew what had to be done.

Twenty-five years ago, the powerful local cartel run by Arnulfo Valle bought the 70 acres adjacent to the mission where Father Serrano hopes to put those displaced from La Reina.

When capos are arrested, the government confiscates whatever land is in their name and holds it in a byzantine bureaucracy. Heirs fight for control over hidden assets -- land that has been put in the name of front men and women, sometimes without their knowledge. "The land itself is not worth that much, but the message of who is in control is everything," Serrano explains.

Two weeks after the disaster, Serrano was publicly asking for land donations during Masses he broadcasts on Facebook. The way he tells it, Arnulfo Valle's son, José Luis, contacted him and they arranged for a legal donation.

"My responsibility was only to legalize the situation. I hired a lawyer to identify the legal owner and we got them to donate it to the National Agrarian Institute," which in turn would give houses and lots to La Reina's people and common areas to the mission, Serrano said.

But the story is a little more complicated than that. It all turned on an intermediary with Jose Luis Valle: the young friar, Oveniel Garcia.

Garcia, who ran away from home at the age of 12 and became a drug addict, is a street-smart survivor. At 16, he got a job cleaning floors in a discotheque frequented by traffickers, where he met Jose Luis Valle.

"Bodyguards, women, weapons, drugs," he recalls. "That same day I already knew who he was. The connection was immediate ... He paid the owner of the place so that I could dedicate myself only to him." They would spend many nights talking.

The closer they became the more Garcia learned about the Valle family business. He resisted Valle's request to work for him, but eventually found himself carrying a weapon. He was well aware that almost

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no one gets out of the drug business alive, and he was scared.

He had heard Serrano's call to drug traffickers to turn from evil to good, and he reached out. "The only way they could believe that I really wanted to disassociate myself and was not going to betray them was through a conversion," he explains. "Otherwise they would have killed me."

Garcia left Valle's orbit and entered Serrano's rehab center for seven months. Over the next few years, he became Serrano's right-hand man in the mission. He largely kept his distance from Valle until December 2020.

It was then that Serrano told Garcia, "We need land. Call your friend."

Valle agreed to give them the land, but he didn't have the titles. "He had to put pressure on those who occupied it, they were usurpers. He would go there with weapons. There were deaths," Garcia recounted, cryptically.

The signing and official transfer of the land took place on the last day of the year. On May 7, the first measurements were taken to mark out plots for houses.

And on May 28, the new inhabitants entered the farm to find narco squatters still occupying part of the land.

To evict them, men from La Reina moved in, armed only with machetes. Ivan Varela was among them. They moved the squatters' cattle out to the main road and, bit by bit, took possession of the land where they planned to build their new houses as part of the mission.

"We know that the father has put his life at risk for us," Varela said. "One reaches a limit where one cannot lose any more. We have lost everything, even fear."

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Then, the government got involved -- or at least it said it was getting involved.

Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández visited the area in February, promising that his government would build "2,500 houses, a whole new town on a piece of land confiscated from traffickers." Construction companies had been hired, and they'd start in May, he said.

That wasn't quite accurate. "The president speaks three or four times a day in different places about different topics," explained Ramon Lara, minister of the National Agrarian Institute. "His advisors do not (always) give him good information."

He said there was no need for that many homes for the residents of La Reina, and some ensuing delays were due to the violence in the area.

May passed. At the end of June, seven months after the hurricanes, dozens of townspeople put on their best donated clothes to attend a ceremony with officials of the Project Coordination Unit of the government of Honduras. They'd come to open the envelopes containing the bids from companies seeking to build the houses at San Francisco de Asís Mission.

Now they promised to build in 100 days -- which would be in mid-October, the middle of the next hurricane season.

Serrano was skeptical and remains so. After Mass the previous day, he had warned the community to be wary: "In Honduras we live a daily storm more damaging than hurricanes, the storm of corruption. The authorities deceive us with false promises. That is why I tell you that I still have doubts about the construction of these houses."

At the ceremony, Serrano opened the blue folding chair he often carries with him and sat at a distance.

He watched as officials handed out donated used toys to hundreds of children. Raul Raudales, project director sent by the government, thanked Serrano for his leadership and said the project would never have launched without him.

"He obtained the land and has guaranteed the order of the process" Raudales said. "Without him, without his pressure, without his daily phone calls, without his presence, this would take twice as long to happen, at least."

He asked Serrano to say a few words or bless the ceremony. The priest declined.

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Each morning now, Serrano goes out to inspect the mission construction sites. A few men and women from La Reina have already begun to build three new homes and a group of apartments for widows with funds donated by churches. He checks on the type of stone they are using, takes measurements and coordinates the crews.

The workers put up windows, lay bricks and make cement. Each family must send one person to work on the construction of their home. They do not receive wages and if they don't work, they must pay into a kitty about \$6 a day (150 lempiras.)

A road is being built from the mission that goes directly up to the arable land on the mountain. "They neither want to nor should they stop being farmers," Father Serrano explains.

Despite his efforts, two dozen residents of La Reina have left for the United States; the number of Hondurans caught crossing the border into the U.S. was 180,000 in the first five months of this year, up more than 600% from the same period in 2020. Others would like to go but can't afford the \$12,000 price tag that coyotes are charging for the illegal journey across borders. They no longer have houses and land to put up as collateral.

Ivan Varela, who is camped out at his parents' house, is debating what to do. He spent eight years working two and three jobs a day in West Palm Beach, Florida, to earn the \$16,000 he needed to build a house in La Reina and buy a bit of land to process his family's coffee beans.

"What I earned in eight years was lost in one night," Varela said.

One thing's for sure, he said. If he goes again, this time he will take his 2-year-old son, and this time he will plan to stay for good.

Another La Reina resident, Obdulio Girón, said at the government ceremony that the only reason he has not left for the United States with his 7-year-old son is because he trusts that Serrano will get funds to build the houses.

But if this project fails, he said, he will have no choice.

Serrano and Garcia are determined to succeed.

The man who provided the land, Garcia's friend José Luis Valle, died in what Serrano and Garcia suggest was a suicide. "He did things knowing it would get him killed," Serrano explained. "In the history of the promised land there have always been wars."

Garcia says he is prepared to dedicate his life to service, starting with helping the people of La Reina and is hoping to be ordained soon.

"The father has made me a servant of God," Garcia said. "I have discovered that there is good, that I can help others to live in justice."

Serrano, meanwhile, soldiers on -- raising money, advocating construction over migration, training the next generation of priests. He preaches good farming over evil drug trafficking.

He shared a WhatsApp message from an army coroner who urged him to be cautious: "Don't keep talking about these people, Father, they will hurt you."

Serrano was defiant. "They have weapons," he replied, "if they wanted to kill me they would have done it already."

And even his death would not stop the new town that was rising at Mission San Francisco de Asís, he insisted.

The friars he is training "can continue my work when I die."

## **EXPLAINER: World champs, Olympic champs and the difference**

By The Associated Press undefined

TOKYO (AP) — Is an Olympic champion by definition a world champion? Can you be a world champion without being an Olympic champion? What's the difference, anyway?

As the Tokyo Olympics provide multiple opportunities for memorable athletic performances, it's worth a closer look. Here, Associated Press Deputy Sports Editor Howie Rumberg sorts it all out.

OLYMPIC CHAMP, WORLD CHAMP: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

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An Olympic champion is only an Olympic champion. Because the Olympics are made up of 33 sports, each run by a federation, those federations can hold their own world championships — some every two years, some every four years, opposite years from the Olympics. And they declare world champions at their events.

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN IN TERMS OF RECORDS?

So in sports like gymnastics and athletics and swimming, you have two sets of records: the Olympic record, which is only set at an Olympics; and the world record, which is the record that is set in their seasons. Any sanctioned event can have a world record held or a world record set.

There are also times where the Olympic record IS the world record, because they set the world record at the Olympics. But they're not the exact same thing.

SO TO BE CLEAR: YOU CAN HOLD AN OLYMPIC RECORD, YOU CAN HOLD A WORLD RECORD OR YOU COULD HOLD A RECORD THAT'S BOTH, RIGHT?

You could hold a record that's both, yes. But the record that's both would have to be set at the Olympics. And there are standards like, say, the depth of the swimming pool or the type of surface on the track that everyone's obligated to follow.

It's worth noting that you have more opportunities to set a world record than you do an Olympic record. So in some ways, an Olympic record, even if it's not as good as a world record, has its own unique glow because being an Olympian is thought of, obviously, as the pinnacle of sports.

## **Biden orders tough new vaccination rules for federal workers**

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE, RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press  
WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Thursday announced sweeping new pandemic requirements aimed at boosting vaccination rates for millions of federal workers and contractors as he lamented the "American tragedy" of rising-yet-preventable deaths among the unvaccinated.

Federal workers will be required to sign forms attesting they've been vaccinated against the coronavirus or else comply with new rules on mandatory masking, weekly testing, distancing and more. The strict new guidelines are aimed at increasing sluggish vaccination rates among the huge number of Americans who draw federal paychecks — and to set an example for private employers around the country.

"Right now, too many people are dying or watching someone they love die and say, 'If I'd just got the vaccine,'" Biden said in a somber address from the East Room of the White House. "This is an American tragedy. People are dying who don't have to die."

However, pushback is certain to Biden's action. It puts him squarely in the center of a fierce political debate surrounding the government's ability to compel Americans to follow public health guidelines.

The federal government directly employs about 4 million people, but Biden's action could affect many more when federal contractors are factored in. New York University professor of public service Paul Light estimates there are nearly 7 million more employees who could potentially be included, combining those who work for companies that contract with the government and those working under federal grants.

Biden, seemingly fed up with persistent vaccine resistance among many Americans, delivered a sharp rebuke to those who have yet to get shots, saying "they get sick and fill up our hospitals," taking beds away from others who need them.

"If in fact you are unvaccinated, you present a problem to yourself, to your family and those with whom you work," he said bluntly.

At the same time, he expressed sympathy for people who have received their shots and are "frustrated with the consequences of the minority that fail to get vaccinated." And he again emphasized that the fight against the virus is far from over, girding Americans to remain strong in the face of setbacks in the pandemic.

"I know this is hard to hear. I know it's frustrating. I know it's exhausting to think we're still in this fight. I know we hoped this would be a simple straightforward line, without problems or new challenges. But that isn't real life," he said.

His comments came as some 60% of American adults have been fully vaccinated. He had set a July 4

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goal to get at least one shot in 70% of adults, and is still not quite there. The latest figure is 69.3%. And there remains significant resistance from many Republicans and some unions to vaccine mandates for employers.

Reflecting an awareness of the political landmines surrounding mandates, administration officials emphasize that their plan does not require workers to receive the vaccine but aims to make life more difficult for those who are unvaccinated to encourage them to comply. Biden directed his team to take steps to apply similar requirements to all federal contractors.

He also directed the Defense Department to look into adding the COVID-19 shot to its list of required vaccinations for members of the military. Service members already are required to get as many as 17 vaccines, depending on where they are based around the world.

Over and over, the president repeated that the vast majority of those falling ill and dying in the new wave of the delta virus are unvaccinated, putting others at risk and endangering the nation's fragile economic recovery and return to normalcy.

"It's an American blessing that we have vaccines for each and every American. It's such a shame to squander that blessing," said Biden.

He praised the recent increase in Republican lawmakers urging those who are not vaccinated — many of whom, polling suggests, identify as conservatives — to get their shots. And seeking to push back against skepticism among some Republicans over the safety of the vaccine, he gave a nod to predecessor Donald Trump, noting that it was "developed and authorized under a Republican administration."

"This is not about red states and blue states," he said. "It's literally about life and death, life and death."

Biden renewed his calls for schools to fully open this fall, although children under 12 are not yet eligible to receive the vaccine. And he said that public health officials do not yet believe Americans need a booster vaccine despite the highly contagious delta variant fueling the surge.

The new pressure on workers to get vaccinated could work because evidence shows people would rather get the vaccine than deal with burdens they consider onerous at work, said Lawrence Gostin, a professor of global health law at Georgetown University Law School.

"People would much rather roll up their sleeves and get a jab, than undergo weekly testing and universal masking," he said. "In many ways, this is really not a mandate, it's giving workers a choice."

Thursday's move is not just about federal workers.

The administration hopes it will nudge private companies push their workers harder to get vaccines that, while widely recognized as safe and effective, have yet to receive full approval from the Food and Drug Administration.

"I think we've reached this tipping point, and Biden's announcement will provide a lot of air cover for companies and boards of directors who have difficult decisions facing them," said Jeff Hyman, a Chicago-based business author and recruiter for start-up companies.

Some of the nation's biggest corporations have moved to require vaccinations for their workers. Tech giants Facebook and Google announced this week their employees would have to show proof they've been fully vaccinated before returning to work.

Delta and United airlines are requiring new employees to show proof of vaccination. Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley are requiring workers to disclose their vaccination status though not requiring them to be vaccinated.

But fewer than 10% of employers have said they intend to require all employees to be vaccinated, based on periodic surveys by the research firm Gartner.

Still, there is opposition.

State lawmakers across the U.S. have introduced more than 100 bills aiming to prohibit employers from requiring vaccination as a condition of employment, according to the National Academy for State Health Policy. At least six states have approved such bills.

The Justice Department and the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission have both said no federal laws prevent businesses from requiring vaccinations as a condition of employment and the federal

policy would take precedent. But the "medical freedom" bills underscore the resistance such guidance may encounter at the state level.

Government actions in New York City and California have faced resistance from local unions. And prior to Biden's announcement, some national unions were speaking out against it.

Larry Cosme, President of the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, which represents 30,000 federal officers and agents, said in a statement while the organization supports the vaccine it opposes compelling it.

"Forcing people to undertake a medical procedure is not the American way and is a clear civil rights violation no matter how proponents may seek to justify it," he said.

## **Flight attendants report high frequency of unruly passengers**

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

DALLAS (AP) — Nearly one in five flight attendants say they have witnessed physical incidents involving passengers this year, and their union is calling for criminal prosecution of people who act up on planes.

A union survey supports what airlines and federal officials have been saying: There has been a surge in unruly passengers this year, who sometimes become violent.

The most common trigger is passengers who refuse to follow the federal requirement that they wear face masks during flights, according to the survey by the Association of Flight Attendants. Alcohol is the next largest factor, with flight delays also playing a role, according to the union.

The union said nearly 5,000 flight attendants responded to its survey from June 25 through July 14 and 85% said they have dealt at least once this year with an unruly passenger. The union said 17% reported seeing a "physical incident," including touching, slapping or striking a flight attendant or another passenger.

Some said they were cursed or yelled at, and some said they were followed through the airport and harassed after the flight ended, said the union, which represents flight attendants at United, Alaska, Spirit and several smaller carriers.

Airlines have banned a few thousand people for the duration of the mask rule, and the Federal Aviation Administration has announced proposed fines against dozens of people. But union President Sara Nelson said more passengers should face criminal prosecution.

"When people are facing jail time for acting out on a plane, we suddenly see some sobering up, and we need some sobering up," Sara Nelson, the union's president, told reporters.

A few cases have led to criminal charges, and crews sometimes ask police to meet the plane when it lands. In May, a 28-year-old woman was arrested on felony charges in San Diego after a video showed a young female passenger punching a Southwest flight attendant in the face. Such cases are usually filed by local prosecutors — the FAA lacks authority to pursue criminal charges.

The FAA said this week that airlines have reported more than 3,600 cases of unruly passengers this year — figures were not kept for prior years. Nearly three-fourths involved disputes over masks. The agency has announced dozens of proposed fines, the largest being \$52,500 for a man who tried to open the cockpit door and then struck a flight attendant on a Delta Air Lines flight in December.

The FAA said it is investigating 600 other cases this year — nearly double the number of investigations started in 2019 and 2020 combined. In January FAA Administrator Stephen Dickson announced a "zero-tolerance policy" in which passengers can face immediate enforcement action instead of warnings.

## **New Russian lab briefly knocks space station out of position**

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

A newly arrived Russian science lab briefly knocked the International Space Station out of position Thursday when it accidentally fired its thrusters.

For 47 minutes, the space station lost control of its orientation when the firing occurred a few hours after docking, pushing the orbiting complex from its normal configuration. The station's position is key for

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getting power from solar panels and or communications. Communications with ground controllers also blipped out twice for a few minutes.

Flight controllers regained control using thrusters on other Russian components at the station to right the ship, and it is now stable and safe, NASA said.

"We haven't noticed any damage," space station program manager Joel Montalbano said in a late afternoon press conference. "There was no immediate danger at anytime to the crew."

Montalbano said the crew didn't really feel any movement or any shaking. NASA said the station moved 45 degrees out of attitude, about one-eighth of a complete circle. The complex was never spinning, NASA spokesman Bob Jacobs said.

NASA's human spaceflight chief Kathy Lueders called it "a pretty exciting hour."

The incident caused NASA to postpone a repeat test flight for Boeing's crew capsule that had been set for Friday afternoon from Florida. It will be Boeing's second attempt to reach the 250-mile-high station before putting astronauts on board; software problems botched the first test.

Russia's long-delayed 22-ton (20-metric-ton) lab called Nauka arrived earlier Thursday, eight days after it launched from the Russian launch facility in Baikonur, Kazakhstan.

The launch of Nauka, which will provide more room for scientific experiments and space for the crew, had been repeatedly delayed because of technical problems. It was initially scheduled to go up in 2007.

In 2013, experts found contamination in its fuel system, resulting in a long and costly replacement. Other Nauka systems also underwent modernization or repairs.

Stretching 43 feet (13 meters) long, Nauka became the first new compartment for the Russian segment of the outpost since 2010. On Monday, one of the older Russian units, the Pirs spacewalking compartment, undocked from the station to free up room for the new lab.

Nauka will require many maneuvers, including up to 11 spacewalks beginning in early September, to prepare it for operation.

The space station is currently operated by NASA astronauts Mark Vande Hei, Shane Kimbrough and Megan McArthur; Oleg Novitsky and Pyotr Dubrov of Russia's Roscosmos space corporation; Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronaut Akihiko Hoshide and European Space Agency astronaut Thomas Pesquet.

In 1998, Russia launched the station's first compartment, Zarya, which was followed in 2000 by another big piece, Zvezda, and three smaller modules in the following years. The last of them, Rassvet, arrived at the station in 2010.

Russian space officials downplayed the incident with Dmitry Rogozin, head of Roscosmos, tweeting: "All in order at the ISS. The crew is resting, which is what I advise you to do as well."

## Scarlett Johansson sues Disney over 'Black Widow' release

By LINDSEY BAHR and ANDREW DALTON Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Scarlett Johansson is suing the Walt Disney Co. over its streaming release of "Black Widow," which she said breached her contract and deprived her of potential earnings.

In a lawsuit filed Thursday in Los Angeles Superior Court, the "Black Widow" star and executive producer said her contract guaranteed an exclusive theatrical release. The Wall Street Journal first reported the news of the lawsuit.

Johansson's potential earnings were tied to the box office performance of the film, which the company released simultaneously in theaters and on its streaming service Disney+ for a \$30 rental.

"In the months leading up to this lawsuit, Ms. Johansson gave Disney and Marvel every opportunity to right their wrong and make good on Marvel's promise," the lawsuit said. "Disney intentionally induced Marvel's breach of the Agreement, without justification, in order to prevent Ms. Johansson from realizing the full benefit of her bargain with Marvel."

Disney said the lawsuit has "no merit whatsoever."

"The lawsuit is especially sad and distressing in its callous disregard for the horrific and prolonged global effects of the COVID-19 pandemic," Disney said in a statement. "Disney has fully complied with Ms. Johans-



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son's contract and furthermore, the release of Black Widow on Disney+ with Premier Access has significantly enhanced her ability to earn additional compensation on top of the \$20M she has received to date."

After its release was delayed more than a year because of COVID-19, "Black Widow" debuted to a pandemic-best of \$80 million in North America and \$78 million from international theaters three weeks ago, but theatrical grosses declined sharply after that. In its second weekend in release, the National Association of Theater Owners issued a rare statement criticizing the strategy asserting that simultaneous release lends itself only to lost profits and higher quality piracy.

Once taboo, hybrid theatrical and streaming releases have become more normal for many of the biggest studios during the pandemic, with each adopting its own unique strategy. This weekend, Disney is employing the same strategy with "Jungle Cruise," and next weekend Warner Bros. big budget "The Suicide Squad" opens both in theaters and on HBO Max.

The revised hybrid release strategies over the 16 months have occasionally led to public spats from not just theater owners, but stars, filmmakers and financiers who are unhappy with the potential lost revenues and the alleged unilateral decision-making involved.

The WSJ said Warner Media, for instance, paid over \$200 million in "amended agreements" with talent over its decision to release its entire 2021 slate simultaneously in theaters and on HBO Max.

But none have been as public as Johansson's lawsuit. The actor, who has been in nine Marvel movies going back to 2010's "Iron Man 2," quickly became a trending topic on Twitter on Thursday after news of the lawsuit broke.

## Congress passes bill to fund Capitol security, Afghan visas

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress overwhelmingly passed emergency legislation Thursday that would bolster security at the Capitol, repay outstanding debts from the violent Jan. 6 insurrection and increase the number of visas for allies who worked alongside Americans in the Afghanistan war.

The \$2.1 billion bill now goes to President Joe Biden for his signature. The Senate approved the legislation early Thursday afternoon, 98-0, and the House passed it immediately afterward, 416-11.

Senators struck a bipartisan agreement on the legislation this week, two months after the House had passed a bill that would have provided around twice as much for Capitol security. But House leaders said they would back the Senate version anyway, arguing the money is urgently needed for the Capitol Police and for the translators and others who worked closely with U.S. government troops and civilians in Afghanistan.

The bill loosens some requirements for the visas, which lawmakers say are especially pressing as the U.S. military withdrawal enters its final weeks and Afghan allies face possible retaliation from the Taliban.

The money for the Capitol — including for police salaries, the National Guard and to better secure windows and doors around the building — comes more than six months after the insurrection by former President Donald Trump's supporters. The broad support in both chambers is a rare note of agreement between the two parties in response to the attack, as many Republicans still loyal to Trump have avoided the subject. The former president's loyalists brutally beat police and hundreds of them broke into the building, interrupting the certification of Biden's election win.

Democrats have said that if Congress didn't pass the bill, money would start running out for officers' salaries by August and that the National Guard might have to cancel some training programs.

"We can't let that happen," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said before the vote. He said the agreement "shouldn't have taken this long" but that passing the legislation is living up to Congress' responsibility to keep the Capitol safe "and to make sure that the people who risk their lives for us and protect us get the help they need."

The bill's passage comes after four police officers who fought off the rioters in the Jan. 6 attack testified in an emotional House hearing on Tuesday and detailed the "medieval" battle in which they were beaten and verbally assaulted. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi suggested on Wednesday that the hearing had perhaps "jarred the Senate to move in a bipartisan way to pass this legislation."

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The more generous bill narrowly passed the House in May, but no Republicans supported it and some liberal Democrats voted against it as well. On Thursday, only 11 Republicans and Democrats opposed it.

In the Senate, Republicans rejected an earlier \$3.7 billion proposal by Democrats before they negotiated the final version.

Pelosi said on Wednesday that the legislation was months overdue.

"It's not what we sent, it's certainly not what we need, but it's a good step forward," she said. "It doesn't mean that we're finished, but it does mean that we can't wait another day until we strengthen the Capitol Police force, strengthen the Capitol."

The legislation would boost personal protection for lawmakers who have seen increasing death threats since the insurrection, install new security cameras around the complex and replace riot equipment the police lost in the fighting that day. It would fund new intelligence gathering and boost wellness and trauma support for the Capitol Police, as many troops are still suffering in the wake of the attack. And it would reimburse the National Guard \$521 million for the thousands of troops that protected the Capitol for more than four months after the siege.

Unlike previous proposals, the bill would not provide money for the FBI to prosecute cases related to the insurrection, for temporary fencing in case of another attack or to create a new quick reaction force within the police or military that could respond to events at the Capitol. Police were overrun on Jan. 6 as the National Guard took hours to arrive.

The White House issued a statement of support for the legislation, saying the Biden administration backs the Capitol security improvements and "remains committed to supporting the Afghan people, including by fulfilling our commitment to Afghan nationals who worked for or on behalf of the U.S. Government."

For the allies in Afghanistan, the bill would allow 8,000 additional visas and provide \$500 million for their emergency transportation, housing and other essential services.

Alabama Sen. Richard Shelby, the top Republican on the appropriations panel who negotiated the legislation with the Democrats, said it would be "shameful" not to help the Afghan allies and that they could be killed by the Taliban as the U.S. withdraws.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell said senators "intend to keep our nation's promises to brave Afghans who have taken great risks to help America and our partners fight the terrorists."

The House overwhelmingly passed separate legislation last week to provide the visas, 407-16. The Pentagon says the troop withdrawal is more than 95% complete and is to be finished by Aug. 31.

Some 70,000 already have resettled in the U.S. under the special visa program since 2008. Administration officials said this month that the first flights of those former U.S. employees and family members who have completed security screening would soon start arriving from the Afghan capital, Kabul, for a week or so of final processing at Fort Lee, Virginia.

## Ex-Cardinal McCarrick charged with sexually assaulting teen

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, who was defrocked after a Vatican investigation confirmed he had sexually molested adults as well as children, has been charged with sexually assaulting a teenage boy during a wedding reception in Massachusetts in 1974, court records show.

McCarrick is the first cardinal in the U.S. to ever be criminally charged with a sexual crime against a minor, according to Mitchell Garabedian, a well-known lawyer for church sexual abuse victims who is representing the man alleging the abuse by McCarrick.

"It takes an enormous amount of courage for a sexual abuse victim to report having been sexually abused to investigators and proceed through the criminal process," Garabedian said in an email. "Let the facts be presented, the law applied, and a fair verdict rendered."

McCarrick faces three counts of indecent assault and battery on a person over 14, according to documents filed in the Dedham District Court on Wednesday.

Barry Coburn, an attorney for McCarrick, told The Associated Press that they "look forward to addressing

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the case in the courtroom," and declined further comment.

The charges against McCarrick were first reported by The Boston Globe on Thursday.

The man said the abuse started when he was a young boy, according to the court records. The man told authorities during an interview in January that McCarrick was close to his family and would perform wedding masses, baptisms and funerals for them.

The man said that during his brother's wedding reception at Wellesley College in June 1974 — when he was 16 — McCarrick told him that his father wanted him to have a talk with McCarrick because the boy was "being mischievous at home and not attending church."

The man said that the two of them went for a walk around campus and McCarrick groped him before they went back to the party. The man said McCarrick also sexually assaulted him in a "coat room type closet" after they returned to the reception, authorities wrote in the documents.

Before leaving the room, McCarrick told him to "say three Our Fathers and a Hail Mary or it was one Our Father and three Hail Marys, so God can redeem you of your sins," according to the report.

The man also described other instances of sexual abuse by McCarrick over the years, including when the man was an adult, the report said.

Authorities began investigating McCarrick after Garabedian sent a letter alleging the abuse to the district attorney's office, according to the court records.

McCarrick can still be charged in this case because he wasn't a Massachusetts resident and had left the state, stopping the clock on the statute of limitations, authorities said.

McCarrick, 91, was defrocked by Pope Francis in 2019 after a Vatican investigation confirmed decades of rumors that he was a sexual predator.

The case created a credibility crisis for the church since the Vatican had reports from authoritative cardinals dating to 1999 that McCarrick's behavior was problematic, yet he became an influential cardinal, kingmaker and emissary of the Holy See's "soft diplomacy."

It led to a two-year investigation that found that bishops, cardinals and popes downplayed or dismissed multiple reports of sexual misconduct. An internal investigation report released last year put the lion's share of blame on Pope John Paul II, who appointed McCarrick archbishop of Washington, D.C., despite having commissioned an inquiry that confirmed he slept with seminarians.

Anne Barrett Doyle, co-founder of the online research database BishopAccountability.org, said that "for McCarrick, today's reckoning is long overdue."

"We hope that these charges lead to justice," she said in an emailed statement.

Jeff Anderson, an attorney who has represented others who say they were victimized by McCarrick, said in a statement that the defrocked cardinal's "history of prolific sex crimes has been ignored by the highest-ranking Catholic officials for decades."

"For too long Catholic institutions have been self-policing while making pledges and promises without action. McCarrick should be behind bars for his crimes," Anderson said.

McCarrick, who now lives in Missouri, has been ordered to appear in Massachusetts for his arraignment on Sept. 3. The hearing was originally scheduled for Aug. 26.

Of the thousands of Catholic clergymen implicated in sexual abuse in recent decades, McCarrick was distinctive in having reached the highest circles of church leadership — even as awareness of his suspect behavior spread steadily through the hierarchy.

Ordained as a priest in New York City in 1958, McCarrick rose to become archbishop of Newark, New Jersey, in 1986 and then archbishop of Washington, D.C., in 2000. He was elevated to the rank of cardinal in 2001 by Pope John Paul II.

In June 2018, McCarrick suddenly became the face of the long-festering Catholic sex abuse crisis as Pope Francis removed him from public ministry due to allegations that he abused a teenager while a priest in New York. A church panel determined that a former altar boy's allegations that McCarrick fondled him before Christmas Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in 1971 and 1972 were "credible and substantiated."

The church also acknowledged that it had made previously undisclosed financial settlements with adults

who accused McCarrick of sexual misconduct decades ago. It was apparently common knowledge in the U.S. and Vatican leadership that "Uncle Ted," as McCarrick was known, slept with seminarians, and yet he still he ascended up the church ranks.

## 'Happy tears': Lee's gold sparks joy at home in Minnesota

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — There were cheers and screams and "happy tears" for one of their own, and unending delight for what many saw as an "Only in America" story.

Sunisa Lee captured the women's all-around gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics on Thursday, a triumph that wowed all of Minnesota but carried special resonance in the state's close-knit Hmong American community, one of the largest in the United States.

"I can't find the words to express how happy we are, how important that was to me and my family and to the whole Hmong community throughout the world," John Lee, father of one of the brightest lights now in Tokyo, told The Associated Press. "We never expected gold, but she came through. She did it."

That she did, and dozens of her family and friends gathered early in the morning at a suburban St. Paul event center to watch the gymnastics broadcast from Tokyo.

Sunisa Lee got an opening when reigning Olympic champion Simone Biles withdrew from the all-around competition to focus on her mental health. There was nervous silence at the watch party as Lee turned in a brilliant set on uneven bars, a nervy performance on beam and a well-executed floor exercise.

When Rebeca Andrade of Brazil stepped out of bounds twice during her floor routine, John Lee said, everybody knew his 18-year-old daughter would soon be bedecked in gold.

"It was neck to neck going to that last event, and when she pulled it off, my mind, just oh my God, is this really real?" Lee said. "And when we saw that she won, it, I couldn't even find the right words to say how happy, how proud I am of her. ... I never cry, I try not to in front of people, I do deep inside, but I don't want to show it to the world. ... My daughter cried, my wife cried ... happy tears."

Puner Koy, who coached Sunisa Lee for several years when she first came to Midwest Gymnastics in the St. Paul suburb of Little Canada, caught part of her performance at the watch party. Then he had to leave for the gym to work. He said he could barely hold back his tears on the drive. He recalled her trying out at age 6 and called her a "phenom."

"Immediately there was tremendous talent, you could see the strength to bodyweight ratio was quite evident," Koy said. "She had a certain fearlessness about her."

Lee was a quick study. The coach said she often went from learning a skill in a drill to doing it on an apparatus the same day. He described a particular aerial on the beam that Gabby Douglas did at the 2012 London Olympics. Lee replicated it at age 8 or 9 on the beam her father built in the family yard.

Also at the celebration was state Rep. Kaohly Vang Her, of St. Paul, whose daughter, Ayden Her, trained with Lee at Midwest Gymnastics for 10 years. Her said the girls in the group, who have stuck together over the years, were all elite athletes — Ayden Her will be a diver at the University of Minnesota this fall. But Lee, she said, was "special from the minute you saw her."

Many Hmong, who fought for the U.S. in Laos during the Vietnam War, resettled in Minnesota. Patriotism runs deep in the community, fueling the joy over Lee's success. Her said that's because the Hmong were oppressed in every other country where they have lived, including Laos and China, and sought opportunity in America.

"Every other Hmong person who has done something as a first is literally living out the dreams of our ancestors," she said.

Lee Pao Xiong, director of the Center for Hmong Studies at Concordia University in St. Paul, notes that Lee is the first Hmong American to go to the Olympics. He said the only other Hmong athlete to do so was a gold medalist on the Chinese weightlifting team in 2008.

"You have the child of a refugee representing the United States of America, so not only representing America, but bringing the spotlight to the Hmong community," Xiong said. "Even for her to be so proud

to say 'I'm doing this for my community, I'm doing this for my people,' she didn't forget her Hmongness."

Lee's progress highlights a cultural and generational shift among Hmong American families, who traditionally emphasized education as a way out of poverty and attached little value to sports. But the Lees are athletes. Her father, who served in the U.S. Navy, said he was active in sports growing up.

"All three of my girls can do backflips, none of the boys can," the father said.

Several local Hmong leaders said Lee's victory shows sports can be a path for this community.

"Our parents always pounded it in our heads to study — extracurricular activities are playing," Xiong said. "I think Sunisa demonstrated that it will lead to something if you work hard at it."

Sunisa Lee is bound next for Auburn University, and community members are raising scholarship money for her. John Lee hopes she'll compete in the 2024 Paris Olympics, but now is not the time to decide.

"She's been so, so overwhelmed because she missed all the vacation, she missed all, every family event ... she worked so hard, she had no friends outside school and just a few in gymnastics world," he said. "We'll see when she comes home."

## Robinhood CEO tells AP it's eyeing expansion beyond trading

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Robinhood has already changed how people trade stocks and who's doing it. Now its sights are on the rest of the financial industry.

Shares of Robinhood Markets traded for the first time on the Nasdaq Thursday, following the highly anticipated initial offering by the company that's drawn a new generation of investors into the market and forced the industry to stop charging fees for trading. Shares swung sharply through the day before ending with an 8.4% drop. But while the IPO is a milestone, it's not a culmination, according to CEO Vlad Tenev.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Tenev said he wants Robinhood to be the only app that people use on their phones for money. That covers everything from depositing paychecks to paying bills to splitting payments with friends.

Tenev, who founded Robinhood with fellow Stanford graduate Baiju Bhatt in 2013, also said he accepts how his company has become synonymous with the boom in trading by smaller-pocketed and novice investors, for both good and ill. Such investors are getting their first chance to grow their wealth, after years of falling further behind stock-owning households, but they also have been criticized for making too many risky trades with their newfound app.

Early this year, they almost singlehandedly sent GameStop and a group of other "meme stocks" to heights professional investors called dangerously irrational. The mania led to big losses for some hedge funds, multiple halts in trading for stocks and congressional hearings asking who was getting hurt. It also forced Robinhood to temporarily bar its customers from making some GameStop trades, after it suddenly had to post much more in collateral to its clearinghouses that process its trades.

Critics say the company based in Menlo Park, California, encourages unsophisticated investors to make dangerous bets by making it seem too much like a game. But Tenev said he wants his app to encourage everyone to profit from the stock market, not just the elite. This interview has been edited for clarity and for length.

Q: This year started off rocky for Robinhood with the GameStop saga. Is the IPO a sign the company has turned the corner?

A: I think it's an amazing milestone, and it's really a celebration of the individual investor. Individual investors have undoubtedly seen a resurgence over the past few years, and Robinhood has been part of that story. We think there's a lot more we can still do to serve the individual investor.

Q: Your app makes it fun and easy to trade, but that's something you get criticism for, both on Wall Street and from regulators. Is that criticism justified?

A: I don't think so. We accept that there's always things that we could be doing better, and we're investing a lot in making sure that customers are educated. Ultimately, though, more access is better. And the stock market in particular has been a great source of wealth creation for so many people. It's been reserved for the 1% for a very long time. So we're proud to give access and to make it easier for people to use.

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Q: Why is Robinhood the lightning rod for so much criticism?

A: Well, I think that Robinhood has become synonymous with retail investing and the individual investor in America, and with that comes good things and the downsides of it as well. You hear "Robinhood investors," and that's kind of become the new term for retail investors. So I think it's a positive thing, that helps get the brand out there. But whenever there's criticism for the industry, since we represent it, we to some degree have to answer to it.

Q: When you look at your customers, do you think they see it as entertainment at all?

A: Well, I think that in general, it's important for our customers to enjoy using our products. I think if there's no enjoyment to it, if there's no joy in your investing, you're just going to do less of it. So we want to make our products easy to use, but it's also important for people to be educated, to be informed. And that's why we've been investing so much and making sure our products are safe and we provide all of the educational tools that our customers need to succeed.

Q: When GameStop was shaking Wall Street, people were saying it was the "Robinhood gang" taking over the market. Does the use of that term bother you?

A: If it's being discussed or used pejoratively, certainly, because it's such a broad brush. What you're seeing is a lot of these customers building portfolios, and they're largely buying and accumulating stocks. So I think a lot of people are engaging in long-term beneficial behaviors. So it is a little bit unfair that a large group of people is sort of painted with the brush of a relatively small group of people.

Q: What do you think personally when people say Robinhood makes the stock market a casino, or more of a casino than it would be otherwise?

A: I think it's a big, big mischaracterization because if you look at it, the stock market has been one of the greatest wealth creation tools. We should be encouraging access to it and not denigrating people that are able to use it. So in a sense, you're hearing when wealthier customers are engaging in the stock market, it's investing. But when the rest of us are accessing the stock market, it's gambling. And I think that rhetoric just has to go.

Q: One out of every \$20 Robinhood made at the start of the year came just from dogecoin. How important are Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies to the long-term strategy?

A: It's certainly an area we're interested in. I mean, it's in many ways the future of the financial industry, according to a lot of people. So we want to make sure that we're there, and we're serving customers well as they're interested in exploring this new asset class. So, no doubt, crypto has been very culturally relevant through the first six months of the year.

Q: What will Robinhood look like in the future?

A: Over time, we want to be the single money app, the most trusted and most culturally relevant money app worldwide. So, everything that you use your money for, you should be able to do through Robinhood.

Anytime you receive a paycheck direct deposit, we'd like you to do that through Robinhood. Your emergency fund, your bill pay, your day-to-day spending, we'd like for customers to use us for that. And of course, all types of investing ranging from more discretionary investing to long-term retirement savings as well.

Q: After the IPO, you may be worth more than \$2 billion. Are there any social causes that you're thinking of championing?

A: I haven't started thinking too much about what I'm going to do post-IPO, I've been very much focused on the company and the mission. But we'll see. I mean, I think Robinhood's mission itself is a cause that I believe in very strongly. Financial empowerment and inclusion for all is something we believe in very strongly.

Q: So you're not going to buy a ticket to space? I heard your favorite planet was Venus.

A: Not a very hospitable planet to visit, it turns out. I like all the planets. Earth is pretty good, too, so I'm happy staying here for the time being.

**Israel to offer 3rd COVID booster shot to older citizens**

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By ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's prime minister on Thursday announced that the country would offer a coronavirus booster to people over 60 who have already been vaccinated.

The announcement by Naftali Bennett makes Israel, which launched one of the world's most successful vaccination drives earlier this year, the first country to offer a third dose of a Western vaccine to its citizens on a wide scale.

"I'm announcing this evening the beginning of the campaign to receive the booster vaccine, the third vaccine," Bennett said in a nationally televised address. "Reality proves the vaccines are safe. Reality also proves the vaccines protect against severe morbidity and death. And like the flu vaccine that needs to be renewed from time to time, it is the same in this case."

The decision comes at a time of rising infections and signs that the vaccine's efficacy dwindles over time.

Anyone over 60 who was vaccinated more than five months ago will be eligible. Bennett said the country's new president, Isaac Herzog, would be the first to get the booster on Friday. It will also be offered to the general public.

Bennett, who is 49, said his first call after the news conference would be to his mother to encourage her to get her booster shot.

Neither the U.S. nor the EU have approved coronavirus booster shots. It's not yet proven if a third dose helps and, if so, who needs one and when.

But Bennett said that a team of expert advisers had agreed overwhelmingly, by a 56-1 margin, that it made sense to launch the booster campaign. He said the recommendation was made after "considerable research and analysis" and that its information would be shared around the world. Preliminary studies in Israel have indicated the vaccine's protection against serious illness dropped among those vaccinated in January.

"The findings show that there is a decline in the body's immunity over time, and the purpose of the booster is to re-strengthen it, thus significantly reducing the chances of infection and serious illness," Bennett said.

Israel has used the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine on its population. Previously, boosters were used in some countries with the Chinese and Russian vaccines.

Early this year, Israel carried out one of the world's most aggressive and successful vaccination campaigns, reaching a deal with Pfizer to purchase enough vaccines for its population in exchange for sharing its data with the drug maker.

Over 57% of the country's 9.3 million citizens have received two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, and over 80% of the population over 40 is vaccinated.

The vaccination program allowed Israel to reopen its economy ahead of other countries. But Israel has seen a spike in cases of the new delta variant, even among people who are vaccinated. Bennett urged unvaccinated Israelis, especially younger people who have been hesitant, to get vaccinated immediately.

Earlier this month, Israel started giving individuals with weakened immune systems a third shot to increase their resilience against COVID-19.

Pfizer said Wednesday that the effectiveness of the vaccine drops slightly six months after the second dose. Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech have said they plan to seek authorization for boosters in August.

Most studies — and real-world data from Britain and the U.S. — so far show that the Pfizer vaccine remains powerfully protective against serious illness. Just Wednesday, Pfizer released data from its long-running 44,000-person study showing that while protection against any symptomatic infection declined slightly six months after immunization, protection against severe COVID-19 remained at nearly 97%. Earlier this month, Israel's Health Ministry announced that protection against severe disease was around 93%.

The World Health Organization said earlier this month that there is not enough evidence to show that a third dose is needed.

The agency's officials have appealed for wealthier countries to share vaccines with poorer nations that have yet to immunize their people, instead of using them as boosters. Israel itself has come under criticism for not sharing more of its vaccines with the Palestinians.

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The Israeli Health Ministry recorded at least 2,165 new coronavirus cases on Thursday, following an accelerating rise in infections over the past month. Serious cases of COVID-19 have grown from 19 a day in mid-June to 159 as the highly infectious delta variant has spread.

Thanks to its successful vaccination campaign, Israel lifted almost all of its coronavirus restrictions this spring. But with new cases back on the rise, the country has tried to halt the spread of the highly infectious delta variant by re-imposing limitations on gatherings, restoring a "green pass" system for vaccinated people to enter certain enclosed spaces, and an indoor mask mandate.

## Homes lose water as wells run dry in drought-ravaged basin

By GILLIAN FLACCUS and NATHAN HOWARD Associated Press

MALIN, Ore. (AP) — Judy and Jim Shanks know the exact date their home's well went dry — June 24. Since then, their life has been an endless cycle of imposing on relatives for showers and laundry, hauling water to feed a small herd of cattle and desperately waiting for a local well-drilling company to make it to their name on a monthslong wait list.

The couple's well is among potentially hundreds that have dried up in recent weeks in an area near the Oregon-California border suffering through a historic drought, leaving homes with no running water just a few months after the federal government shut off irrigation to hundreds of the region's farmers for the first time ever.

Officials have formal reports of 117 empty wells but suspect more than 300 have gone dry in the past few weeks as the consequences of the Klamath River basin's water scarcity extend far beyond farmers' fields.

Worried homeowners face waits of six months or more to get new, deeper wells dug because of the surging demand, with no guarantee that those wells, too, won't ultimately go dry.

Some are getting by on the generosity of neighbors, or hauling free water from a nearby city. The state also is sending in a water truck and scrambling to ship more than 350 emergency storage tanks from as far as Oklahoma amid a nationwide shortage of the containers due to drought-induced demand across the U.S. West. The first tanks arrived Thursday.

Judy Shanks, a volunteer ambulance driver, and her husband are surviving on 5-gallon (19-liter) jugs she fills at her mother's house, and have already sold several cows.

"Come December, if we don't get some storms in here and we don't see any changes, I'll probably sell everything because we can't hang on," she said.

While much of the West is experiencing exceptional drought conditions, the toll on everyday life is particularly stark in this region filled with flat vistas of sprawling alfalfa and potato fields and normally teeming wetlands.

This summer's already critical water shortages have been amplified by a mandate to preserve water levels for two species of endangered suckerfish in a key lake that's also the primary source of irrigation water for 200,000 acres (80,900 hectares) of farmland.

"It's kind of hard to look forward and see good things," said Justin Grant, a farmer who lost irrigation water and whose home now also has a dry well. "I'm trying to wrap my head around how to get through the season."

In the past, water from Upper Klamath Lake was released each spring from a dam controlled by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and flowed into a vast network of irrigation canals. That system feeds fields converted from marshy lakes to arable land by the government more than a century ago.

The amount of water allocated to farmers varies yearly based on lake levels, and already in recent years it had been reduced.

This year, however, the bureau said because of unusually low lake levels caused by severe drought it could not release any water at all without imperiling the suckerfish. Now, some farmers are drawing instead from deep wells that dot the region, depleting groundwater at the shallower depths tapped by homeowners.

"This is something that you don't really think of having to deal with in a country like ours," said Klamath County Commissioner Kelley Minty Morris. "It's unimaginable to me even though it's going on right in my



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community.”

Some water also leaks from the irrigation canals every growing season, superficially replenishing the groundwater. But those canals have run dry, said Brad Kirby, manager of the Tulelake Irrigation District, just south of the California border.

Experts say several factors — years of paltry rain and snow, record-setting heat and raging wildfires driven by climate change — are inexorably changing the region’s ecology.

Oregon’s Water Resources Department, which monitors groundwater levels, recorded the lowest inflow of water ever into the Upper Klamath Lake this spring, setting the stage for a disastrous summer.

“In some wells, we’re seeing a drop of 40 or 50 feet (12 to 15 meters) so far this season,” said Ivan Gall, field services administrator for the agency. “It is a lot.”

And there is no guarantee the groundwater will fully recharge when it rains and snows again, he said. In 2010, another year when farmers pumped a lot of groundwater because of drought, the aquifer dropped permanently between 4 and 5 feet (1.2 to 1.5 meters), he said.

“You can see how interconnected all of this is,” Gall said, calling it a “cascade effect” of competing demands.

Irrigators drawing on groundwater have irked some homeowners, but the overwhelming focus of anger in this conservative, Republican-leaning community has been the U.S. government and the Endangered Species Act.

Some acknowledge global warming’s role, but most say they are victims of bad government policy in what’s been framed as a battle between farmer and fish. Now, homeowners are in the mix.

“I don’t want to get political about this because I understand everybody’s desire — we’re all just trying to survive. But the environmental policies have killed us here,” said Shanks, the ambulance driver. “We have a drought, I’m not denying that. But we have an even worse man-made drought.”

The two species of suckerfish have been listed as federally endangered since 1988 and are of critical cultural importance to the Klamath Tribes, which have fought for decades to preserve them. The tribes’ studies show that if nothing changes, the fish will disappear from the lake within a generation.

“Archeological evidence has us here for 14,000 years. Our world view, our traditional world view, is everything was placed here for a purpose, including us, and those fish that were created for us were to provide for our subsistence,” said Klamath Tribes Chairman Don Gentry.

With fields and now wells drying up, and the fish struggling, everyone is wondering where to go from here.

Nathan Buckley was on a camping trip on Memorial Day weekend when his wife called him to say their sprinkler had stopped running and the kitchen faucet was dry.

A pump specialist told them they had an inch (2.5 centimeters) of water left in their 180-foot (55-meter) well. The only solution, he said, was to dig a deeper well — but well-drilling companies in the rural region are few, and the wait for service is at least six months.

The Buckleys are now hauling up to 45 gallons (170 liters) of water a day from neighbors for their four horses, a miniature pony and 14 goats that their daughter shows competitively. They have borrowed a 550-gallon (2,080-liter) water tank that they use for limited showers and laundry; Nathan Buckley hauls it into town every five days on a borrowed trailer to fill it up.

Buckley has spent weeks pulling records and using Google Earth to map every well within a quarter-mile (0.4 kilometers) of his house and now knows his own well is about a quarter-mile from a dry irrigation ditch.

“What if we spend \$25,000 or \$30,000 right now putting a well in, and next year it goes dry again? Then what? My gut says it’s a remote possibility,” he said. “But it is a possibility.”

Some homeowners, however, take an even broader view as their lawns die and they pay tens of thousands for new wells.

“You hear the word ‘unprecedented’ so many times that it loses its impact, but really, this is not normal,” said Roger Smith, a retired fish biologist who also must dig a deeper well after his went dry this summer.

“There’s been anger in the Klamath Basin for so long,” he said. “If this goes on for a few more years, some of these small communities will cease to exist.”

## Olympic sponsors praise Simone Biles after withdrawal

By MAE ANDERSON AP Business Writer

Simone Biles' sponsors, including Athleta and Visa, are lauding her decision to put her mental health first and withdraw from the gymnastics team competition during the Olympics.

It's the latest example of sponsors praising athletes who are increasingly open about mental health issues. Tennis star Naomi Osaka found widespread support when she withdrew from the French Open earlier this year.

Biles could still compete in other gymnastic events during the Olympics. She also has a solid history of gymnastic accomplishments, including four gold medals and a bronze medal at the 2016 Olympics. She has earned five more all-around titles in world championships since 2013. That earns the 24-year-old a lasting athletic legacy that sponsors can capitalize on.

"We are past the time when athletes like Simone are valued simply for their athletic prowess," said Jim Andrews, founder of A-Mark Partnership Strategies. "She has earned a place in gymnastics history, and has proven herself to be an amazing spokesperson and influencer who has much to offer brands even without competing and eventually in retirement."

Biles split with longtime sponsor Nike in April to sign with Athleta, the athletic clothing arm of Gap. Biles' deal with Athleta also includes sponsorship of the Gold Over America victory tour later this year, which will star her as well as other USA Gymnastics team members.

At the time, Biles said she signed with Athleta over Nike because she wanted to be aligned with a brand more reflective of her values.

"I feel like they work very closely with women and girls and letting them have a voice and kind of breaking those beauty standards," Biles said in May.

Biles launched her first ad campaign with Athleta in June, including a video that showcases the people that have supported her through her rise to superstardom.

Athleta put out a statement in support of Biles after her withdrawal in Tokyo.

"We stand by Simone and support her well-being both in and out of competition," Athleta said. "Being the best also means knowing how to take care of yourself. We are inspired by her leadership today and are behind her every step of the way."

Visa put out a similar statement, calling her decision "incredibly brave." Nabisco said Biles is an "inspiration to us all." Core Power, a protein shake maker, said Biles is "showing us all that her courage and strength extend well beyond the mat."

Dropping support of Biles would hurt a brand more than it would help, said David Carter, sports business professor at the University of Southern California, and founder of marketing consultancy Sports Business Group.

"Given the fluidity and high-profile nature of the situation, as well as the sensitivities associated with her reasoning behind withdrawing, sponsors must be very careful not to be perceived as cutting and running," he said. "Doing so would not only draw the ire of many consumers who staunchly support Biles, but also future athletes contemplating marketing relationships with any brands deemed tone deaf to the circumstances involved."

## US economy surpasses pre-pandemic size with 6.5% Q2 growth

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Fueled by vaccinations and government aid, the U.S. economy grew at a solid 6.5% annual rate last quarter in another sign that the nation has achieved a sustained recovery from the pandemic recession. The total size of the economy has now surpassed its pre-pandemic level.

Thursday's report from the Commerce Department estimated that the nation's gross domestic product — its total output of goods and services — accelerated in the April-June quarter from an already robust 6.3% annual growth rate in the first quarter of the year.

The latest figure fell well below the 8%-plus annual growth rate that many economists had predicted for

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the second quarter. But the miss was due mainly to clogged supply chains related to the rapid reopening of the economy. Those bottlenecks exerted a larger-than-expected drag on companies' efforts to restock their shelves. The resulting slowdown in inventory rebuilding, in fact, subtracted 1.1 percentage points from last quarter's annual growth.

By contrast, consumer spending — the main fuel of the U.S. economy — surged for a second straight quarter, advancing at an 11.8% annual rate. Spending on goods grew at an 11.6% rate, and spending on services, from restaurant meals to airline tickets, expanded at a 12% pace as vaccinations encouraged more Americans to shop, travel and eat out.

Companies, too, spent with confidence last quarter. Business investment surged at an 8% annual rate in the April-June quarter, adding 1.1 percentage point to GDP.

With consumers and businesses expected to keep spending, many analysts expect the economy to grow at a robust pace of around 6.5% for all of 2021, despite the supply shortages and the possibility of a resurgent coronavirus in the form of the highly contagious delta variant. That would amount to the strongest calendar-year growth since 1984.

Growth that strong would far exceed the 2% to 3% average annual rates of recent decades. And it would represent a striking bounce-back from the economy's 3.4% contraction last year in the midst of the pandemic, the worst decline since the 1940s.

Underpinning the rapid recovery have been trillions in federal rescue money, ranging from stimulus checks to expanded unemployment benefits to small business aid to just-distributed child tax credit payments. And millions of affluent households have benefited from a vast increase in their wealth resulting from surging home equity and stock market gains.

"Consumers are going to continue to drive the economic train," said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics. "There is a lot of excess savings, a lot of cash in people's checking accounts."

Jen Psaki, the White House press secretary, hailed the GDP report and called on Congress to go further by passing the administration's proposals to vastly expand the nation's infrastructure.

Overhanging the bright economic forecasts is the threat posed by the delta variant. The U.S. is now averaging more than 60,000 confirmed new cases a day, up from only about 12,000 a month ago. Should a surge in viral infections cause many consumers to hunker down again and pull back on spending, it would weaken the recovery.

For now, the economy is showing sustained strength. Last month, America's employers added 850,000 jobs, well above the average of the previous three months. And average hourly pay rose a solid 3.6% compared with a year earlier, faster than the pre-pandemic annual pace.

Consumer confidence has reached its highest level since the pandemic struck in March 2020, a key reason why retail sales remain solid as Americans shift their spending back to services — from restaurant meals and airline trips to entertainment events and shopping sprees.

The economy is also receiving substantial support from the Federal Reserve. On Wednesday, the Fed reaffirmed that it will maintain its key short-term interest rate at a record low near zero to keep short-term borrowing costs low. It will also continue to buy government-backed bonds to put downward pressure on long-term loan rates to encourage borrowing and spending.

The recovery, in fact, has been so rapid, with pent-up demand from consumers driving growth after a year of lockdowns, that one looming risk is a potential spike in inflation that could get out of control. Consumer prices jumped 5.4% in June from a year ago, the sharpest spike in 13 years and the fourth straight month of sizable price jumps.

The measure of consumer inflation in the second-quarter GDP report showed an annual rise of 3.4% for core inflation, which excludes food and energy. It was the fastest such jump since 1991.

In addition to the drag on GDP from weak inventory restocking, reflecting the supply chain problems, housing construction fell at a 9.8% annual rate last quarter. This decline reflected, in part, the troubles home builders have had in obtaining lumber and other supplies.

Some economists have warned that by choosing not to begin withdrawing its extraordinary support for

the economy, the Fed may end up responding too late and too aggressively to high inflation by quickly jacking up rates and perhaps causing another recession.

But at a news conference Wednesday, Fed Chair Jerome Powell underscored his belief that recent inflation readings reflect price spikes in a narrow range of categories — from used cars and airline tickets to hotel rooms and auto rentals — that have been distorted by temporary supply shortages related to the economy's swift reopening. Those shortages involve items like furniture, appliances, clothing and computer chips, among others.

## **Group: Jailed Belarus journalist needs urgent hospital care**

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The Belarusian Association of Journalists on Thursday called on authorities in Belarus to transfer a jailed journalist to a civilian hospital so he could get treatment for a coronavirus-induced pneumonia he has reportedly developed in detention.

The association said it filed a request with the Interior Ministry's penitentiary department and the Health Ministry to urgently hospitalize Andrei Skurko, head of the advertising and marketing department of the prominent Nasha Niva newspaper. Skurko, who used to be the paper's chief editor from 2006 to 2017, was arrested three weeks ago and is in a pre-trial detention center in Minsk, the capital.

Nasha Niva reported this week that Skurko has been transferred to the facility's medical ward with "structural changes in his lungs," and his cellmates were placed in quarantine because Skurko was suspected to have been infected with COVID-19.

The newspaper said before Skurko, 43, was moved to the detention facility he is in now, he had spent 13 days in another detention center that is notorious for its harsh conditions, without a bed or a mattress and lacking access to his diabetes medications.

"Andrei Skurko is an insulin-dependent diabetic. For people like him, coronavirus can be deadly," the Belarusian Association of Journalists said.

Belarusian authorities raided the offices of Nasha Niva, the country's oldest and most well-respected independent newspaper, on July 8 along with the homes of some staff members. Skurko was detained that day along with the paper's editor, Yavor Martsinovich, and two other employees of Nasha Niva, who were later released.

Martsinovich and Skurko remain in custody and are facing charges over incorrect payments of utility bills, charges that carry punishment of up to five years in prison.

Belarusian authorities have ramped up the pressure against non-governmental organizations and independent media, conducting more than 200 raids of offices and apartments of activists and journalists so far this month alone, according to the Viasna human rights center.

Authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko has vowed to continue what he called a "mopping-up operation" against civil society activists whom he has denounced as "bandits and foreign agents."

Lukashenko faced months of protests triggered by his being awarded a sixth term in an August 2020 vote that the opposition and the West saw as rigged. He responded to demonstrations with a massive crackdown that saw more than 35,000 people arrested and thousands beaten by police.

According to Viasna, Belarus authorities are deliberately creating unbearable conditions for political prisoners behind bars, including by placing them into "coronavirus cells."

Raids targeting journalists and more detentions took place Thursday in Minsk and other cities, the Belarusian Association of Journalists said.

Earlier this week, Belarusian authorities declared the Polish-funded Belsat TV channel an extremist group.

A total of 28 Belarusian journalists — including those working with Nasha Niva, Belsat and the popular independent news site Tut.by — remain in custody either awaiting trial or serving their sentences.

In a statement Thursday, the International Federation of Journalists condemned the government crackdown on Belarusian media.

"We call on the international community to denounce the situation in Belarus. Each day, the authorities

violate the media's and citizens' freedoms with impunity," said the Federation's general secretary, Anthony Bellanger.

## American gymnast Sunisa Lee takes Olympic gold

By WILL GRAVES AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Sunisa Lee wanted to quit during quarantine.

It all had become too much. The lingering pain from a broken foot. The deaths of two family members from COVID-19. Her father's slow recovery from an accident that left him paralyzed.

The urge eventually passed. It always does. Still, less than two months ago the 18-year-old gymnast hobbled around the podium at the U.S. championships, getting by more on grit than anything else.

Tokyo seemed far away. The top of the Olympic podium, even further.

Then suddenly, there she was on Thursday night as a tinny version of "The Star-Spangled Banner" echoed across Ariake Gymnastics Centre. Gold medal around her neck. A watch party back home among the Hmong-American community in her native Minnesota raging. A victory she never envisioned not yet sinking in.

"It's crazy," Lee said after winning the Olympic all-around title following a tight duel with Brazil's Rebeca Andrade. "It doesn't seem like real life."

Even though the pain in Lee's foot eased — funny how it seemed to get better the more she trained — she arrived in Japan figuring her best shot was at a silver medal. Sure, she'd beaten good friend and reigning Olympic champion Simone Biles during the final day of the U.S. Olympic Trials last month, but that was an anomaly, right?

Then Biles opted out of the all-around competition to focus on her mental health following an eight-year run atop the sport.

Everything was on the table. Gold included. Lee took it with a brilliant set on uneven bars, a nervy performance on beam and a floor exercise that made up for in execution what it might have lacked in aggression.

Her total of 57.433 points was just enough to top Andrade, who earned the first gymnastics all-around medal by a Latin American athlete but missed out on gold when she stepped out of bounds twice during her floor routine.

Russian gymnast Angelina Melnikova added bronze to the gold she won in the team final. American Jade Carey, who joined the competition after Biles pulled out, finished eighth.

Biles' decision to sit out led to the jarring sight of the gymnast considered the greatest of all time cheering on Lee and the rest of the 24-woman field from the stands with the gold that's been hers for so long now in play for everyone else.

Still, Lee did her best to not think about the stakes. She FaceTimed with her father John — who was paralyzed from the chest down during a freak accident in Minnesota just days before the 2019 national championships — before the meet, just like always. He told her to relax. So she did. Or at least, she tried.

Lee admitted she was getting "in her head" a little bit while prepping for her bar routine, the one that's currently the hardest in the world. She didn't exactly look nervous. The 15.300 the judges rewarded her for a series of intricate connections and releases tied Andrade's near-perfect Cheng vault for the highest score of the night.

Yet it wasn't Lee's brilliance that made the difference but her guts. She nearly came off the balance beam while executing a wolf turn — basically a seated spin — needed to suction cup her toes to the 4-inch slab of wood to stay on. Her score of 13.833 moved her in front of Andrade heading into the floor exercise.

Going first, Lee opted for a routine with three tumbling passes instead of four, hoping better execution would override any potential tenths she surrendered by not doing a fourth pass. Her 13.700 was steady, but it left an opening for Andrade.

The 21-year-old Brazilian, two years removed from a third surgery to repair a torn ACL in her knee, had the best floor score of the contenders during qualifying. Yet she bounded out of bounds with both feet at

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the end of her first tumbling pass. And her right foot stepped off the white mat and onto the surrounding blue carpet.

Needing a 13.802 to win, Andrade received a 13.666 instead. Not that she particularly cared. She wasn't even sure she would make it to Tokyo until she won the all-around at the Pan American Championships two months ago. She was in tears as she watched her country's flag raised during an Olympic gymnastics ceremony for the first time.

"This medal represents all Brazil," she said.

The gold, however, remains in possession of the Americans. Lee's victory marked the fifth straight by a U.S. woman, with the past three Olympic champions all being women of color.

Biles and 2012 gold medalist Gabby Douglas are Black. Lee's parents are Hmong, an ethnic group who have historically lived in the mountains of Southeast Asia. Lee's parents emigrated from Laos to Minnesota, which has the largest concentration of Hmong in the U.S. A large group of friends and family gathered in Minneapolis to watch her make history. She hopes the image of a Hmong standing in front of the world and on top of her sport resonates in a community she sometimes feels can be too restrictive.

"I want people to know that you can reach your dreams and you can just do what you want to do," she said. "Because you never know what's going to happen in the end."

## Forgotten oil and gas wells linger, leaking toxic chemicals

By CATHY BUSSEWITZ and MARTHA IRVINE Associated Press

CRANE, Texas (AP) — Rusted pipes litter the sandy fields of Ashley Williams Watt's cattle ranch in wind-swept West Texas. The corroded skeletons are all that remain of hundreds of abandoned oil wells that were drilled long before her family owned the land. The wells, unable to produce any useful amounts of oil or gas, were plugged with cement decades ago and forgotten.

But something eerie is going on beneath the land, where Watt once played among the mesquite trees, jackrabbits and javelina and first drove the dirt roads at 10 years old. One by one, the wells seem to be unplugging themselves. They're leaking dangerous chemicals that are seeping into groundwater beneath her ranch.

Now 35, Watt believes the problems on her ranch, which sprawls across the oil-rich fields of the Permian Basin, are getting worse. In April, she found crude oil bubbling from an abandoned well. In June, an oil company worker called to alert her that another well was seeping pools of salty produced water, a byproduct of oil and gas extraction containing toxic chemicals.

"I'm watching this well literally just spew brine water into my water table, and then I have to go home at night, and I'm sweaty and tired and smelly, and I get in the shower, and I turn on the shower and I look at it, and I think, is this shower going to kill me?" Watt said.

### A GROWING THREAT

The crisis unfolding on Watt's 75,000-acre ranch offers a window on a growing problem for the oil industry and the communities and governments that are often left to clean up the mess. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, 3.2 million abandoned oil and gas wells exist in the United States. About a third of them were plugged with cement, which is considered the proper way to prevent harmful chemical leaks. But most haven't been plugged at all.

Many of the wells are releasing methane, a greenhouse gas containing about 86 times the climate-warming power of carbon dioxide over two decades. Some are leaking chemicals such as benzene, a known carcinogen, into fields and groundwater.

Regulators don't know where hundreds of thousands of abandoned wells are because many of them were drilled before modern record-keeping and plugging rules were established. They are a silent menace, threatening to explode or contaminate drinking water and leaking atmosphere-warming fumes each day that they're unplugged. Without records of their whereabouts, it's impossible to grasp the magnitude of the pollution or health problems they may be causing.

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The problem isn't confined to Texas. In recent years, abandoned wells have been found under brush deep in forests and beneath driveways in suburbia. On the Navajo Nation, a hiker stumbled across wells oozing brown and black fluid that smelled like motor oil. In Colorado, a basement exploded, killing a man and his brother-in-law who were repairing a water heater, after an abandoned flowline had leaked methane into the house.

A Wyoming school shut down for more than a year after students and teachers complained of headaches for weeks. Air quality tests revealed high levels of benzene and carbon dioxide, most likely from a nearby abandoned oil well. A garage in Pennsylvania exploded — a consequence, the state suspects, of abandoned gas wells.

Experts believe the problem is getting worse. Even before the viral pandemic, producers were declaring bankruptcy and abandoning oil fields after spending more on fracking operations than they ultimately could afford. Then the coronavirus halted travel, obliterating demand for fuel and leaving less money to properly plug wells.

President Joe Biden, who has built much of his domestic policy around a transition to cleaner energy sources, wants to spend billions to put unemployed wildcatters to work plugging the wells. But Congress is unlikely to allocate enough money to seriously confront the issue.

"If, all of a sudden, we could switch to all green renewable energy, that's great, but these wells don't disappear; they're still going to be there," said Mary Kang, an assistant professor of civil engineering at McGill University in Montreal who was among the first scientists to call attention to the danger of abandoned wells.

## TRACES OF BENZENE

After the discoveries on Watt's ranch, traces of benzene showed up in the well that supplies her cattle's drinking water. Chevron, which owned at least two of the oil wells that recently came unplugged, began trucking in drinking water while its crews tried to fix the leaks. But Watt worried that her animals might have consumed contaminated water. So she had her 600 head of cattle hauled off to another part of her ranch.

"At this point," she said, "I cannot sell my cattle at market in good conscience, because I have no idea what is in them."

Though Chevron officials maintained that the cattle could safely return, Watt disagreed.

She's haunted by a memory of crude oil bubbling up in a toilet bowl at her family's ranch when she was a teenager. Horrified, they turned off the well that supplied their water and switched to another well. They never found the source of the leak.

Representatives for Chevron said the company is committed to re-plugging the two wells that recently sprang leaks.

But Watt fears that dozens of other plugged and abandoned wells on her ranch might be deteriorating, and Chevron has no plans to check its other wells for problems. If Watt should inform Chevron of another leaking well, "if we have to take responsibility, we will and we'll do the right thing by the landowner," said Catie Mathews, a company spokeswoman.

Hailing from a long line of cattle ranchers, Watt never thought she'd be fighting this fight. After high school, she graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy and worked in intelligence for the Marines. Even after she obtained an MBA from Harvard, she returned to the ranch.

She packs a gun, but only on her own land. Though she's passionate about protecting it, she doesn't want to be called an "environmentalist" — that's a dirty word out here. But she has to save her ranch.

"The story of my family," Watt said, "is a story of land, if nothing else."

## LAYERS OF CONFUSION

Dispiriting as her situation is, Watt is luckier than some. She knows Chevron bears responsibility for two wells that recently sprang leaks on her property. But not every well has a clear responsible party. Some abandoned ones are so old and records so scarce that landowners or states are left to clean up the damage.

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Molly Rooke, who co-owns a family ranch near Corpus Christi, Texas, faced that predicament in 2019, when an orphaned well blew out on her property, spewing chemicals. The 15,000-acre ranch contained dozens of orphaned wells, with exposed pipes not much taller than her own frame. Some pipes stuck out of the ground. Others were hidden in brush.

"We have problems finding the well head, and that's above the ground," Rooke said. "Then you have all these pipes underground, and there's no record of where those go."

Her only records of these wells that were drilled in the 1920s were scattered old photos and papers. She tried to contact companies that used to pump oil from the wells. No luck. One well had already leaked into a nearby river.

Rooke's father tried for years to get the state to plug them. When he died, she took over the fight. Rooke and the consumer rights group Public Citizen sued the Texas Railroad Commission over its decision during the pandemic to suspend rules requiring operators to plug abandoned wells within a year. After her lawsuit sparked attention, the state sealed her wells.

"All the wells were so old, they were ticking time bombs," Rooke said.

## SEARCHING FOR LOST WELLS

The first successful commercial oil well in the U.S. was drilled in Pennsylvania in 1859. But few detailed records survived that early oil boom, which lasted several decades. Not until a century later would the industry develop modern plugging standards, which require filling abandoned wells with cement to prevent leaks.

These days, some abandoned wells have metal casings intact. But others were stripped of metal during World War II, making them hard to find. Still others were constructed from wood that rotted away and left only a hole in the ground.

Pennsylvania has located roughly 8,700 orphaned wells, mostly unplugged and in rural areas. Yet the problem is far larger. Based on historical photos and surveys, Pennsylvania estimates that between 100,000 and 560,000 additional unplugged wells remain scattered around the state.

"We're not plugging fast enough to keep up with the wells we're discovering," said Seth Pelepko, an environmental program manager in the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. "Our list is not getting smaller. It's getting larger."

Some states have taken to hiring well hunters who specialize in finding abandoned wells. They use metal detectors — first in helicopter surveys, then on the ground — to seek steel well casings. But metal detectors can't detect wells cased in wood. So they fly drones with laser imaging to seek depressions in the ground.

On her Texas ranch, Watt uses some of the same techniques to seek problematic aging wells. She has driven her land, looking for signs of trouble.

Sometimes, she finds a dark patch of earth using a drone. She calls one of the biggest the "elephant graveyard," after a wasteland in the movie "The Lion King." Rather than animal bones, her graveyard contains blackened mesquite trees.

The sand there is dark and reeks of oil. But Watt's worry is the water below. Without it, she and her longtime ranch foreman, Marty White, and his wife — and their cattle — can't live here. Water is the lifeblood of this place and all of West Texas.

"I told him, 'I'll take care of you,'" Watt said of White. " 'You're going to have to trust me, and I don't know what it looks like, but I'll take care of you.' "

## LEAKING CHEMICALS AND MONEY

In addition to polluting groundwater, the wells are accelerating global warming. Unplugged, abandoned wells in the U.S. leaked 5,000 times more methane than plugged wells did, according to a 2015 study cited by the EPA. Unplugged wells leak 280,000 metric tons of methane into the atmosphere each year, according to an estimate by EPA, though experts have estimated far higher totals.

That amount of methane packs roughly the same climate-warming power as the carbon dioxide emitted



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by all the power plants in Massachusetts in a year, according to Daniel Raimi, a fellow at Resources for the Future, a research group.

Many states require companies to plug wells that are out of production and to post bonds in case they go belly-up. But the amounts are typically far lower than what's required to plug the wells, leaving states or the federal government with hefty bills.

At the end of June, Texas reported 7,268 orphaned wells, up 17% since 2019. An additional 146,859 were considered "inactive": They were no longer producing oil, but the owners hadn't yet been required to plug them. Many inactive wells may actually be orphaned wells, said David Wieland, regional organizer with the Western Organization of Resource Councils, a network of grassroots groups focused on land stewardship. Some producers will let a well sit idle for a year or two, he said, and then produce just enough oil to avoid being required to plug it.

"That sort of hidden inventory is likely true in almost any state," Wieland said.

Some states, like Texas, use fees collected from the oil and gas industry for cleanups. In 2018 alone, oil-producing states spent \$45 million plugging orphaned wells and \$7.9 million restoring surrounding land, according to the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission.

## CLEANING UP THE MESS

As the financial and environmental tolls of abandoned wells grow, policy makers are searching for solutions. In his initial infrastructure proposal, Biden suggested spending \$16 billion to put people to work plugging old oil and gas wells and coal mines. Yet even that wouldn't be nearly enough to solve the problem.

Raimi, of Resources for the Future, estimates that a federal program to plug 62,000 wells over a decade could create 15,000 to 33,000 year-long jobs. At a per-well cost of \$76,000, it would take roughly \$160 billion to plug all the wells and reclaim the surrounding land, whether it's companies or governments who pay the price.

Wyoming and North Dakota channeled millions of dollars in federal coronavirus relief funds into employing workers to plug abandoned oil and gas wells over the past year.

Watt's family never owned the mineral rights to the land and thus never profited from these wells, many of which were drilled in the 1950s and were plugged in the four decades that followed.

She isn't looking for a drawn-out legal battle with Chevron or any other oil company with wells on her land. She simply wants assurance that the water is safe for her cattle, and the people in her life, to drink. She wants the land to be restored. And she doesn't know if that's possible.

"I do not want to sue," Watt said. "All I want is everything cleaned up."

Knowing that benzene has seeped into some of her water, she has a nagging suspicion that the rare cancer that killed her mother might have been related to wells leaking toxic chemicals on her ranch. She will likely never know for sure.

More than anything, she wants justice for the land, her cattle — and the legacy her family bequeathed to her. This is where she spread the ashes of her parents.

"My greatest fear when I lay down every night, even before this well became unplugged, is what if I do something to screw up the history of this ranch, that's still being written?" Watt asked.

"What if that history ends with me?"

## Olympics Latest: US women's volleyball reaches quarterfinals

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:

The U.S. women's volleyball team won its third straight match at the Olympics and is assured of a spot in the quarterfinals.

The Americans beat Turkey 25-19, 25-20, 17-25, 20-25, 15-12 in their third pool play match to join Italy at 3-0 in Pool B.

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The United States is seeking its first gold medal in the sport and is off to a good start in Tokyo with wins over Argentina, defending champion China and Turkey.

Italy, Serbia and Brazil have also clinched spots in the quarters with the other four spots still to be determined.

## MEDAL ALERT

Chen Meng won the women's singles table tennis title at the Olympics by beating Chinese teammate Sun Yingsha 4-2 in the final.

The victory is a return to winning form for China after a surprising loss in mixed doubles to a Japanese team in the gold medal match. Chinese women have won every Olympic gold medal in singles.

Sun took the first game 11-9 but the top-ranked Chen won the next two 11-6 and 11-4. Sun dominated the fourth game 11-5 with Chen running away in the fifth 11-4.

Chen finally won 11-9 in the final game and immediately went to hug her coach before both players posed with the Chinese flag and their paddles.

Mima Ito of Japan won the bronze medal by beating Yu Mengyu of Singapore.

## MEDAL ALERT

Sunisa Lee became the fifth straight American woman to claim the Olympic title in the women's all-around. She edged Rebeca Andrade of Brazil in an entertaining and hotly contested final while Simone Biles watched from the stands.

Lee's total of 57.433 points was just enough to top Andrade. The Brazilian earned the first gymnastics all-around medal by a Latin American athlete but missed out on gold when she stepped out of bounds twice during her floor routine.

Russian gymnast Angelina Melnikova earned bronze two days after leading ROC to gold in the team final.

## MEDAL ALERT

Russian fencers won gold in the women's team foil by beating France 45-34 in the final.

The Russians stayed on course for gold despite an early medical timeout when Marta Martyanova rolled her ankle. She stayed in the contest and contributed 14 of the team's points.

The Russian Olympic Committee team has won five fencing medals in Tokyo in women's events. France was on the podium in the women's team foil for the first time since 1984.

Italy beat the United States 45-23 for the bronze medal to make the podium in the event for a record seventh consecutive Olympics.

It's going to go down to the wire in the women's all-around gymnastics final.

Rebeca Andrade of Brazil leads with a score of 29.966 through two rotations. Sunisa Lee of the U.S. is right behind at 29.900 followed by Angelina Melnikova and Vladislava Urazova from the ROC.

The gymnasts will head to balance beam and then floor for the final two rotations.

An American has won each of the last four Olympic all-around titles. Andrade is looking to become the first female gymnast from Latin American to medal in the all-around.

A few hours after winning the first individual gold medal of his career, Caeleb Dressel has returned to the pool to tie an Olympic record in preliminaries of the 100-meter butterfly.

Dressel touched first in the last of eight heats with a time of 50.39 seconds, equaling the mark set by Singapore's Joseph Schooling when he won gold at the 2016 Rio Olympics. Dressel holds the world record of 49.50, set two years ago at the world championships in Gwangju.

Hungary's Kristof Milak was the second-fastest qualifier, advancing to Friday's semifinals in 50.62. Milak already won gold in the 200 butterfly.

A couple of big names failed to make the top 16, which was needed to advance.

South African gold medalist Chad le Clos was 18th, while Schooling was far back with the 44th-fastest

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time. Only 11 swimmers went slower than the defending Olympic champion, who has fallen on hard times with his memorable upset of Michael Phelps.

Simone Biles is in the stands supporting American teammates Sunisa Lee and Jade Carey in the Olympic women's gymnastics all-around final.

Biles topped qualifying but opted not to defend the title she won in Rio de Janeiro to focus on her mental health. Biles sat with Grace McCallum, Jordan Chiles and MyKayla Skinner to cheer on Lee and Carey.

Rebeca Andrade of Brazil is in the lead following the first rotation, followed by Carey and Angelina Melnikova of the ROC.

Katie Ledecky has advanced to the final of her final Olympic event, posting the top time in preliminaries of the 800-meter freestyle.

After anchoring the United States to a silver medal in the 4x200 free relay during the morning session, Ledecky returned to the Tokyo Aquatics Centre in the evening to post the top qualifying time of 8 minutes, 15.67 seconds.

Another American, Katie Grimes, was the second-fastest qualifier at 8:17.05. Australia's double gold medalist, Ariarne Titmus, also advanced to Saturday morning's final to set up a fourth and final showdown with Ledecky.

Ledecky will be going for her second gold medal of these games and sixth individual medal overall, which would be the most of any female swimmer. She's currently tied with Hungarian great Krisztina Egerszegi.

The women's all-around gymnastics final is underway without reigning champion Simone Biles.

Biles pulled out of the competition on Wednesday to focus on her mental health. That leaves the bid for the gold medal wide open.

American Sunisa Lee, Brazil's Rebeca Andrade, and Russian athletes Angelina Melnikova and Vladislava Urazova were separated but mere tenths during qualifying. Biles' withdrawal opened the door for American Jade Carey to also compete in the event.

The top six gymnasts from qualifying will start on vault before making their way to uneven bars, balance beam and floor.

An American has won each of the last four Olympic titles. The last non-American to win was Simona Amanar of Romania in Sydney in 2000.

Novak Djokovic is into the medal rounds of the Olympic tennis tournament.

The top-ranked Serb rolled past home favorite Kei Nishikori of Japan 6-2, 6-0 to reach the semifinals and extend his bid for a Golden Slam.

Steffi Graf in 1988 is the only tennis player to achieve the Golden Slam by winning all four Grand Slam tournaments and Olympic gold in the same calendar year.

Djokovic has already won the Australian Open, French Open and Wimbledon this year and needs the Tokyo Games title and the U.S. Open trophy to complete the Golden Slam.

Djokovic's semifinal opponent will be either Alexander Zverev of Germany or Jeremy Chardy of France.

Djokovic was to play again later with Serbian partner Nina Stojanovic against the German pair of Laura Siegemund and Kevin Krawietz in the mixed doubles quarterfinals.

## MEDAL ALERT

Aaron Wolf has won Japan's eighth gold medal in judo at the Tokyo Olympics, defeating South Korea's Cho Gu-ham 5:35 into golden score for his first Olympic title in the men's 100-kilogram division.

Wolf, whose father is American, won the draining final bout by ippon with an o-uchi-gari throw. Wolf beat Georgian veteran Varlam Liparteliani in the semifinals to reach his first Olympic final.

Japan has won eight golds, one silver and one bronze from the first 12 judo weight classes, adding to their record total of gold medals and total medals in the nation's homegrown martial art. Wolf and Shori

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Hamada (women's 78 kilogram) swept both golds available Thursday at the Budokan.

Portugal's two-time world champion Jorge Fonseca and Russian athlete Niaz Iliasov won bronze. Cho upset Fonseca in the semifinals.

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Allison Schmitt has entered rare territory with her swim in the women's 4x200-meter freestyle relay.

Schmitt became only the fourth American female swimmer to win 10 Olympic medals in her career. She earned a silver for her leadoff leg at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre.

The 31-year-old Schmitt is a team captain as she takes part in her fourth Olympics. She's earned a pair of relay medals in Tokyo, also picking up a bronze for swimming in the preliminaries of the 4x100 free relay.

Schmitt now has four golds, three silvers and three bronzes in her career. The only other American female swimmers to win more are Jenny Thompson, Dara Torres and Natalie Coughlin, each of whom had 12 career medals.

Asked about her milestone, Schmitt broke down in tears. She says "getting to the Olympics is hard. Winning an Olympic medal is even harder."

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## MEDAL ALERT

Shori Hamada has won Japan's seventh gold medal in judo at the Tokyo Olympics, beating French former world champion Madeleine Malonga by ippon just 1:08 into the women's 78-kilogram final.

The result was a reversal of the two players' bout in the 2019 world championship final, which was also held in Tokyo. Hamada pinned Malonga early and held on for the ippon to win her first Olympic medal at the Budokan.

Hamada, who won the 2018 world title, is the third Japanese woman to win gold in the past week. The home nation is dominating its homegrown martial art with nine medals from the first 11 weight classes.

Germany's Anna-Maria Wagner -- the current world champion -- and Brazil's Mayra Aguiar won bronze.

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## MEDAL ALERT

Australia's Jessica Fox has made Olympic history at the Tokyo Games as the first gold medalist in women's canoe slalom.

Fox made the last run of the final and crushed it, beating rival and silver-medalist Mallory Franklin of Britain with a winning run of 105.04 seconds through the rapids of the Kasai Canoe Slalom Center.

It was a clean run without the mistakes and penalty seconds that prevented her from winning gold in the kayak slalom two days earlier, when she won bronze.

The women's canoe slalom is one of 18 new events introduced to the Olympics this year in a push for gender equity. It replaced the men's double canoe slalom.

Andrea Herzog of Germany took bronze.

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## MEDAL ALERT

Czech shooter Jiri Liptak has outlasted teammate David Kostelecky in a shoot-off to win men's trap gold at the Tokyo Olympics.

Liptak and Kostelecky tied after 50 shots, hitting 43 targets to set an Olympic record. Both shooters hit the first six targets in the shoot-off before Kostelecky missed on the seventh.

Great Britain's Matthew Coward-Holley took bronze.

Liptak finished 18th at the 2012 London Games, but did not compete in Rio five years ago. Kostelecky earned his second medal in his sixth Olympics with the gold he won at the 2008 Beijing Games.

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More than 50 athletes and officials with the Australian track and field team were briefly isolated in their rooms at the Olympics after American pole vaulter Sam Kendrick tested positive for COVID-19.

Kendricks, the two-time world champion, is out of the Games.

The Australian Olympic committee said three of its athletes were still being kept isolated after "a brief

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casual contact with a U.S. track and field athlete who had tested positive." Those three can still train, but away from other team members.

The Australian Olympic committee said the three returned negative tests and would be tested daily. All three were vaccinated. The committee did not name them.

Another 41 Aussie athletes and 13 officials who were also initially isolated were allowed to return to their regular routines after about two hours. The committee says all athletes are expected to compete as planned. The track and field events begin Friday.

Kendricks was a strong contender for gold in Tokyo. His dad posted on social media that his son had no symptoms but was informed while in Tokyo that he tested positive for the virus and was out of the Olympics. He has been placed in isolation at a hotel.

The German Olympic team says a cycling official will be sent home a day after he used a racist slur during the men's time trial.

Patrick Moster is the sports director for the German cycling federation and was overseeing the cycling squad at the Tokyo Olympics.

He used the slur to describe a rider from Algeria while urging a German rider to catch up. It was heard on TV broadcasts.

German national Olympic committee president Alfons Hörmann says he considers Moster's subsequent apology to be "sincere" but that "fair play, respect and tolerance ... are non-negotiable" for the German team.

## MEDAL ALERT

Slovakia's Zuzana Rehak Stefecekova has set an Olympic record in women's trap to deny the United States a third-straight shotgun gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics.

Rehak Stefecekova hit 43 of 50 targets on a breezy day at Asaka Shooting Range, beating American Kayle Browning.

Alessandro Perilli took bronze to earn the first medal in San Marino's 61-year Olympic history.

Americans Vincent Hancock and Amber English opened the shotgun events by sweeping skeet on Tuesday.

A 37-year-old police officer, Rehak Stefecekova took silver at the 2008 Beijing and 2012 London Games, and missed Rio in 2016 due to the birth of her son.

The IOC's medical director says COVID-19 cases at the Tokyo Games are not burdening the city's medical system.

Officials say that from July 1 through Wednesday, 198 people accredited for the Tokyo Games have tested positive for COVID-19, including 23 athletes. Three of the new cases from Wednesday were athletes staying in the Olympic Village.

Olympic organizers say two people among the 198 are receiving hospital treatment. Neither of those two cases is severe.

Medical Director Richard Budgett says care for athletes is being provided by their own team medical staff and a polyclinic at the village.

He says he's confident "the Olympics are being run without actually affecting that essential secondary care and hospital provision" for residents of Japan.

Tokyo, meanwhile, reported 3,177 new coronavirus cases on Wednesday, setting an all-time high and exceeding 3,000 for the first time.

Experts say Tokyo's surge is being propelled by the new, more contagious delta variant of the virus. There is no evidence of the disease being transmitted from Olympics participants to the general public.

American world-champion pole vaulter Sam Kendricks will miss the Olympics after testing positive for COVID-19.

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Kendricks' dad posted on social media that his son had no symptoms but was informed while in Tokyo that he tested positive and was out of the competition.

The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee confirmed the news and said Kendricks has been placed in isolation at a hotel. He is being supported by the USOPC and USA Track and Field.

Kendricks won the bronze medal at the 2016 Olympics and took gold at the last two world championships. He holds the American record at 19 feet, 10 ½ inches (6.06 meters).

## UPSET ALERT

China has surprised the U.S. and Australia with a world-record performance in the women's 4x200-meter freestyle relay.

Katie Ledecky took the anchor leg for the Americans in third place, nearly 2 seconds behind the Chinese and also trailing the Aussies.

Ledecky passed Australia's Leah Neale and closed the gap significant on China's Li Bingjie, but couldn't quite catch her at the end.

Li touched in 7 minutes, 40.33 seconds, denying both Ledecky and Ariarne Titmus another gold medal. After winning both the 200 and 400 free individual titles, Titmus led off for Australia in the relay.

The Americans claimed silver in 7:40.73, while Australia took the bronze in 7:41.29. It was the second swimming world record of the Tokyo Games -- in fact, all three medalists broke the previous mark of 7:41.50 set by the Aussies at the 2019 world championships.

Phil Dalhausser and Nick Lucena are moving on in the Olympic beach volleyball tournament.

The Americans beat Julian Azaad and Nicolas Capogrosso of Argentina 21-19, 18-21, 15-6 to improve to 2-1 in the round-robin. That's good for at least one more match in Tokyo.

In all, the American teams are 8-1 in the preliminary stage. Three other teams still have one match to play.

USA Climbing head coach Josh Larsen has returned to the United States due to the death of his father. Meg Coyne, national teams manager and assistant coach, will temporarily step into Larson's role.

Sport climbing is making its Olympic debut at the Tokyo Games. Qualification rounds begin on Aug. 3 with the men. The women qualifying the following day.

Reigning BMX racing gold medalists Mariana Pajon of Columbia and Connor Fields of the United States have moved on to the semifinals at the Tokyo Olympics.

Pajon is the only BMX rider to earn two Olympic gold medals. She won all three of her qualifying rounds to finish with three points. Her top challenger, American Alise Willoughby, also won her three qualifying runs.

Fields, gold medalist at the 2016 Rio Olympics, won two qualifying heats and finished second in another. France's Joris Daudet and Sylvain Andre won all three of their heats.

Former world champion Niek Kimmann of the Netherlands won two heats to qualify after colliding with a race steward who had wandered onto the course during a training run on Monday.

The top four riders from each of two semifinals will move on to Friday's finals.

Simone Biles has expressed her gratitude on social media for the support she has received since dropping out of the women's team gymnastics final at the Tokyo Olympics.

She withdrew after the first rotation, vault, because she said wasn't in the right headspace to compete. A day later, she gave up her chance to defend her all-around title.

The most decorated gymnast ever said in a tweet, "the outpouring love & support I've received has made me realize I'm more than my accomplishments and gymnastics which I never truly believed before." Biles still has not decided if she will compete in the individual events.

The women's all-around competition is Thursday night Tokyo time, while individual events start Sunday.

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## MEDAL ALERT

Living up to the hype, American swimmer Caeleb Dressel has claimed the first individual Olympic gold medal of his career.

Dressel held off the defending Olympic champion, Australia's Kyle Chalmers, with a furious sprint to the wall. The winning time was an Olympic record of 47.02 seconds.

Dressel beat Chalmers by a mere six-hundredths of a second, leaving the 2016 winner with a silver medal this time. The bronze was claimed by Russia's Kliment Kolesenikov.

The first three gold medals of Dressel's career were all in the relays.

Now, he's got one earned all by himself.

## MEDAL ALERT

China has claimed its first gold medal at the Olympic pool.

Zhang Yufei turned in a dominating performance to win the women's 200-meter butterfly with an Olympic-record time of 2 minutes, 3.86 seconds. She was more than a body length ahead of the pair of Americans, Regan Smith and Hali Flickinger.

The U.S. swimmers dueled back and forth for the silver, with Smith pulling ahead at the end to touch in 2:05.30. Flickinger earned the bronze in 2:05.65.

Italian tennis player Fabio Fognini has apologized for yelling at himself with a homophobic slur during a loss at the Tokyo Games.

Fognini used the offensive Italian word repeatedly during the three-set defeat to Russian athlete Daniil Medvedev in the third round on Wednesday.

Fognini writes in an Instagram story that the extremely hot conditions "affected his head" and that he "used a really stupid expression toward myself."

He adds that "obviously I didn't want to offend anyone's feelings" and that "I love the LGBT community and I apologize for the nonsense that I let out."

The Instagram story was written on a rainbow background.

The often volatile Fognini was kicked out of the U.S. Open doubles tournament in 2017 for vulgarly insulting the chair umpire during his first-round loss in singles.

## MEDAL ALERT

Izaak Stubblety-Cook of Australia has won the 200-meter breaststroke at the Olympic pool in Tokyo.

Stubblety-Cook rallied on the final lap to pass Arno Kamminga of the Netherlands, who went out fast and tried to hold on. The winning time was an Olympic record of 2 minutes, 6.38 seconds as the Aussies captured their fifth gold of the swimming competition, matching the powerful American team.

Kamminga was under world-record pace through the first 150 meters, but he faded to the silver in 2:07.01. The bronze went to Finland's Matti Mattsson in 2:07.24.

American Nic Fink finished fifth.

## MEDAL ALERT

Bobby Finke of the United States has captured gold in the debut of the men's 800-meter swimming freestyle event at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre.

Italy's Gregorio Paltrinieri grabbed the silver after leading most of the race, while the bronze went to Mykhailo Romachuk of Ukraine.

It was a thrilling finish. Germany's Florian Wellbrock grabbed the lead from Paltrinieri on the final flip, with Finke lurking back in fourth. But the American turned on a dazzling burst of speed at the end of the 16-lap race, passing all three swimmers ahead of him to take the gold.

Finke's winning time was 7 minutes, 41.87 seconds, just 0.24 ahead of Paltrinieri. Romachuk finished in 7:42.33, knocking Wellbrock back to fourth.

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The men's 800 freestyle was added to the Olympic program for the Tokyo Games, marking the first time that approximate distance was contested by the men since there was an 880-yard race at the 1904 St. Louis Games.

## MEDAL ALERT

Italy's Valentina Rodini and Federica Cesarini have surged over the final 50 meters to snatch the gold medal in the women's lightweight double sculls.

The Dutch team of Marieke Keiser and Ilse Paulis had led nearly the entire race but collapsed to the bronze medal in the final 20 meters as the French team of Laura Tarantola and Claire Bove won silver.

The Dutch team nearly slipped out of the medals entirely, and only took the podium by 0.01 seconds ahead of Great Britain.

American beach volleyball players Kelly Claes and Sarah Sponcil dispatched Kenya in just 25 minutes, the fastest women's match since the Olympics adopted their current format.

The U.S. pair beat Brackcides Khadambi and Gaudencia Makokha 21-8, 21-6 to improve to 2-0 and almost certainly clinch a spot in the knockout round of 16. They have one match remaining, against Brazil on Saturday.

The match was the fastest since the international volleyball federation adopted the rally scoring and best-of-three sets format in 2002.

## MEDAL ALERT

Ireland's duo of Fintan McCarthy and Paul O'Donovan held off a late charge from Germany's Jonathan Rommelmann and Jason Osborne to win the gold medal in men's lightweight double sculls.

The Irish boat looked secure through the first 1,000 meters before the Germans closed the gap with 500 to go and threatened to pull even.

A late surge over the final 200 meters sent the Irish to the win by 0.86 seconds.

Italy's Stefano Oppo and Pietro Ruta won bronze.

## MEDAL ALERT

New Zealand's Grace Pendergrast and Kerri Gowler have won gold in the rowing women's pair.

The Kiwi duo won the world championship in 2019 and were favored to grab victory in Tokyo. They are just the third non-European team to win the Olympic event and the first since 1996.

Russia's Vasilisia Stepanova and Elena Oriabinskaia surged past Canada's Cailleigh Filmer and Hillary Janssens over the final 300 meters to take the silver medal. Canada won bronze.

## MEDAL ALERT

Croatian brothers Martin and Valent Sinkovic have dominated the men's pair in Olympic rowing, cruising to victory in a race they led from the start.

The Croatians were the heavy favorites. They won double sculls in 2016, then switched boat disciplines and won two world championships before claiming another Olympic gold medal. They are the first men to win Olympic gold in both double sculls and the sweep pairs.

Romania's duo of Marius Cozmiuc and Ciprian Tudosas won silver. Denmark's Frederic Vystavel and Joachim Sutton won bronze.

## German court faults Facebook's past handling of hate speech

BERLIN (AP) — A German federal court on Thursday faulted aspects of Facebook's handling of "hate speech," at least in the past. It ruled that the social network giant can't delete posts without at least informing users afterward, and must give users advance notice when it moves to suspend their accounts.

The Federal Court of Justice considered two cases dating back to August 2018 in which Facebook de-



leted comments taking aim at Muslim migrants and people of immigrant origin and suspended the users' accounts. It ordered the company to restore the posts.

The court found that Facebook wasn't entitled to delete the posts and suspend the accounts under its April 2018 conditions of use, which barred users from violating "community standards" and banned "hate speech," which it did not define more precisely. It said that "users of the network are inappropriately disadvantaged, contrary to the requirement of good faith."

Facebook is entitled in principle to set standards that go above and beyond legal requirements and to reserve the right to delete posts and suspend accounts, the court said. But it must commit itself to informing a user at least after the event about the removal of a post, and to giving advance notice of plans to suspend an account — giving the user a reason for the suspension and the possibility to respond.

Facebook said in an emailed response that it welcomes the federal court's ruling that it is entitled in principle to remove content according to its own policies and to suspend the accounts concerned.

"We will examine the decision of the Federal Court of Justice carefully to ensure that we can continue to act effectively against hate speech in Germany," it said.

## Infrastructure deal: Senate suddenly acts to take up bill

By LISA MASCARO, KEVIN FREKING and ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate has voted to begin work on a nearly \$1 trillion national infrastructure plan, acting with sudden speed after weeks of fits and starts once the White House and a bipartisan group of senators agreed on major provisions of the package that's key to President Joe Biden's agenda.

Biden welcomed the accord as one that would show America can "do big things." It includes the most significant long-term investments in nearly a century, he said, on par with building the transcontinental railroad or the Interstate highway system.

"This deal signals to the world that our democracy can function," Biden said ahead of the vote Wednesday night. "We will once again transform America and propel us into the future."

After weeks of stop-and-go negotiations, the rare bipartisan showing on a 67-32 vote to start formal Senate consideration showed the high interest among senators in the infrastructure package. But it's unclear if enough Republicans will eventually join Democrats to support final passage.

Senate rules require 60 votes in the evenly split 50-50 chamber to proceed for consideration and ultimately pass this bill, meaning support from both parties.

The outcome will set the stage for the next debate over Biden's much more ambitious \$3.5 trillion spending package, a strictly partisan pursuit of far-reaching programs and services including child care, tax breaks and health care that touch almost every corner of American life. Republicans strongly oppose that bill, which would require a simple majority, and may try to stop both.

Lead GOP negotiator Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio announced the bipartisan group's agreement on the \$1 trillion package earlier Wednesday at the Capitol, flanked by four other Republican senators who had been in talks with Democrats and the White House.

After voting, Portman said the outcome showed that bipartisanship in Washington can work and he believed GOP support would only grow. "That's pretty darn good for a start," he said.

That group had labored with the White House to salvage the deal, a first part of Biden's big infrastructure agenda. Swelling to more than 700 pages, the bill includes \$550 billion in new spending for public works projects.

In all, 17 Republican senators joined the Democrats in voting to launch the debate, but most remained skeptical. The GOP senators were given a thick binder of briefing materials during a private lunch, but they asked many questions and wanted more details.

According to a 57-page GOP summary obtained by The Associated Press, the five-year spending package would be paid for by tapping \$205 billion in unspent COVID-19 relief aid and \$53 billion in unemployment insurance aid some states have halted. It also relies on economic growth to bring in \$56 billion, and other measures.

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Giving Wednesday night's vote a boost, Senate GOP leader Mitch McConnell announced late in the day he would vote to proceed, though whether he will support the final bill remains uncertain. The Republican negotiators met with McConnell earlier Wednesday and Portman said the leader "all along has been encouraging our efforts."

Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, a lead Democratic negotiator who talks often with Republicans also spoke with Biden on Wednesday and said she hoped the results showed "our government can work."

Democrats, who have slim control of the House and Senate, face a timeline to act on what would be some of the most substantial pieces of legislation in years.

Filling in the details has become a month-long exercise ever since a bipartisan group of senators struck an agreement with Biden in June over the broad framework.

The new spending in the package dropped from about \$600 billion to \$550 billion, senators said, as money was eliminated for a public-private infrastructure bank and was reduced in other categories, including transit.

The package still includes \$110 billion for highways, \$65 billion for broadband and \$73 billion to modernize the nation's electric grid, according to a White House fact sheet.

Additionally, there's \$25 billion for airports, \$55 billion for waterworks and more than \$50 billion to bolster infrastructure against cyberattacks and climate change. There's also \$7.5 billion for electric vehicle charging stations.

Paying for the package has been a slog throughout the talks after Democrats rejected a plan to bring in funds by hiking the gas tax drivers pay at the pump and Republicans dashed an effort to boost the IRS to go after tax scofflaws.

Along with repurposing the COVID-19 relief and unemployment aid, other revenue would come from the sale of broadcast spectrum, reinstating fees that chemical companies used to pay for cleaning up the nation's worst hazardous waste sites and drawing \$49 billion from reversing a Trump-era pharmaceutical rebate, among other sources.

The final deal could run into political trouble if it doesn't pass muster as fully paid for when the Congressional Budget Office assesses the details. But Portman said the package will be "more than paid for."

House Democrats have their own transportation bill, which includes much more spending to address rail transit, electric vehicles and other strategies to counter climate change.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi did not commit to supporting the package until she sees the details, but said Wednesday she's "rooting for it."

Pelosi said, "I very much want it to pass."

A recent poll from The Associated Press-NORC found 8 in 10 Americans favor some increased infrastructure spending.

Senators in the bipartisan group have been huddling privately for months. The group includes 10 core negotiators, split evenly between Democrats and Republicans, but has swelled at times to 22.

Transit funding has remained a stubborn dispute, as most Republican senators come from rural states where highways dominate and public transit is scarce, while Democrats view transit as a priority for cities and a key to easing congestion and fighting climate change.

Expanding access to broadband, which has become ever more vital for households during the coronavirus pandemic, sparked a new debate. Republicans pushed back against imposing regulations on internet service providers in a program that helps low-income people pay for service.

Meanwhile, Democrats are readying the broader \$3.5 trillion package that is being considered under budget rules that allow passage with 51 senators in the split Senate, with Vice President Kamala Harris able to break a tie. It would be paid for by increasing the corporate tax rate and the tax rate on Americans earning more than \$400,000 a year.

## Officials in Tokyo alarmed as virus cases hit record highs

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

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TOKYO (AP) — Japanese officials sounded the alarm Thursday as Tokyo reported record-breaking coronavirus cases for the third-straight day with the Olympics well underway.

Tokyo reported 3,865 new cases Thursday, up from 3,177 on Wednesday and double the numbers a week ago.

"We have never experienced the expansion of the infections of this magnitude," Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato told reporters. He said the new cases were soaring not only in the Tokyo area but across the country.

Nationwide, Japan reported more than 9,500 confirmed cases on Wednesday, also a record, for a total of about 892,000 infections and about 15,000 deaths since the pandemic began.

Japan has kept its cases and deaths lower than many other countries, but its seven-day rolling average is growing and now stands at 28 per 100,000 people nationwide and 88 per 100,000 in Tokyo, according to the Health Ministry. This compares to 18.5 in the United States, 48 in Britain and 2.8 in India, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

"While almost nothing is helping to slow the infections, there are many factors that can accelerate them," said Dr. Shigeru Omi, a top government medical adviser, noting the Olympics and summer vacation. "The biggest risk is the lack of a sense of crisis, and without it the infections will further expand and put medical systems under severe strain."

Tokyo has been under its fourth state of emergency since July 12, ahead of the Olympics, which began last Friday despite widespread public opposition and concern that they could worsen the outbreak.

People are still roaming the streets despite stay-at-home requests, making the emergency measures largely ineffective at a time the more infectious delta strain is spreading.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said his government will decide Friday whether to expand the emergency measures. The government is expected to extend Tokyo's emergency until Aug. 31 and add the capital's three neighboring areas and Osaka, local media reported.

Suga defended his virus measures and denied the Olympics had anything to do with the record surge.

Tokyo officials said Thursday that two foreign Olympic athletes are currently hospitalized and 38 others are self-isolating at designated hotels in the city.

Gov. Yuriko Koike urged the organizers to make sure not to burden Tokyo's hospitals.

Japan's vaccine minister, Taro Kono, said in an interview with The Associated Press on Wednesday that there is no evidence of the coronavirus spreading from Olympic participants to the general public.

"I don't think there have been any cases related to the Olympic Games. So we aren't worried about that issue," he said.

Koike said the medical system was under severe stress, and noted that experts have projected cases in Tokyo could exceed 4,500 a day by mid-August.

Koike noted that adults in their 30s or younger dominate recent cases and reminded them of following basic anti-virus measures including mask-wearing and avoiding having parties.

"I would like young people to be aware that the delta strain is a very tough, dangerous enemy," she said.

She also urged those below 64, who are largely unvaccinated, to get their shots as soon as their turn comes.

As of Wednesday, 26.3% of the Japanese population has been fully vaccinated. The percentage of the elderly who are fully vaccinated is 70%, or 24.8 million people.

Dr. Norio Ohmagari, director of the Disease Control and Prevention Center, said Tokyo's surge is "heading toward an explosive expansion we have never experienced before."

Dr. Masataka Inokuchi, another expert on the Tokyo metropolitan COVID-19 panel, said the rapid increase of patients is beginning to force hospitals to postpone scheduled surgical operations and reduce other treatment. Thousands of people who tested positive are now staying at home or designated hotels while waiting for hospital beds.

**Today in History**

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By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, July 30, the 211th day of 2021. There are 154 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 30, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed a measure creating Medicare, which began operating the following year.

On this date:

In 1619, the first representative assembly in America convened in Jamestown in the Virginia Colony.

In 1864, during the Civil War, Union forces tried to take Petersburg, Virginia, by exploding a gunpowder-laden mine shaft beneath Confederate defense lines; the attack failed.

In 1908, the first round-the-world automobile race, which had begun in New York in February, ended in Paris with the drivers of the American car, a Thomas Flyer, declared the winners over teams from Germany and Italy.

In 1916, German saboteurs blew up a munitions plant on Black Tom, an island near Jersey City, New Jersey, killing about a dozen people.

In 1945, the Portland class heavy cruiser USS Indianapolis, having just delivered components of the atomic bomb to Tinian in the Mariana Islands, was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine; only 317 out of nearly 1,200 men survived.

In 1956, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a measure making "In God We Trust" the national motto, replacing "E Pluribus Unum" (Out of many, one).

In 1975, former Teamsters union president Jimmy Hoffa disappeared in suburban Detroit; although presumed dead, his remains have never been found.

In 1980, Israel's Knesset passed a law reaffirming all of Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish state.

In 2001, Robert Mueller (MUHL'-ur), President George W. Bush's choice to head the FBI, promised the Senate Judiciary Committee that if confirmed, he would move forcefully to fix problems at the agency. (Mueller became FBI director on Sept. 4, 2001, a week before the 9/11 attacks.)

In 2003, President George W. Bush took personal responsibility for the first time for using discredited intelligence in his State of the Union address, but predicted he would be vindicated for going to war against Iraq.

In 2008, ex-Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic (RA'-doh-van KA'-ra-jich) was extradited to The Hague to face genocide charges after nearly 13 years on the run. (He was sentenced by a U.N. court in 2019 to life imprisonment after being convicted of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.)

In 2010, the Afghan Taliban confirmed the death of longtime leader Mullah Mohammad Omar and appointed his successor, Mullah Akhtar Mansoor.

Ten years ago: NATO jets bombed three Libyan state TV satellite transmitters in Tripoli, targeting a propaganda tool in Moammar Gadhafi's fight against rebels.

Five years ago: Sixteen people died when a hot air balloon caught fire and exploded after hitting high-tension power lines before crashing into a pasture near Lockhart, Texas, about 60 miles northeast of San Antonio.

One year ago: John Lewis was eulogized in Atlanta by three former presidents and others who urged Americans to continue the work of the civil rights icon in fighting injustice during a moment of racial reckoning. Herman Cain, a former Republican presidential candidate and former CEO of a pizza chain who became an ardent supporter of President Donald Trump, died in Atlanta of complications from the coronavirus at the age of 74; he was hospitalized less than two weeks after attending Trump's campaign rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where he was photographed not wearing a mask. Trump floated the idea of delaying the Nov. 3 presidential election, an idea that met immediate resistance from Republicans in Congress. The government reported that the coronavirus pandemic sent the economy plunging by a record-shattering 32.9% annual rate in the second quarter. The NBA season resumed for 22 teams inside a "bubble" at Walt Disney World in Florida, with no fans in attendance and with strict health and safety protocols in effect.

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Today's Birthdays: Former Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig is 87. Blues musician Buddy Guy is 85. Movie director Peter Bogdanovich is 82. Feminist activist Eleanor Smeal is 82. Former U.S. Rep. Patricia Schroeder is 81. Singer Paul Anka is 80. Jazz musician David Sanborn is 76. Former California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is 74. Actor William Atherton is 74. Actor Jean Reno (zhahn rih-NOH') is 73. Blues singer-musician Otis Taylor is 73. Actor Frank Stallone is 71. Actor Ken Olin is 67. Actor Delta Burke is 65. Law professor Anita Hill is 65. Singer-songwriter Kate Bush is 63. Country singer Neal McCoy is 63. Actor Richard Burgi is 63. Movie director Richard Linklater is 61. Actor Laurence Fishburne is 60. Actor Lisa Kudrow is 58. Bluegrass musician Danny Roberts (The Grascals) is 58. Country musician Dwayne O'Brien is 58. Actor Vivica A. Fox is 57. Actor Terry Crews is 53. Actor Simon Baker is 52. Actor Donnie Keshawarz is 52. Movie director Christopher Nolan is 51. Actor Tom Green is 50. Rock musician Brad Hargreaves (Third Eye Blind) is 50. Actor Christine Taylor is 50. Actor-comedian Dean Edwards is 48. Actor Hilary Swank is 47. Olympic gold medal beach volleyball player Misty May-Treanor is 44. Actor Jaime Pressly is 44. Alt-country singer-musician Seth Avett (AY'-veht) is 41. Actor April Bowlby is 41. Former soccer player Hope Solo is 40. Actor Yvonne Strahovski is 39. Actor Martin Starr is 39. Actor Gina Rodriguez is 37. Actor Nico Tortorella is 33. Actor Joey King is 22.