

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 1 of 75

- [1- Truss Pros Help Wanted Ad](#)
- [1- City Council Story](#)
- [2- State B American Legion Baseball Tournament](#)
- [2- JVT Annual meeting ad](#)
- [3- Avera St. Luke's continues outreach vaccination efforts throughout August](#)
- [4- The Life of Donald E. Helmer](#)
- [5- Controlling Grasshoppers, Salvaging Drought Corn Kick Off August Drought Hours](#)
- [6- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [7- Weather Pages](#)
- [10- Daily Devotional](#)
- [11- 2021 Community Events](#)
- [12- News from the Associated Press](#)



## Water rate proposal to increase by 25¢/1000 gallons

WEB Water has announced to its customers that it plans to increase its rates for the third time in as many years. The council will consider a first reading on the water rate ordinance at its next meeting, reflecting about 25 cents per 1,000 gallons of water used increase. WEB Water raised its rates by 24 cents per 1,000 gallons. In addition, there is a 55 cent per 1,000 gallon increase for any water the city uses over its contracted rate with WEB.

The city was presented with a Drinking Water Excellence Award for the 20th consecutive year. It recognizes the fact that the city has provided safe drinking water to its citizens.

The second reading was passed in regarding the issuance of local medical cannabis establishment permits and/or licenses.



**HOW HIRING!**

## Day shift and night shift assemblers!

**Competitive starting wage  
with monthly tier increases!  
Full benefit package!**

**To apply:  
[www.uslbm.com/careers](http://www.uslbm.com/careers) or  
call Diane at 605-448-2929**



**TRUSS PROS**  
A Division of 



**Precision  
Wall Systems**  
A Division of 

## Britton

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

## State B American Legion Championship Game

### Redfield Falls To Tabor After Intense High-Scoring Game

Bats were blistered on Tuesday, but Redfield Post 92 couldn't quite get the job done against Tabor Post 183 and lost 10-6.

Redfield Post 92 opened up an early lead in the second inning when Peyton Osborn doubled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring two runs.

After Tabor Post 183 scored two runs in the top of the fourth, Redfield Post 92 answered with two of their own. Tabor Post 183 scored when Kaleb Kubal doubled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring one run and Dawson Bietz grounded out, scoring one run.

Tabor Post 183 took the lead for good with four runs in the third inning. In the third Dustin Honomichl doubled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring two runs and Nate Scieszinski singled on a 2-2 count, scoring two runs.

Trent Herrboldt earned the win for Tabor Post 183. Herrboldt allowed two hits and one run over three and a third innings, striking out two.

Camden Osborn took the loss for Redfield Post 92. The bulldog surrendered five runs on seven hits over two and a third innings, striking out two and walking one.

Carter Uecker started the game for Tabor Post 183. The bulldog surrendered five runs on eight hits over three and two-thirds innings, striking out three

Redfield Post 92 collected ten hits. Osborn, Osborn, and Cooper Hainy each collected multiple hits for Redfield Post 92. Osborn led Redfield Post 92 with four hits in four at bats.

Tabor Post 183 tallied 13 hits in the game. Herrboldt, Honomichl, Kubal, and Riley Rothschadl all collected multiple hits for Tabor Post 183.

"Powered by Narrative Science and GameChanger Media. Copyright 2021. All rights reserved."

## 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

## **Avera St. Luke's continues outreach vaccination efforts throughout August**

ABERDEEN, S.D. – Avera St. Luke's Hospital continues to offer both the Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines on a regular basis. Additionally, the hospital has coordinated several outreach pop-up vaccination clinics, including clinics at the Brown County Fair, Northern State University and Presentation College.

"As health care continues to change, we know the importance of meeting people where they are. Adding these outreach vaccination clinics provide a convenience to a demographic our vaccine efforts have not yet reached," said Alvin Haugen, Director of Pharmacy and Avera St. Luke's Vaccine Coordinator.

Avera will offer vaccines at the First Aid Station at the Brown County Fair on Thursday, August 19 from 2 to 6 p.m. The Avera mobile unit will be located between the Home Arts Building and the Expo building.

A vaccine clinic will also be held at the Groton Township Building in Centennial Village on Saturday, August 21 from 2 to 6 p.m. Centennial Village will be offering a free beverage to those choosing to be vaccinated during the event, as well as drawing for prizes.

Walk-ins are accepted for both clinics during the fair. Those wanting to guarantee a Pfizer or Johnson & Johnson vaccine or time can schedule by calling 605-622-5273. Anyone that shows proof of vaccination may also enter for a door prize from Avera.

Presentation College is hosting two Avera vaccine clinics for its students, faculty and staff only. Both are in the college's Student Union as follows:

- 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Aug. 13
- 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Aug. 30

Northern State University will host Avera vaccination clinic from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Aug. 27. NSU's vaccine clinic will be open to the public.

At each of these events, Avera will offer both the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine and a first dose of the Pfizer vaccine. Those that receive the Pfizer vaccine will need to schedule a second dose. Those 18 and older are eligible to receive the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Anyone 12 years old and older may receive the Pfizer vaccine.

For any clinic, those being vaccinated will complete a form that is also available here. Because of changes with state funding, staff may also ask for insurance cards. Vaccines remain free, and insurance is not needed in order to get vaccinated.

Everyone getting vaccinated will take part in a 15-minute observation period. Those that have risk factors will be required to be observed for 30 minutes.

Vaccine appointments for additional clinics at State Street Medical Square may be made by calling 605-622-5273. Those clinics are held Wednesdays from 2-5 p.m. and Thursdays from 9-11 a.m.

While those clinics are smaller than earlier vaccination clinics, they have been consistently filling up and there remains interest in getting the COVID-19 vaccine, Haugen said.

"In fact, these clinics continue to exceed our expectations with the quantity of vaccines we are administering weekly," he said. "These clinics were originally set up to accommodate at least 30 doses, and we've had some that have been double that number."

The vaccine coordination team believes the interest continues to remain steady as more and more people are finding value in getting vaccinated and as children are preparing to go back to school. COVID-19 positivity rates among the unvaccinated are projected to increase for the first time since this spring. More recently, 90% of hospital admissions and deaths nationwide are among those unvaccinated. The Delta variant is more than 80% of those cases.

"A safe and effective vaccine is a vital step toward ending the COVID-19 pandemic," Haugen said.

Since the end of December 2020, Avera St. Luke's Hospital has completed almost 100 vaccine clinics, administering nearly 20,000 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

You can learn more about Avera's vaccination efforts, including information on other vaccination clinics, at [Avera.org/covid19](https://Avera.org/covid19).

## The Life of Donald E. Helmer

Donald E. Helmer, 90, Cibolo, Texas, and formerly Andover, SD, died Thursday, July 22, 2021 in San Antonio, Texas.



Donald Eugene Helmer was born February 10, 1931, Webster, SD, to Henry W.F. and Mabel (Wilmsen) Helmer, Andover, SD. He was raised on the farm, where he did chores with his eight siblings. He graduated from Andover High School in 1949 and went to work in the Groton, SD, bank. And soon he received his draft notice. Not wanting to join the Army, he instead enlisted in the United States Air Force. Upon returning home from his service, he was asked back to work at the Groton bank. Deciding he didn't want to work in the bank the rest of his life, he reenlisted in the USAF and made it a career. He retired October 31, 1984 as a Colonel in the Air Force with the 47th Flying Training Wing at the Laughlin Air Force Base, Del Rio, Texas.

He settled in Del Rio, bought a house and worked at part-time jobs. He later moved to Cibolo, Texas, where he bought a house. He corresponded with family often and visited his hometown, "the beautiful Andover, South Dakota" regularly. He ran in many 5K events around the country. He created and ran the Andover 5K Walk/Run in 2001, to assist with repairing the Andover Waldorf Hotel. He operated and participated in the annual event for several years. It was discontinued upon the demolition of the hotel.

He is survived by one sister, Joyce Skiles, Chattanooga, Tenn.; three sisters-in-law, Ilene Helmer, Andover, SD; LaVonne Helmer, Aberdeen, SD, and Norma Helmer, Groton, SD; many nieces and nephews; and friend, Christopher Kite, Texas.

Preceding him in death were his parents; three sisters, Dorothy Sundermeyer, Beatrice Tobin and Barbara Guthmiller; four brothers, Leon, Richard, Orville and Norman; one sister-in-law, Shirley Helmer; four brothers-in-law, William Sundermeyer, James Tobin, Myron Guthmiller and Gwin Skiles; one niece, Sharon Sundermeyer; and two nephews, Scott Tobin and David Skiles.

Donald was cremated and his ashes scattered, according to his wishes.



## Controlling Grasshoppers, Salvaging Drought Corn Kick Off August Drought Hours

Brookings, S.D. - The drought's footprint continues to expand across South Dakota, as periodic heat waves impacted conditions over the last month. According to the latest U.S. Drought Monitor, nearly 18% of the state is in Extreme Drought (D3), while another 70% follows as Severe Drought (D2).

"On Aug. 1, the U.S. Department of Agriculture rated topsoil moisture 84% short to very short in South Dakota. Rangeland and pastures were also rated 84% very poor to poor across the state," says South Dakota State University (SDSU) Extension State Climatologist Laura Edwards. "The country's spring wheat crop was rated just 9% good to excellent with 64% very poor to poor. South Dakota, being in the heart of spring wheat country, has been setback severely due to the conditions, with 84% rated poor to very poor."

This August, SDSU Extension will continue its virtual educational program series, Drought Hour. From 11 a.m. to noon CDT, participants are invited to join the online conversation and stay ahead of drought impacts with climate updates, business insights and the latest research-tested management tips for farms, ranches and properties of all sizes.

Drought Hour will be featured on the following Mondays during the month and will cover a variety of production topics:

### Aug. 9

- "Grasshoppers, Spidermites and Blister Beetles," Adam Varenhorst, Assistant Professor and SDSU Extension Field Crop Entomologist
- "Making Lemons into Lemonade: Salvaging Drought Corn," Warren Rusche, SDSU Extension Beef Feedlot Management Associate and Sara Bauder, SDSU Extension Agronomy Field Specialist

### Aug. 23

- "2021 Growing Season Drought and Climate Update," Laura Edwards, SDSU Extension
- "August Look at Crop and Forage Prices," Jack Davis, SDSU Extension Crops Business Management Field Specialist

### Aug. 30

- "Meeting Nutritional Needs through Various Management Strategies: Fence-line Weaning and Grazing Standing Corn," Julie Walker, Professor and SDSU Extension Beef Specialist

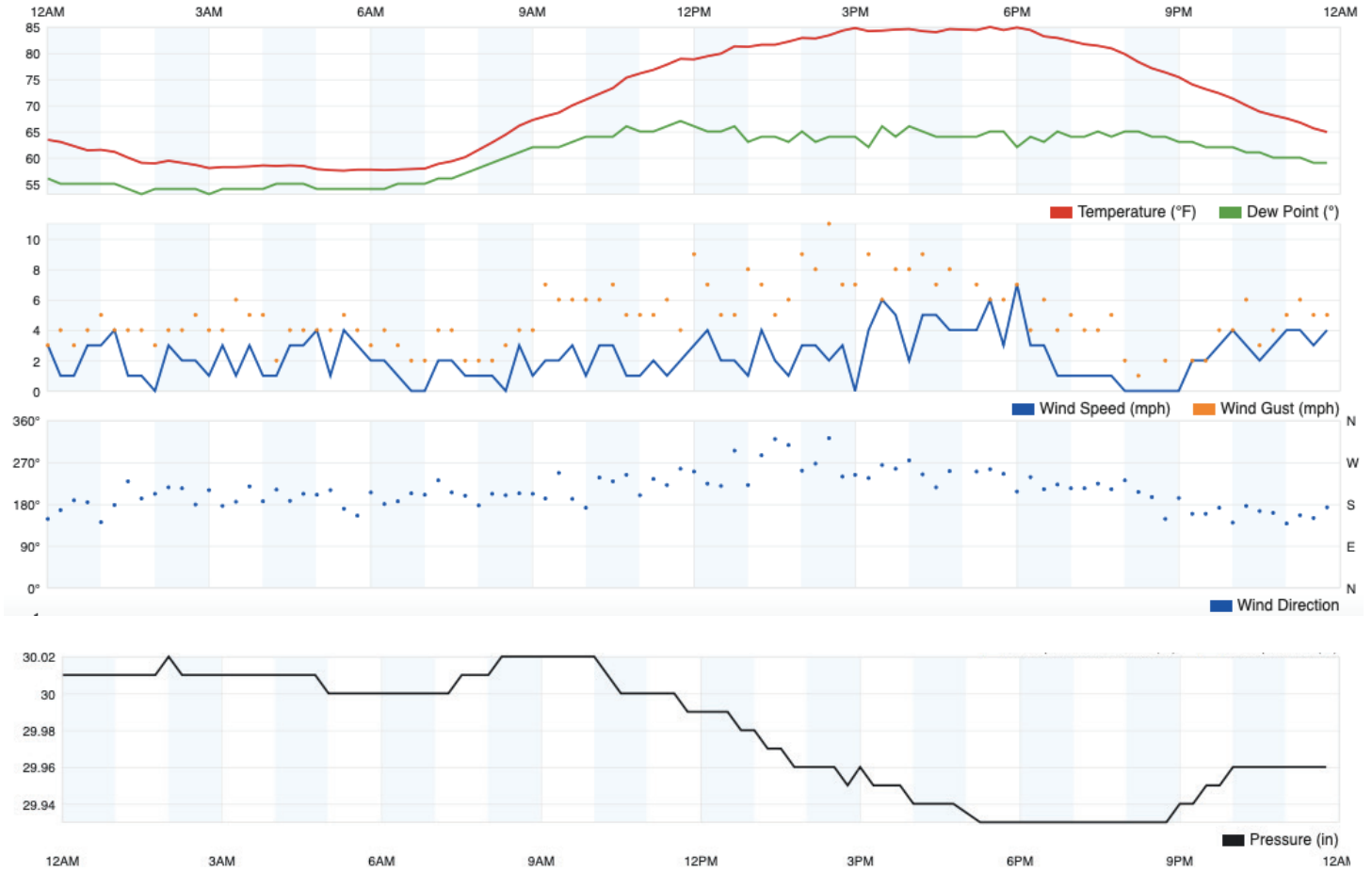
There is no fee to attend, but participants will need to register for the weekly webinars on the SDSU Extension Events page ([extension.sdstate.edu/events](https://extension.sdstate.edu/events)). Confirmation Zoom links and reminders will be emailed to attendees.

In addition to the weekly webinar series, SDSU Extension has devoted an entire page on the Extension website to addressing drought concerns ([extension.sdstate.edu/drought](https://extension.sdstate.edu/drought)). To receive regular updates and the latest resources on drought conditions, South Dakotans are also encouraged to subscribe to Extension's newsletters ([extension.sdstate.edu/about/newsletters](https://extension.sdstate.edu/about/newsletters)).

# Groton Daily Independent






Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 6 of 75

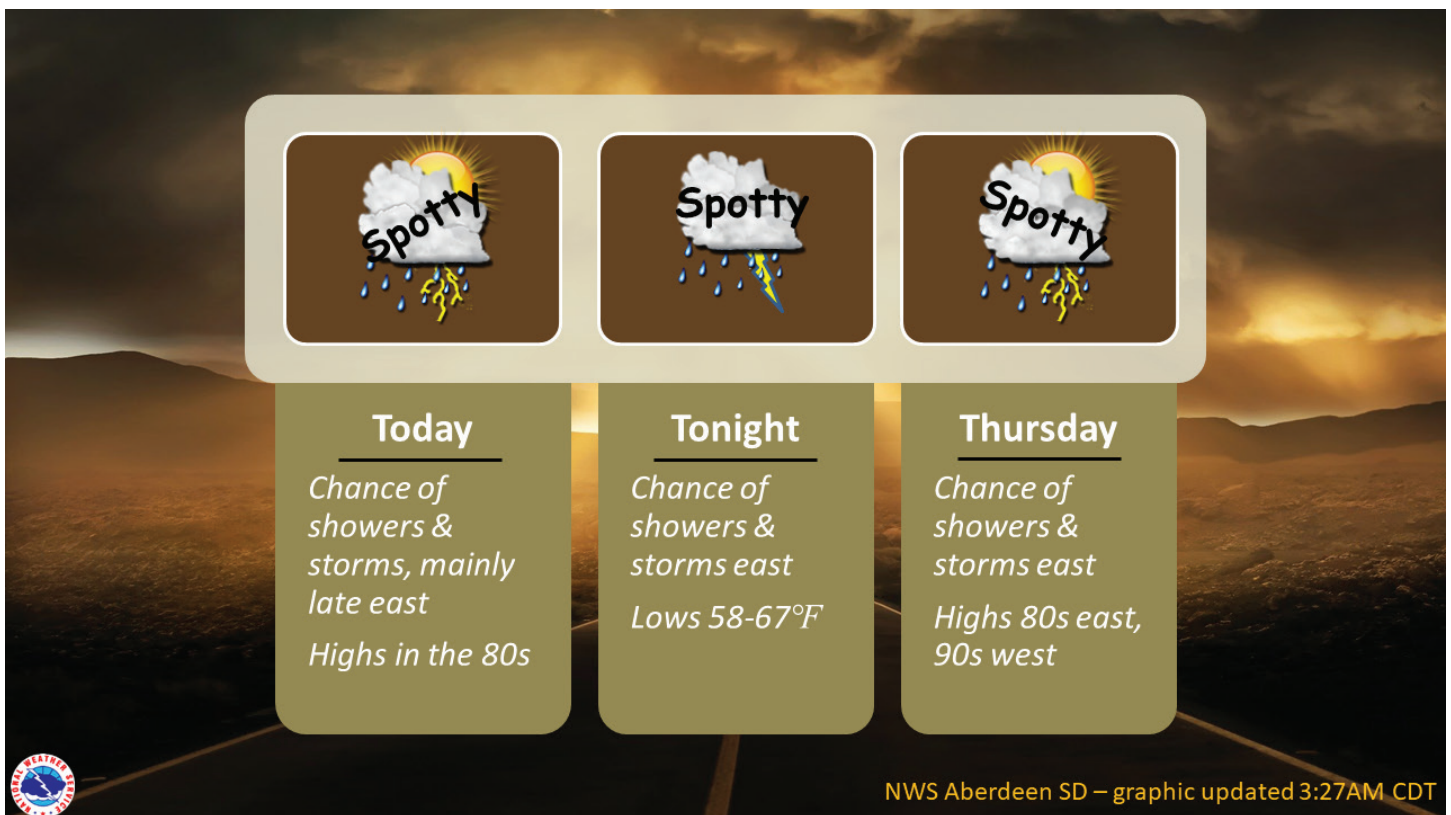
## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 7 of 75

Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
				
Partly Sunny	Chance T-storms	Mostly Sunny then Slight Chance T-storms	Slight Chance T-storms then Mostly Clear	Sunny
High: 85 °F	Low: 63 °F	High: 86 °F	Low: 59 °F	High: 86 °F



**Today**  
Chance of showers & storms, mainly late east  
Highs in the 80s

**Tonight**  
Chance of showers & storms east  
Lows 58-67°F

**Thursday**  
Chance of showers & storms east  
Highs 80s east, 90s west

NWS Aberdeen SD – graphic updated 3:27AM CDT

A system aloft will move across the region through Thursday. Showers and thunderstorms are possible, first over the Missouri valley, spreading east through tonight. A few showers may linger in the east on Thursday. #sdwx #mnwx

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 8 of 75

## Today in Weather History

August 4, 1960: At Draper in Jones County, three-inch hail caused substantial damage to roofs, building windows and automobiles. Losses estimated at 100,000 dollars. About 1,000 chickens and turkeys killed on nearby farms.

August 4, 2000: Tennis ball size hail along with high winds caused a lot of damage throughout Selby. Many east and north windows were broken along with many vehicle's windshields. Also, many cars were dented, house siding was damaged, gardens were destroyed, and many acres of crops around Selby were destroyed. Softball hail broke windows and caused extensive damage to a few vehicles and homes west of Faulkton. Baseball size hail and high winds had broken out about every window on all of the buildings at the Brentwood Colony in Edmunds County. The large hail and strong winds also damaged many of the buildings.

1882 - A vivid aurora was visible from Oregon to Maine, down the east coast as far as Mayport FL, and inland as far as Wellington KS. Observers at Louisville KY noted merry dancers across the sky, and observers at Saint Vincent, MN, noted it was probably the most brilliant ever seen at that location. (The Weather Channel)

1930 - The temperature at Moorefield, WV, soared to 112 degrees to establish a state record, having reached 110 degrees the previous day. Widespread drought after April of that year caused some towns to haul water for domestic use, and many manufacturing plants were barely operational. (The Weather Channel)

1961 - Spokane, WA, reached an all-time record high of 108 degrees. Kalispell, MT, set an all-time record with a reading of 105 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1980 - A record forty-two consecutive days of 100 degree heat finally came to an end at the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport. July 1980 proved to be the hottest month of record with a mean temperature of 92 degrees. There was just one day of rain in July, and there was no measurable rain in August. There were 18 more days of 100 degree heat in August, and four in September. Hot weather that summer contributed to the deaths of 1200 people nationally, and losses from the heat across the country were estimated at twenty billion dollars. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A cold front brought relief from the heat to a large part of the Midwest, while hot weather continued in the south central and eastern U.S. Morning thunderstorms in Nebraska deluged the town of Dalton with 8.71 inches of rain, along with hail three inches in diameter, which accumulated up to four feet deep near the town of Dix. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from eastern Iowa to Lower Michigan during the afternoon and evening hours, producing golf ball size hail and spawning several tornadoes. A thunderstorm at Maquoketa, IA, produced wind gusts to 75 mph. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from eastern Nebraska and northeastern Kansas to the Great Lakes Region, with 150 reports of large hail or damaging winds during the afternoon, evening, and nighttime hours. Thunderstorms produced tennis ball size hail at Claremont, MN, and wind gusts to 75 mph at Milwaukee, WI. Thunderstorms representing what once was Hurricane Chantal produced five inches of rain at Grant, MI, and deluged Chicago, IL, with more than three inches of rain in three hours. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2008: Severe storms moved across northern Illinois and Indiana with tornadoes and stiff winds reported. With tornado sirens blaring, the game at Wrigley Field between Cubs and Astros was stopped as fans were told to evacuate to the lower concourse. Passengers at O'Hare International Airport were evacuated to lower levels of buildings as well. An estimated 350 flights were canceled.

2009: The strongest tornado to hit Quebec since the same date in 1994 ripped through Mont-Laurier. The F2 tornado tore through the small western Quebec town severely damaging about 40 homes. Two men were taken to the hospital with minor injuries.



# Groton Daily Independent

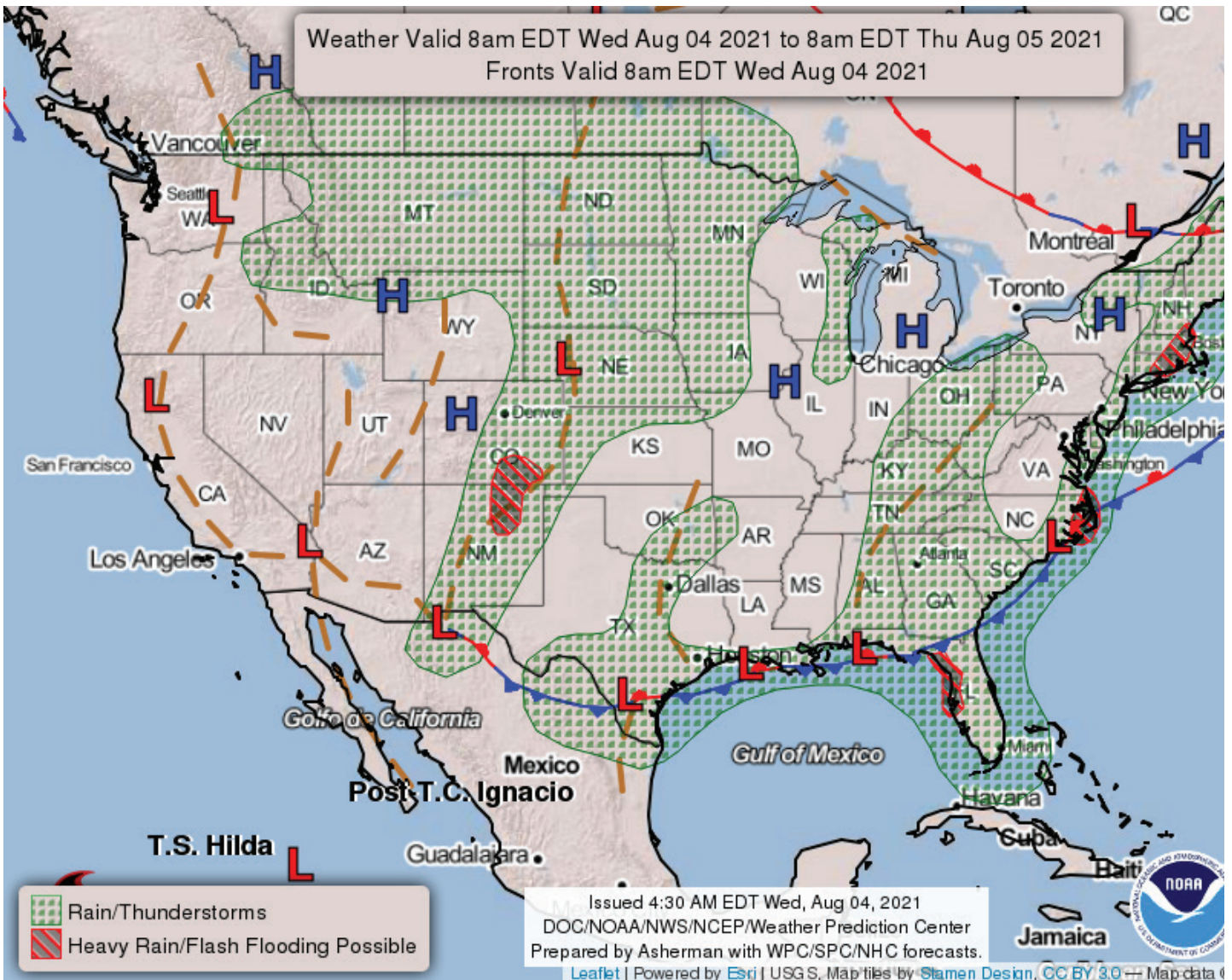
Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 9 of 75

## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 85.0 °F at 5:30 PM**  
**Low Temp: 57.5 °F at 5:30 AM**  
**Wind: 11 mph at 2:30 PM**  
**Precip: 0.00**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 107° in 1934**  
**Record Low: 42° in 1978,2017**  
**Average High: 85°F**  
**Average Low: 59°F**  
**Average Precip in Aug.:** 0.22  
**Precip to date in July.:** 2.52  
**Average Precip to date:** 14.32  
**Precip Year to Date:** 7.27  
**Sunset Tonight:** 8:57 p.m.  
**Sunrise Tomorrow:** 6:23 a.m.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 10 of 75



## KINGDOM WORK

What happens when God's people do God's work? Can what we do provide evidence to His mercy and grace? Can those around us actually see Him by what we do?

The Psalmist said that "Surely His salvation is near those who fear Him, that His glory may dwell in our land."

In other words, when people become born again – accept God's salvation through faith in Christ – there will be evidence of God's Kingdom on earth. Christians will busy themselves in working with the needy, bring hope and help to those who are suffering, seek justice for those who are wronged, and establish rules that are just and fair.

In Psalm 85:11 we read, "Faithfulness (to God's Word) will spring forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven." If we believe in the Word of God, we are to live in obedience to the Word of God, and that means we are to do the work of God: we are to do whatever is within our abilities and power to establish His Kingdom on earth.

Whenever people's hearts are right with God, we see God-things happen. The abolition of slavery and the end of child labor followed a resurgence of faith in God. The Salvation Army came to life when General Booth was convicted that God called him to "bring God's love to the needy". Seeing children, who were neglected, ignorant and hungry burdened Robert Raikes to start "Sunday" school. Many educational and charitable institutions came into existence because God's people saw God's children in need and were convicted by His Spirit to do something about it. Good deeds and showing compassion are evidence that righteousness on earth comes from Heaven!

Prayer: Help us, Father, to see what You see and then become Your hands and feet on earth to show Your love. May we find a need and fill it! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Psalm 85:11 Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 11 of 75

## 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

### SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

01-09-17-27-34, Mega Ball: 24, Megaplier: 2

(one, nine, seventeen, twenty-seven, thirty-four; Mega Ball: twenty-four; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$179 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$211 million

### Pennington County drug bust net up to \$2.5 million in meth

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Pennington County authorities said Tuesday that a months-long investigation has turned up large quantities of drugs, including about 72 pounds of methamphetamine worth as much as \$2.5 million.

Narcotics task force officials said three search warrants also turned up approximately 10 pounds of cocaine, 6 pounds of heroin, 6,000 counterfeit fentanyl pills, \$150,000 in cash and 13 guns.

"This is a big bust — a big win for Pennington County," said Sgt. Casey Kenrick of the Unified Narcotics Task Force. "These drugs had a combined street value in the millions of dollars. It's important to get these drugs off our streets and hold the dealers responsible for the violence and addiction they perpetuate in our community."

No further information was released.

### Ex-Sturgis lawyer gets more than 2 years in prison for fraud

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A disbarred South Dakota lawyer who pleaded guilty to wire fraud and other counts for allegedly stealing nearly \$144,000 from a dead man's estate was sentenced to more than two years in prison and must repay the money she stole.

Rena Hymans of Vale, who practiced law in Sturgis, pleaded guilty to two counts of wire fraud, two counts of money laundering and one count of bank fraud.

Hymans allegedly deposited the inheritance into the trust account of the late Leo Drillig in May 2017 and was supposed to immediately transfer the money to Drillig, but did not. Drillig's cousin, Doris Powers Lauing, said Drillig was murdered in Germany. Lauing wanted to use the money to bury him with family. She said Drillig is now buried in a mass grave.

U.S. District Judge Jeffrey Viken sentenced Hymans to 30 months in jail with no supervised release and ordered her to pay restitution, the Rapid City Journal reported.

"You've been punished by the state bar, you're barred from practicing in federal courts," Viken said in his reasoning for the sentence.

Hymans told the court that she filed for bankruptcy and hopes to work toward repaying the money.

### Unruly air passenger from Florida facing multiple charges

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Florida woman is facing multiple charges after police say they took her off a plane at the Rapid City Regional Airport for exposing herself and becoming unruly.

According to police, an officer at the airport was notified Friday night of a disruptive passenger who was exposing herself to others on the plane. The officer says he could smell that she had been drinking. The officer told the 41-year-old Daytona Beach Shores woman he would escort her off the plane.

Police say when she pulled away and kicked the officer, additional officers arrived to take her out of the



airport. She is facing charges of disorderly conduct, indecent exposure, assaulting a law enforcement officer and unlawful occupancy, the Rapid City Journal reported.

The Federal Aviation Administration, there have been 3,615 unruly passenger reports in a year-to-date analysis, many of which are related to wearing face masks.

## **"Uuh-aaah!" Sport climbing's Ondra screams his way to top**

By JOHN MARSHALL AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Weightlifters are among the most vocal athletes at the Olympics, letting out screams as they lock out at the top of a lift: "ahhhhhh!"

Tennis players have long been known to be grunters, usually with some form of "ha-uh!" or "ha-ooah!"

The loudest vocalizations of the Tokyo Games may come from the grounds in one of the Olympic program's newest sports.

Adam Ondra is widely considered the best climber in the world and a gold medal favorite in sport climbing's Olympic debut.

He's also a bit of a yeller.

"It might sound bad, but it helps me," Ondra said.

Some scientific studies say he may be right.

Whatever it is, it's hard to argue with the results.

Ondra has become the rock star of rock climbing, a long-limbed, long-necked Czech who moves up sheer faces like a spider across a web.

The 28-year-old has tackled more of the world's most difficult climbs than anyone, scaling routes with names like Silence, Change and Pure Imagination — ascensions that leave even above-average climbers standing on the ground shaking their heads no.

Ondra also is arguably the world's best indoor climber, winning four world championships and finishing in the top three seven other times.

He may be the loudest, too.

There are other climbers known for their wall-echoing wails, like American Chris Sharma and German Olympian Alex Megos.

Ondra takes it to another octave, just as he does on the rock face.

His ascension of Silence 2017 is considered the hardest climb in the world, a 45-meter pitch curving up a wall in a Norwegian cave rated at 9c. Ondra originally dubbed the climb Project Hard before changing it to Silence.

He should have called it Loud.

A film crew was on hand to document the climb, following Ondra along as he pulled himself along by the fingertips, wedged into difficult positions, even hanging by one foot upside down. It also documented Ondra's cries echoing off the cave walls, a series of screams, growls and grunts punctuated by a shrieking "uuuh-aaah!" after clipping into the final bolt.

As Ondra's celebrity has risen with his climbs up rock walls, his audible exaltations have become part of popular culture, turned into ringtones, GIFs and mashups with songs. A compilation of his screams has been mixed with metal music and another person inserted his shrieks into Taylor Swift's "I Knew You Were Trouble."

"If I'm focused on a certain move and I scream, I know I'm 100% breathing out," he said.

Ondra is onto something in that aspect.

Tennis players have been grunting for years to add power and rhythm to their strokes. Screaming, shrieking and grunting has infiltrated other sports as athletes try to find any extra edge.

There's some science behind it.

A 2014 study published in the International Journal of Exercise Science had 30 people squeeze a device three times and measured their grip strength as they vocalized, exhaled forcefully or breathed passively. It found compression power increased by 25% when they vocalized compared to 11% while just exhaling.

A second study in 2015 had 30 people jump forward as far as possible while exhaling forcefully and again while yelling. Those who yelled jumped about 5% farther.

Both studies, conducted at Drexel University, attributed the yell-induced power boosts to an increased response by the sympathetic nervous system, which governs the body's fight or flight response.

"The shrieking comes when I'm at my absolute limit," Ondra said.

Ondra was relatively quiet on the lead, speed and bouldering walls during qualifying Tuesday in Tokyo, his loudest vocalization coming after he tackled the first bouldering "problem" after multiple attempts.

Aomi Urban Sports Park, where sports climbing is being held, also isn't conducive to spectators getting a chance to hear Ondra scream, thanks to nonstop music and chatter between two public address hype/announcers alternating in different languages.

That could change if things heat up during Thursday's finals.

A gold medal on the line, Ondra could find himself in a tight spot on the wall, needing to muster up all his strength to contort his body while hanging from his fingertips.

Then it will come: "bah-bah-uhhhhhh-aaaaahhhh!"

## Mired in crises, Lebanon marks 1 year since horrific blast

By ZEINA KARAM Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Banks, businesses and government offices were shuttered Wednesday as Lebanon marks one year since the horrific explosion at the port of Beirut with a national day of mourning.

The grim anniversary comes amid an unprecedented economic and financial meltdown, and a political stalemate that has kept the country without a functioning government for a full year. United in grief and anger, families of the victims and other Lebanese were planning prayers and protests later in the day.

The explosion killed at least 214 people, according to official records, and injured thousands.

It was one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history — the result of hundreds of tons of ammonium nitrate igniting after a fire broke out. The explosion tore through the city with such force it caused a tremor across the entire country that was heard and felt as far away as the Mediterranean island of Cyprus more than 200 kilometers (180 miles) away.

It soon emerged in documents that the highly combustible nitrates had been haphazardly stored at a port warehouse alongside other flammable material since 2014, and that multiple high-level officials over the years knew of its presence and did nothing.

A year later, there has been no accountability, and the investigation has yet to answer questions such as who ordered the shipment of the chemicals and why officials ignored repeated internal warnings of their danger.

Families of the victims planned a memorial and prayers at the still wrecked site of the blast at Beirut port later in the day. Mass protests were also expected. A huge metal gavel with the words "Act for Justice" was placed on a wall opposite the port with its shredded grain silos, near the words "My government did this" scrawled in black.

Flags flew at half-staff over government institutions and embassies and even medical labs and COVID-19 vaccination centers were closed to mark the day. Reflecting the raw anger at the country's ruling class, posters assailing authorities were hung on the facade of defaced buildings across from the port.

"Here starts your end and our beginning," read one poster that took up the space of five floors of a high-rise. "Hostages of a murderous state," read another.

In an extensive investigative report about the blast, Human Rights Watch on Tuesday called for an international probe into the port blast, accusing Lebanese authorities of trying to thwart the investigation.

HRW said a lack of judicial independence, constitution-imposed immunity for high-level officials and a range of procedural and systemic flaws in the domestic investigation rendered it "incapable of credibly delivering justice."

"Since the 1960s we have not seen an official behind bars," said Pierre Gemayel, whose brother Yakoub was killed in his apartment in the explosion last year.

Taking part in a small protest outside the justice palace Wednesday, he said the refusal by the political class to lift immunity from senior officials accused of negligence that led to the blast is "proof of their collusion, and that their hands are tainted with blood."

The explosion — which destroyed and damaged thousands of homes and businesses — and the lack of accountability, have added to tensions and anguish in a country reeling from multiple crises, including an economic unraveling so severe it has been described by the World Bank as one of the worst in the last 150 years.

The crisis has led to a dramatic currency crash and hyperinflation, plunging more than half the country's population below the poverty line.

At the Vatican, Pope Francis recalled the suffering of the Lebanese people, as he held his first weekly audience with the public since surgery a month ago.

"A year after the terrible explosion in the port of Beirut, Lebanon's capital, that caused death and destruction, my thoughts go to that dear country, above all to the victims, to their families, to the many injured and all those who lost home and work," the pontiff said.

"And so many lost the illusion of living," he added.

## Olympics Latest: France's Mawem out of climbing with injury

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:

France's Bassa Mawem has pulled out of the sport climbing final at the Tokyo Olympics after rupturing a tendon in his left biceps during qualifying.

Mawem was injured during the final of three disciplines while reaching up with his left arm near the bottom of the lead wall. He immediately fell off the wall and stood at the bottom holding his biceps as an official untied his rope.

Mawem still managed to join his brother in qualifying for the finals after finishing first in boulder and 18th in speed.

The French Olympic Committee said Mawem is returning home to have surgery.

### MEDAL ALERT

Britain has won gold in the two-person dinghy sailing event.

Hannah Mills becomes the first British woman to win at least three Olympic medals in sailing. She and Eilidh McIntyre won at Enoshima Yacht Harbor. Britain also won in Rio in 2016.

Agnieszka Skrzypulec and Jolanta Ogar of Poland won silver. Ogar, 39, becomes the oldest woman to win an Olympic medal in sailing.

Camille Lecointre and Aloise Retornaz of France won bronze.

### MEDAL ALERT

Italy has broken its own world record to win the gold medal in men's team pursuit cycling at the Tokyo Olympics.

The team of Simone Consonni, Filippo Ganna, Francesco Lamon and Jonathan Milan stopped the clock in 3:42.032 to edge world champion Denmark in a dramatic final at the Izu Velodrome. Denmark finished in 3:42.203.

The Italians led through the first half of the 4,000-meter race, then watched as the Danish team of Lasse Norman Hansen, Niklas Larsen, Frederik Madsen and Rasmus Pedersen pulled ahead.

Over the last five laps, the Italians wiped out a deficit of nearly a half-second to win the gold medal.

Australia, the silver medalist in Rio, took the bronze. The Aussies were in a tight race with New Zealand before a touch of wheels sent one of the Kiwi riders to the ground and effectively eliminated them from contention.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 16 of 75

A pair of teenagers gave China a 1-2 finish in the preliminaries of women's 10-meter platform diving. The Chinese have won five of six diving events so far, and earned eight medals overall at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre.

China has won every women's diving event at the past three Olympics.

Chen Yuxi, a 15-year-old who is the current world champion, and her 14-year-old teammate, Quan Hongchan, led 18 women into the semifinals on Thursday.

Chen totaled 390.70 points for five dives. Quan was second at 364.45.

Quan fell from second to 25th on her third dive, earning just 47.85 points. That was her lowest score of the round. But she rebounded on her fourth dive with 76.80 points to tie for first.

American Delaney Schnell was third at 360.75. Her teammate, Katrina Young, squeaked into the semifinals in 17th place.

Schnell already won a silver medal in 10-meter synchro with partner Jessica Parratto, one of three diving medals for the United States.

A Russian athlete competing in karate has been ruled out of the Tokyo Olympics after testing positive for the coronavirus.

The Russian Karate Federation says on Instagram that Anna Chernysheva will not be able to compete and that her positive test was confirmed by a second test.

The 19-year-old was the Russian Olympic Committee team's only karate athlete at the Olympics. She was due to compete Thursday in the women's 55-kilogram kumite event on the first ever day of Olympic karate competition. It's a new sport on the program in Tokyo.

Olympic organizers also say Algerian weightlifter Walid Bidani has withdrawn from the men's over-109-kilogram event Wednesday "due to health situation which requires him to undergo quarantine." The statement doesn't mention the cause. Bidani won gold at the African championships in May.

Harrie Lavreysen and Dutch teammate Jeffrey Hoogland tied for the Olympic record in qualifying for the men's sprint at the Izu Velodrome, clocking the same time of 9.215 down to the thousandth of a second.

In the qualifying rounds, cyclists get what's called a flying start before they are timed over 200 meters.

That means the two Dutch riders averaged 48.55 mph during their qualifying lap.

Hoogland will be seeded first and Lavreysen second for the knockout rounds. That's when riders face off against each other in a cat-and-mouse game over three laps with the fastest to the finish line advancing to the next round.

## MEDAL ALERT

Mat Belcher and Will Ryan of Australia have won the two-person dinghy event at the Tokyo Olympics.

Belcher won gold at the London Olympics in 2012 in the 470 class and combined with Ryan to win the silver medal at Rio de Janeiro in 2016. Belcher and Ryan only had to finish the last race without penalty to clinch the gold medal.

Anton Dahlberg and Fredrik Bergstrom of Sweden won the silver medal and Spain's Nicolas Rodriguez Garcia-Paz and Jordi Xammar took bronze.

The women's two-person dinghy, the last medal race in sailing at the Tokyo Games, was scheduled later Wednesday.

## MEDAL ALERT

Arlen López has won his second Olympic boxing gold medal for Cuba, beating Britain's Benjamin Whittaker in the light heavyweight final at the Kokugikan Arena.

López outclassed the defense-minded Whittaker to win the fight on four of the five judges' scorecards. Cuba had never won gold at light heavyweight in its decorated Olympic boxing history until Julio Cesar La



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 17 of 75

Cruz claimed the title in Rio de Janeiro.

López is the second Cuban boxer in two days to win a second gold medal in a different weight class by beating a British fighter after Roniel Iglesias achieved the same feat Tuesday. López won the middleweight division in Rio.

Russian athlete Imam Khataev and Cuban-born Loren Alfonso of Azerbaijan won light heavyweight bronze medals.

The defending champion Russian women's handball team has reached the semifinals with a 32-26 win over Montenegro after a troubled start to the tournament.

The Russian Olympic Committee team seemed unlikely to play for a medal after opening Olympic play with a 24-24 tie with Brazil and a crushing 36-24 loss to Sweden.

Further complicating matters, former coach Evgeny Trefilov has often been in the arena, sometimes calling out instructions which clashed with those from the coaches on the sideline.

Now, though, the Russians are on a four-game winning streak after beating Hungary, Spain and France to qualify from the group stage before dismissing Montenegro in the quarterfinals.

The Russian team's semifinal opponent is Norway, which beat Hungary 26-22 on seven goals from Kari Brattset Dale. That sets up a repeat of the 2016 semifinals, when Russia beat Norway 38-37 in overtime.

American silver medalist Raven Saunders says her mother has died.

The shot putter wrote on her Twitter account early Wednesday that "my mama was a great woman and will forever live through me. My number one guardian angel."

Media reports say that Clarissa Saunders died in Orlando, Florida, where she had been attending Olympic watch parties. Raven Saunders won silver Sunday.

At the medal ceremony, she stepped off the podium, lifted her arms above her head and formed an X with her wrists. Asked what that meant, she explained: "It's the intersection of where all people who are oppressed meet."

The International Olympic committee was investigating whether the gesture violated a prohibition on political statements at medal ceremonies, but suspended the investigation after Saunders' mother's death.

Spokesman Mark Adams says the IOC "extends its condolences to Raven and her family."

NBA veteran Pau Gasol has been voted by his fellow Tokyo Games athletes to represent them as a member of the International Olympic Committee.

The IOC says Gasol got the most votes among 30 candidates for four vacant seats on the Olympic body. The results were announced the day after Gasol and Spain lost in the quarterfinals to the United States.

Gasol will be an IOC member for seven years through the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles, where he won two NBA titles with the Lakers.

The three-time Olympic medalist got 1,888 votes of more than 6,800 cast by athletes at Tokyo.

The other new members are cyclist Maja Martyna Wloszczowska of Poland, Italian swimmer Federica Pellegrini and Japan's Yuki Ota, from IOC president Thomas Bach's sport of fencing.

The losing candidates include Danka Bartekova, the Slovakian shooter who has been an IOC member since 2012, men's high jump gold medalist Mutaz Barshim of Qatar, and Australian swimmer Cate Campbell who won two relay gold medals in Tokyo.

The U.S. women's volleyball team has made it to the semifinals for the sixth time in the past eight Olympics after beating the Dominican Republic in straight sets in the quarterfinals.

The Americans advanced to a matchup with the winner of Serbia-Italy in semis, despite playing without injured starters Jordyn Poulter and Jordan Thompson.

Fill-ins Micha Hancock and Annie Drews helped set the tone early for the U.S. and the team wasn't seriously challenged at any point by the Dominicans. Drews finished with a team-high 18 points.

The U.S. is seeking its first gold medal in the sport after winning bronze five years ago in Rio de Janeiro

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 18 of 75

and silver in 2008 and 2012.

## MEDAL ALERT

Sakura Yozozumi of Japan has won the inaugural Olympic women's park event in skateboarding, solidifying Japan's dominance of the sport making its Olympic debut.

The silver went to Kokona Hiraki, who at 12 became Japan's youngest Olympic medalist.

Britain's Sky Brown prevented a Japanese medal sweep, taking the bronze.

Yozozumi won with a trick-filled first run that scored 60.09, the only score to break 60 points in the event at the Ariake Urban Sports Park.

It immediately piled on pressure on the seven other finalists, and none was able to dislodge her. Japanese skaters also took both golds in the men and women's street events in the first week of the Tokyo Games.

Damian Warner of Canada is leading the Olympic decathlon with 2,966 points after the first three events.

The 2016 Olympic bronze medalist is 223 points clear of fellow Canadian Pierce Lepage and 255 ahead of 2018 world junior champion Ash Moloney of Australia.

Decathlon world record holder Kevin Mayer of France, the Olympic silver medalist from Rio and world champion in 2017, is in fourth spot with 2,662 points.

Warner opened the competition by equaling his world decathlon best time of 10.12 seconds in the 100 meters and then produced an Olympic decathlon best 8.24 meters in the long jump. He had 14.80 meters in the shot put, allowing Lepage and Mayer to close the gap.

In the heptathlon, defending Olympic champion Nafissatou Thiam is leading with 2,176 points after two disciplines, 19 points clear of American Erica Bougard.

Thiam was 15th after the 100-meter hurdles but picked up 1,132 points in the high jump by clearing 1.89 meters to take the lead. Bougard moved from fourth place into second by clearing 1.86 and 2019 world champion Katarina Johnson-Thompson moved from seventh to third place on 2,138 points with a best jump of 1.86.

The International Olympic Committee says it will question two Belarus team officials who were allegedly involved in trying to remove a sprinter from the Tokyo Olympics.

IOC spokesman Mark Adams says it's part of a disciplinary case opened "to establish the facts" in the case of sprinter Krystsina Tsimanouskaya.

After Tsimanouskaya criticized the management of her team on social media, she says officials hustled her to the airport and trying to put her on a plane back to Belarus.

The IOC says the Belarus officials under investigation are Artur Shumak and Yuri Moisevich.

Tsimanouskaya boarded a flight to Vienna on Wednesday, though it wasn't clear if that was her final destination. Several countries offered to help her and Poland has given her a visa on humanitarian grounds because she fears her life would be threatened in Belarus.

The IOC could suspend the Belarusian national Olympic committee ahead of the closing ceremony on Sunday.

## MEDAL ALERT

American Sydney McLaughlin has broken her own world record to win the women's 400-meter hurdles in 51.46 seconds. She edged out Dalilah Muhammad, who won silver to make it a U.S. 1-2 finish.

McLaughlin set the previous world record of 51.90 seconds in June. Muhammad, who set the world record twice in 2019 and won the world championship gold medal that year, finished in 51.58.

Femke Bol of the Netherlands took bronze in 52.03.

A Belarusian Olympic sprinter who had a public feud with officials from her team has boarded a plane to Vienna.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 19 of 75

It's not clear if Austria is Krystsina Tsimanouskaya's final destination. Several countries had offered to help her, and Poland has granted her a humanitarian visa.

She said in an interview with The Associated Press that officials from her team had "made it clear" she would face punishment if she returned home to an autocratic government that has relentlessly stifled any criticism.

Tsimanouskaya has said she hopes she can continue her career, but for now her safety is the priority. After she criticized the management of her team on social media, she accused officials of hustling her to the airport and trying to put her on a plane back to Belarus.

She was seen in Tokyo on Wednesday morning entering Narita International Airport surrounded by an entourage.

Brazil is out of the men's beach volleyball tournament at the Olympics, and Latvia can take the credit.

Latvia's Martins Plavins and Edgars Tocs beat 2016 gold medalist Alison and his partner Alvaro Filho 21-16, 21-19 on Wednesday. The Latvians knocked out the other Brazilian men's team -- with Alison's partner in Rio de Janeiro, Bruno Oscar Schmidt -- in the round of 16 on Monday.

Only one of the two Brazilian women's teams has survived the quarterfinals, meaning the traditional beach volleyball power can win at most one medal in Tokyo. That will be its worst performance since the sport was added to the Summer Games in 1996.

In the other morning quarterfinal, top-seeded Anders Mol and Christian Sorum of Norway eliminated Russia. The Norwegians finished atop the qualification points list but lost to Russians Ilya Leshukov and Konstantin Semenov in the round robin.

Norway won the rematch 21-17, 21-19.

## MEDAL ALERT

Ana Marcela Cunha of Brazil won the women's 10-kilometer marathon swimming event.

Cunha touched first in 1 hour, 59 minutes, 30.8 seconds on Wednesday morning, finishing nine-tenths of a second ahead of defending champion Sharon van Rouwendaal of the Netherlands.

Van Rouwendaal took silver in 1:59.31.7.

Kareena Lee of Australia earned bronze in 1:59.32.5.

Cunha won her first medal in her third Olympics. She was 10th five years ago in Rio de Janeiro and fifth in the 2008 Beijing Games.

American Haley Anderson finished sixth and her teammate, Ashley Twichell, was seventh.

The seven-lap course in Tokyo Bay featured a backdrop of skyscrapers, the Rainbow Bridge and the nearby floating Olympic rings.

The air temperature during the latter stages of the race was 86 degrees Fahrenheit (30 Celsius), with 74% humidity that made it feel like 95 degrees (35 C).

The water temperature was about 84 degrees (29 C), under the allowable limit of 88 degrees (31 degrees C).

## China seals city as its worst virus outbreak in a year grows

BEIJING (AP) — China's worst coronavirus outbreak since the start of the pandemic a year and a half ago escalated Wednesday with dozens more cases around the country, the sealing-off of one city and the punishment of its local leaders.

Since that initial outbreak was tamed last year, China's people had lived virtually free of the virus, with extremely strict border controls and local distancing and quarantine measures stamping out scattered, small flareups when they occurred.

Now, the country is on high alert as an outbreak of cases connected to the international airport in the eastern city of Nanjing touched at least 17 provinces. China reported 71 new cases of COVID-19 from local transmission Wednesday, more than half of them in coastal Jiangsu province, of which Nanjing is the capital.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 20 of 75

In Wuhan, the central city where the first cases of COVID-19 were identified in late 2019, mass testing has shown some of its newly reported cases have a high degree of similarity to cases discovered in Jiangsu province. Those cases have been identified as being caused by the highly transmissible delta variant that first was identified in India.

Meanwhile, another COVID-19 hotspot was emerging in the city of Zhangjiajie, near a scenic area famous for sandstone cliffs, caves, forests and waterfalls that inspired the on-screen landscape in the "Avatar" films.

The city ordered residential communities sealed Sunday, preventing people from leaving their homes. In a subsequent order on Tuesday, officials said no one, whether tourist or resident, could leave the city.

The city government's Communist Party disciplinary committee on Wednesday issued a list of local officials who "had a negative impact" on pandemic prevention and control work who would be punished.

The city itself has only recorded 19 cases since last week, three of which were people with no symptoms, which are counted separately. However, individual cases linked to Zhangjiajie's outbreak have spread to at least five provinces, according to the Shanghai government-owned newspaper the Paper.

Far higher numbers were reported in Yangzhou, a city next to Nanjing, which has recorded 126 cases as of Tuesday.

After announcing last week that they were suspending issuance of passports for travelers except for those with an urgent need, officials at the National Immigration Administration reiterated the message again on Wednesday at a press briefing.

As of Tuesday, China has given more than 1.71 billion vaccine doses to its population of 1.4 billion. It's not clear how many of those are first or both doses, but at least 40% of the population is fully protected, according to earlier announcements.

Chinese companies have not publicly shared real-world data on how effective their vaccines are against the delta variant, though officials have said the vaccines prevent severe disease and hospitalization.

In addition to the 71 cases of local transmission, 25 travelers from overseas have COVID-19 and have entered quarantine, making the total for Wednesday 96 new cases. The National Health Commission also said 15 people tested positive for the virus but have no symptoms.

China has reported 4,636 deaths and 93,289 cases of COVID-19 overall, most of them from the original outbreak in Wuhan that peaked early last year.

## Belarus runner flies to Europe after feud with team managers

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — A Belarusian sprinter left Tokyo en route to Europe on Wednesday after resisting an attempt by her Olympic team's officials to send her home to Belarus, where the athlete said she could be in danger from authorities who have relentlessly cracked down on dissent.

Krystina Tsimanouskaya boarded a plane at Tokyo's Narita International Airport that left the gate for Vienna, but she was expected to travel on to Poland. Before leaving Japan, Tsimanouskaya said she hoped she could continue her career but that safety was her immediate priority.

Several countries offered to help after the 24-year-old runner sought refuge in the European Union, and Poland has granted her a humanitarian visa.

Vadim Krivosheyev, an activist with the Belarusian Sport Solidarity Foundation, said Tsimanouskaya took the flight to Austria on the advice of Polish authorities.

"The decision to change the route and fly to Vienna was made by the Polish side for security reasons," Krivosheyev told The Associated Press.

After landing in Vienna, Tsimanouskaya was expected to head to Warsaw later Wednesday, according to Krivosheyev.

Tsimanouskaya's experience at the Tokyo Games became an international issue after she accused Belarusian team officials of hustling her to the airport several days ago and trying to put her on a plane to Belarus because she had criticized the team's management on social media. The team officials made it



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 21 of 75

clear she would face reprisals back home, she said.

The officials "made it clear that, upon return home, I would definitely face some form of punishment," Tsimanouskaya told The Associated Press in a videocall interview from Tokyo on Tuesday. "There were also thinly disguised hints that more would await me."

She added that she believed she would be kicked off Belarus' national team.

"I would very much like to continue my sporting career because I'm just 24, and I had plans for two more Olympics at least," Tsimanouskaya said. But "for now, the only thing that concerns me is my safety."

Reached by phone Tuesday, Dzmitry Dauhalionak, the head of Belarus' delegation at the Summer Olympics, declined comment, saying that he has "no words."

Tsimanouskaya's criticism of how officials were managing her team set off a massive backlash in state-run media in Belarus. The runner said on Instagram that she was put in the 4x400 relay even though she has never raced in the event. She was then barred from competing in the 200 meters.

The sprinter called on international sports authorities Tuesday "to investigate the situation, who gave the order, who actually took the decision that I can't compete anymore." She suggested possible sanctions against the head coach.

In the AP interview, Tsimanouskaya also expressed worry for her parents, who remain in Belarus. Her husband, Arseni Zdanevich, told the AP that he decided to leave the country when Tsimanouskaya told him she wasn't coming back.

Belarus was rocked by months of protests after President Alexander Lukashenko won a sixth term in an August 2020 election that the opposition and the West saw as rigged. Authorities responded to demonstrations with a sweeping crackdown that saw over 35,000 people arrested and thousands beaten by police.

In a show of determination to stifle dissent at any cost, they diverted a passenger plane that was flying from Greece to Lithuania in May and ordered it to land in the Belarusian capital where they arrested an opposition journalist who was on board.

The authoritarian Belarusian president, who led the Belarus National Olympic Committee for almost a quarter-century before handing over the job to his older son in February, has shown a keen interest in sports, seeing it as a key element of national prestige.

Both Lukashenko and his son were banned from the Tokyo Games by the International Olympic Committee, which investigated complaints from athletes that they faced intimidation during the crackdown on anti-government protests over the last year.

Western leaders have condemned Tsimanouskaya's treatment by Belarusian authorities.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken denounced Belarusian officials' attempt to force Tsimanouskaya to return to Belarus for exercising free speech as "another act of transnational repression."

"Such actions violate the Olympic spirit, are an affront to basic rights, and cannot be tolerated," Blinken said on Twitter.

## **EXPLAINER: What happens when Olympics and politics collide?**

By GRAHAM DUNBAR AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — For all the International Olympic Committee talks of staying neutral, its games have long proven to be essentially and sometimes overtly political — for the Games overall, and often for the athletes who are intended to entertain the world in a two-week global show.

Case in point: diplomatic eruptions. Hundreds of athletes have come to an Olympic Games and never returned to the home nation they represented in the pool, on the mat or on the track. Their stories since 1948, when the Olympics resumed in London after a wartime pause, confirm that when the world meets for sports, politics is always there.

The sprinter from Belarus, Krystsina Tsimanouskaya, who left Tokyo early Wednesday to seek refuge, fits into that long tradition — yet with a unique reason.

Most athletes who defected competed under a kind of flag of convenience — traveling to the Summer Games from eastern Europe with a plan to head west. The Olympics offered escape from authoritarian

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 22 of 75

regimes at home, and at no time more than the peak of the Cold War.

After the 1972 Munich Olympics, more than 100 athletes stayed in West Germany to first seek refuge before, in many cases, moving on to make lives in democratically run countries. Those whose plans succeeded have cited varied reasons — political ideology, the prospect of a more peaceful life or simply the chance to achieve their true value as an athlete.

Tsimanouskaya had no plans of escape upon arriving in Japan from Belarus, a country in turmoil for a year since the disputed re-election of authoritarian president Alexander Lukashenko. She disagreed with her coaches about team selection for relay races and shared her thoughts on social media. That made her a pariah in Belarus, where dissent can be life-threatening.

But she leaves having authored a page in a storied Olympic history. What other Olympians have been caught at the intersection of sport and diplomacy?

LONDON, 1948 (AND BEYOND)

Oscar Charles had a different role at three consecutive Summer Games water polo tournaments.

Born Oszkar Csuik in Hungary, he helped the national team take silver in London. He defected to stay in Britain and avoid returning to communist rule in his home country. Two years later, he migrated to Australia and coached its team at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics.

The Olympics came to Australia in 1956, opening in Melbourne three weeks after Soviet Union forces invaded Hungary to crush a people's uprising. Charles worked there as a radio commentator and was poolside for the storied "Blood in the Water" water polo game in which Hungary beat the Soviet team 4-0 in a famously violent clash.

Charles "was only just restrained from jumping into the pool," according to an Australian newspaper obituary in 2008.

MELBOURNE, 1956

Held in the Southern hemisphere summer, the Melbourne Olympics opened on Nov. 22, 1956. Hungary sent more than 100 athletes from a nation in turmoil after Soviet forces invaded — including gymnastics great Ágnes Keleti, who won gold medals and two silvers and proceeded to defect to Australia.

She joined dozens of eastern European athletes who refused to go home. The United States authorized taking in at least 40 Olympic athletes, including 35 from the Hungary team at Melbourne.

Keleti went to Israel, where she lived until six years ago. Now in Hungary, she turned 100 in January and is the oldest living Olympic champion.

ATLANTA, 1996

Defecting in the United States was an attractive prospect. Atlanta offered an opportunity.

Iraq's flag bearer at the opening ceremony, Raed Ahmed, fled the Olympic Village after competing in weightlifting. He wanted to escape the regime of Saddam Hussein.

Pitcher Rolando Arrojo helped Cuba win baseball gold at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics and was preparing to help defend its title. He eluded team security in a Georgia hotel and was soon branded a "Judas" by Cuban president Fidel Castro. Just two years later, as a Tampa Bay Devil Ray, he was an MLB all-star.

LONDON, 2012

Ayoub-Ali Sihame was the only swimmer representing the African island of Comoros in London. Then 17, she left the Olympic Village after competing in the 100 meters freestyle.

She later said she feared going home and being sold by her family into a forced marriage with a much older man. She claimed her family wanted to cash in on her Olympic celebrity.

Those details emerged in an English court in 2013 where she was convicted for using a false passport to try to enter France. Her lawyers said she would seek asylum after serving her jail sentence, having not realized she could apply legally while at the Olympics.

Several African athletes also disappeared in Britain while they had six-month Olympic visas.

## British navy group: Hijackers have left vessel off UAE coast

By JON GAMBRELL and ISABEL DEBRÉ Associated Press

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 23 of 75

FUJAIRAH, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The hijackers who seized a vessel off the coast of the United Arab Emirates in the Gulf of Oman left the targeted ship on Wednesday, the British navy reported, without elaborating.

The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations reported that the incident, which it had described as a "potential hijack" the night before, was now "complete." It did not provide further details. "The vessel is safe," the group said, without identifying the ship. Shipping authority Lloyd's List and maritime intelligence firm Dryad Global both named the hijacked vessel as Panama-flagged asphalt tanker Asphalt Princess. The vessel's owner, listed as Emirati free zone-based Glory International, could not immediately be reached for comment.

Satellite-tracking data for the Asphalt Princess had showed it gradually heading toward Iranian waters off the port of Jask early Wednesday, according to MarineTraffic.com. Later, however, it stopped and changed course toward Oman, just before the British navy group announced the intruders had left.

Two Oman Royal Air Force aircraft, identified as an Airbus C-295MPA and Lockheed C-130H Hercules, flew over the waters off Fujairah on Wednesday after the incident, according to data from FlightRadar24.com.

It was not immediately clear who was responsible for the attempted ship hijack, which unfolded amid heightened tensions between Iran and the West over Tehran's tattered 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. Over the past few years, commercial shipping in vital Persian Gulf waterways has increasingly been caught in the crosshairs.

Most recently, the U.S., the U.K. and Israel have blamed Iran for a drone attack on an oil tanker linked to an Israeli billionaire off the coast of Oman that killed two people. The raid marked the first known fatal assault in the shadow war targeting vessels in Mideast waters. Iran has denied involvement.

Apparently responding to Tuesday's ship seizure, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh described the recent maritime attacks in the Persian Gulf as "completely suspicious." He denied that Iran played any role.

The U.S. military's Mideast-based 5th Fleet and the British Defense Ministry did not return calls for comment about the reported hijack. The Emirati government did not immediately acknowledge the incident.

Late on Tuesday, as the reported hijack was underway, six oil tankers off the coast of Fujairah announced around the same time via their Automatic Identification System trackers that they were "not under command," according to MarineTraffic.com. That typically means a vessel has lost power and can no longer steer.

The Gulf of Oman is near the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which a fifth of all oil passes. Fujairah, on the UAE's eastern coast, is a main port in the region for ships to take on new oil cargo, pick up supplies or trade out crew.

For the past two years, after then-President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from Iran's nuclear deal and imposed crushing sanctions on the country, the waters off Fujairah have seen a series of explosions and hijackings. The U.S. Navy blamed Iran for a series of limpet mine attacks on vessels that damaged tankers.

In the summer of 2019, Iran's Revolutionary Guard troops detained a British-flagged tanker, the Stena Impero, near the Strait of Hormuz — a raid that came after Britain seized an Iranian tanker off the coast of Gibraltar on suspicion the ship had been headed to Syria in violation of European Union sanctions.

Last year, an oil tanker sought by the U.S. for allegedly circumventing sanctions on Iran was hijacked off the Emirati coast and later ended up in Iran, though Tehran never acknowledged the incident.

And in January, armed Iranian Revolutionary Guard troops stormed a South Korean tanker and forced the ship to change course and travel to Iran. While Iran claimed it detained the ship over pollution concerns, it appeared to link the seizure to negotiations over billions of dollars in Iranian assets frozen in South Korean banks.

## Olympics carry a question: What does it mean to be Japanese?

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 24 of 75

TOKYO (AP) — Two multiracial athletes, two high-profile roles: Rising NBA star Rui Hachimura carried the Japanese flag at the Olympics' opening ceremony. Tennis superstar Naomi Osaka lit the Olympic cauldron. For Japan, it was a remarkable showcase of racial diversity — but one that also highlighted how much remains missing in a nation that values homogeneity and conformity.

Osaka and Hachimura, both of whom have one foreign parent and one Japanese parent, were cheered warmly by many even as some nationalists pounded them online for not being "pure Japanese." It has rekindled a debate on racial identity that points toward a particular and thorny question: What does it mean to be Japanese?

Osaka and Hachimura have many fans here. Both appear in commercials for Nissin Cup Noodle. Osaka recently signed with Panasonic, and Hachimura, a Washington Wizards forward, appears in ads for a Taisho Pharmaceutical energy drink and for Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corp.

Their success coincides with an increase in the number of people with multiracial and diverse cultural backgrounds in Japan that comes as more people marry foreigners and more foreign workers arrive.

Tolerance to diversity, however, still lags.

Children from mixed race families in Japan, often called "hafu," or half, account for about 2% of babies born every year. They are often chided for not being "fully Japanese" or bullied for looking different.

Melissa Luna Isomoto, who is of Japanese and Kenyan descent and grew up in Japan, was delighted to see her role model, Osaka, represent Japan as the torch bearer in the July 23 event. But she said her heart sank when she saw online comments criticizing Osaka for not being Japanese enough.

"Those slandering Naomi-san also hurt me and others of mixed-race roots," Isomoto said in a recent interview in Japanese from her home in Yokohama. "It was so painful I tried not to read them."

"She hardly speaks Japanese, and she is not pure Japanese," one Twitter posting said. "No way. We wanted pure Japanese, or as a compromise, at least a Japanese-speaking 'hafu (half-Japanese)' like Rui Hachimura," another tweet said.

Attacks escalated after Osaka's surprise third-round loss to Marketa Vondrousova of the Czech Republic four days later, and some people even celebrated her defeat.

Many critics posting online suggest they define "Japanese" as those whose parents are both Japanese and speak the language perfectly. Many consider those born and raised in Japan, such as Hachimura, as Japanese, but think of Osaka, who grew up mostly in the United States and doesn't speak fluent Japanese, as more Japanese-American.

There were also complaints about Osaka's support of the Black Lives Matter anti-racism movement and her comments about mental health. In addition to her Haitian roots, Osaka tends to be an easy target in Japan, where experts say biases against women and mental health issues persist.

Growing up with African roots, Isomoto was repeatedly reminded that she looked different.

"I was often called a foreigner, or told to go back to Kenya as other kids knew my Kenyan roots, and sometimes called a gorilla," she said. "Because of bullying and racism, I often disliked my own roots and wished I was Japanese."

She gained confidence and started learning more about her African background when she met other students of multiracial or different cultural backgrounds in high school. Still, pressure to conform was so strong she got her hair straightened like other Japanese students, trying to blend in.

Japan's lack of tolerance also affects sexual minorities and ethnic Koreans and Chinese, who do not stand out by their physical features but are discriminated against for historical and political reasons, said Julian Keane, an Osaka City University sociologist.

"Naomi Osaka's torch highlighted the use of diversity only when it is convenient for Japan and brings benefits," Keane said. Multiracial people are seen as "human resources" and considered Japanese only when they achieve results without interfering with the privileges of the "majority," he said.

For example, Japan has eased its immigration policy to allow more unskilled foreign workers to make up for a declining workforce in the world's fastest aging country — but on the condition that they come without their families and leave after their contracts end.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 25 of 75

The term "pure Japanese" is often used to promote unity and national identity, and to target and exclude others. There is a growing presence of mixed-race people in entertainment and sports, where their roles are expected and they are marketed for their looks and physical performance.

Japan's 580-plus-person Olympic team has at least 30 mixed-race athletes, including Abdul Hakim Sani Brown, a sprinter born in Tokyo who is the son of a Japanese mother and a Ghanaian father, and Olympic judo gold medalist Aaron Wolf, an American Japanese born and raised in Tokyo.

There are also diverse stars from the past: home run king Sadaharu Oh, a Chinese citizen who grew up in Japan, for example, and baseball star Satcho Kinugasa, born to a Japanese mother and an African-American soldier, were largely accepted as Japanese and both received the government's prestigious People's Honor Award. Kinugasa, who was bullied for his mixed race as a child, died in 2018. Oh participated in the Olympic torch relay last month at the Games' opening ceremony.

Still, in a country where conformity and homogeneity have been emphasized, life can often be difficult.

In May, Hachimura's younger brother Allen, who also plays basketball on a college team, cited a recent slander, saying on Twitter: "People say there is no racism in Japan, but some people make racist comments like this. I don't think the revelation can make a difference, but I just wanted you to be interested in the problem of racism."

Hachimura responded: "Messages like this come almost every day."

Isomoto says she is now confident about her mixed roots, and about who she is. Like Osaka, her role model, she hopes to help others who still suffer.

"If asked if I'm Japanese or Kenyan, I choose neither. I was born and grew up in Japan and am bicultural. I cannot choose one or the other," Isomoto said. "I'd say, 'I'm just me.'"

## **EXPLAINER: What is behind Belarus athlete's Olympics crisis?**

By YURAS KARMANAU and VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A feud between Belarusian Olympic sprinter Krystsina Tsimanouskaya and team officials that prompted her to seek refuge in the European Union has again cast a spotlight on the repressive environment in the athlete's home country, an ex-Soviet nation where authorities have unleashed a relentless crackdown on dissent.

Tsimanouskaya told The Associated Press on Tuesday that the team officials who hustled her to the airport and tried to send her back to Belarus made it clear she would "definitely face some form of punishment" after she criticized the management of her team on social media.

Here is a brief look at the situation in Belarus and the dangers faced by those who dare to challenge Belarusian authorities.

### **POST-ELECTION CRACKDOWN**

Belarus was rocked by months of protests triggered by President Alexander Lukashenko's re-election to a sixth term in office in an August 2020 vote that the opposition and the West saw as rigged.

Belarusian authorities responded to the protests, the largest of which drew up to 200,000, with a massive clampdown that saw more than 35,000 people arrested and thousands beaten by police. Leading opposition figures have been jailed or forced to leave the country.

Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus with an iron fist for 27 years, has denounced his opponents as foreign stooges and accused the U.S. and its allies of plotting to overthrow his government.

### **NO HOLDS BARRED**

In a show of their determination to hunt down dissenters regardless of costs, Belarusian authorities in May diverted a Ryanair flight from Greece to Lithuania and ordered it to land in the Belarusian capital of Minsk where they arrested a dissident journalist who was on board.

After his arrest, the journalist, Raman Pratasevich, appeared in several interviews on state television, saying he was fully cooperating with investigators, pledging respect for Lukashenko and weeping. The opposition and the West denounced the TV interviews as coerced.

On Tuesday, a Belarusian activist who ran a group in Ukraine that helped Belarusians fleeing persecution

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 26 of 75

was found hanged in a park in the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv. Police said it launched a probe to investigate whether it was a suicide or a murder made to look like suicide.

## WIDENING REPRESSIONS

After targeting opposition leaders and activists for months, Belarusian authorities have ramped up their crackdown in recent weeks with hundreds of raids of offices and homes of independent journalists and activists.

Lukashenko denounced the activists as "bandits and foreign agents" and vowed to continue what he called a "mopping-up operation" against them.

More than 50 NGOs are facing closure, including the Belarusian Association of Journalists, the biggest and most respected media organization in the country, and the Belarusian PEN Center, an association of writers led by Svetlana Alexievich, the winner of the 2015 Nobel Prize in literature.

Amid the crackdown, Belarus' European Union neighbors, Poland and Lithuania, have offered strong support to protesters and provided refuge to those fleeing repression. Poland quickly granted Tsimanouskaya a humanitarian visa. The athlete boarded a plane on Wednesday morning at Tokyo's Narita International Airport that left the gate for Vienna, though it was not immediately clear if that would be her final destination.

## BELARUS PRESIDENT'S FOCUS ON SPORTS

Lukashenko, who has a keen interest in sports and served as the head of the Belarus National Olympic Committee for nearly a quarter-century before handing over the post to his older son in February, has sternly warned the country's Olympic athletes that they better show high performance.

"If you go there like tourists and bring nothing back, you better not return to the country," Lukashenko said.

The Belarusian leader and his son both have been banned from the Tokyo Olympics by the International Olympic Committee, which investigated complaints from athletes that they faced reprisals and intimidation during the crackdown on protests in the country.

"Lukashenko sees sports as a showcase of his regime, he wants to make it shine and he considers any failures and losses as a blow to his personal reputation and authority," said Valery Karbalevich, an independent Belarusian political analyst, adding that the Belarusian leader "sees sports as part of the state ideology."

The Belarusian president was furious when the ice hockey world championship was pulled away from the country earlier this year over the authorities' crackdown on protests.

"Lukashenko believes that Belarus is surrounded by enemies and sees any criticism as part of a Western conspiracy," Karbalevich said. "That is why he saw the situation with Tsimanouskaya as a new attack by Western enemies and part of a hybrid war against Belarus."

## ATHLETES TARGETED

Many Belarusian athletes have faced reprisals after speaking out against the authorities and voicing their support for protests.

Belarus basketball star Yelena Leuchanka, an ex-WNBA player, spent 15 days in jail in October after protesting peacefully against authorities. She later told the AP that prison conditions were awful, with no hot water and toilet in her cell and inmates forced to sleep on metal beds without mattresses.

Maria Shakuro, the captain of the Belarus national rugby team and bronze medalist of the European Beach Rugby Championships, also was sentenced to 10 days in jail for participating in a peaceful protest.

The legendary Olympic hammer thrower, Vadim Devyatovsky, was dismissed in September as the head of the country's athletics federation after a Facebook post critical of Lukashenko.

And Natalya Petrakova, one of the most famous Belarussian handball players, was fired as the senior coach of the women's handball national team after signing a letter of protest.

The Belarusian Sport Solidarity Foundation said that a total of 124 athletes have served jail terms, faced dismissals or other repressive action.

"The horrible situation in the country is also reflected in sports," said Vadim Krivosheyev, an activist with the sports foundation. "All the power of the repressive machine has been directed at athletes who dared

to express their civic position. Sports in Belarus is facing quick degradation as only those athletes who are loyal (to the authorities) are allowed to perform.”

## South Africa quickens vaccine drive, gets more doses from US

By ANDREW MELDRUM Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — The cars lined up by the strikingly modern mosque and were guided to parking bays where the drivers soon got jabs.

The brisk pace at the Houghton mosque COVID-19 vaccination center is seeing 700 people per day getting shots and is expected to soon reach 1,000 a day.

“This is exciting! We’re vaccinating more people than we expected,” said Yaseen Theba, chairman of the Muslim Association of South Africa a day after the vaccination center opened last week. “We created this drive-thru site to accommodate as many people as possible, in a situation where they are comfortable. And it’s working! We’ll keep it going as long as people need to get vaccinated.”

Hitting its stride after a faltering start, South Africa’s mass vaccination drive gave jabs to 220,000 people a day last week and is accelerating toward the goal of 300,000 per day. With large deliveries of doses arriving and some vaccines being assembled here, South Africa appears on track to inoculate about 35 million of its 60 million people by the end of the year and 40 million by February.

More than 7.7 million South Africans have received at least one dose, with more than 100,000 fully vaccinated, representing 1.6% of the population, according to official figures. Across Africa, less than 1.5% of the continent’s 1.3 billion people have been fully vaccinated, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

After starting with just a dozen vaccination sites, South Africa now has more than 3,000 including government and private hospitals, pharmacies, mines, factories, churches and mosques.

South Africa now appears to have an adequate supply of doses. More than 5.7 million doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine have arrived this week from the U.S., part of President Joe Biden’s distribution of more than 110 million surplus doses to more than 60 countries. South Africa has also purchased more than 40 million Pfizer/BioNTech doses, which are being delivered in regular shipments, and 30 million Johnson & Johnson doses.

Another encouraging factor is the enthusiasm for the vaccines. More than 70% of South Africans say they are eager to get vaccines while just 10% say they are opposed, according to surveys.

South Africa has shouldered by far the largest burden of COVID-19 in Africa, with more than 35% of the cases reported by all of the continent’s 54 countries, although its population is just 4.6% of the continent’s total. More than 72,000 South Africans have died of COVID-19 according to official records, but statistics indicate it’s likely that nearly three times that number have actually died.

South Africa is currently the only country in Africa to be able to manufacture COVID-19 vaccines. Its dependence on imported vaccines is set to decline.

A local firm, Aspen Pharmacare, is assembling the J&J vaccines from large batches of the ingredients and putting them into vials, a process called fill and finish. The factory in Gqeberha can produce more than 200 million J&J doses which will be distributed across the continent.

Pfizer has announced that the Biovac Institute in Cape Town will assemble its COVID-19 vaccines in the same fill and finish procedure. Both Pfizer and J&J have agreed that eventually the South African production facilities will be able to manufacture the vaccines from scratch.

The most recent surge of infections, driven by the delta variant, brought President Cyril Ramaphosa to tighten restrictions, including limiting the sales of liquor to Monday through Thursday, to reduce the number of people going to hospital emergency rooms after alcohol-related incidents. Ramaphosa recently visited vaccination sites in the capital, Pretoria, to encourage people to get jabbed.

“South Africa is slowly but steadily coming out of the third wave with a curve that is on a downward trajectory. The peak of the third wave was higher than the previous two peaks and a slightly more severe situation in terms of caseload,” said Mosa Moshabela, professor of public health at the University of

KwaZulu-Natal.

"Our vaccination drive is a source of pride in the current climate. It is building momentum," said Moshabela. "We are beginning to see a lot of creative approaches to reach more people using workplace approaches, trying to get people in hard-to-reach areas."

At the Johannesburg mosque's drive-thru vaccine center, Tumi Sedumedi pulled into the waiting area after getting her J&J jab and bowed her head for a quiet moment of prayer.

"I wanted to give thanks that I received the vaccination," said Sedumedi. "I'm so relieved that I got it, so I wanted to pray about it and just be grateful. To pray for these people that are offering the service. And to hope that all can get vaccinated and we can bring this pandemic under control."

## **This year's summer of climate extremes hits wealthier places**

By SETH BORENSTEIN and FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

As the world staggers through another summer of extreme weather, experts are noticing something different: 2021's onslaught is hitting harder and in places that have been spared global warming's wrath in the past.

Wealthy countries such as the United States, Canada, Germany and Belgium are joining poorer and more vulnerable nations on a growing list of extreme weather events that scientists say have some connection to human-caused climate change.

"It is not only a poor country problem, it's now very obviously a rich county problem," said Debby Guha-Sapir, founder of the international disaster database at the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters at Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium. "They (the rich) are getting whacked."

Killer floods hit China, but hundreds of people also drowned in parts of Germany and Belgium not used to being inundated. Canada and the Pacific Northwest of the U.S. had what climate scientist Zeke Hausfather called "scary" heat that soared well past triple digits in Fahrenheit and into high 40s in Celsius, shattering records and accompanied by unusual wildfires. Now southern Europe is seeing unprecedented heat and fire.

And peak Atlantic hurricane and U.S. wildfire seasons are only just starting.

When what would become Hurricane Elsa formed on July 1, it broke last year's record for the earliest fifth named Atlantic storm. Colorado State University has already increased its forecast for the number of named Atlantic storms — and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration will update its season outlook on Wednesday.

For fire season, the U.S. West is the driest it has been since 1580, based on soil moisture readings and tree ring records, setting the stage for worsening fires if something ignites them, said UCLA climate and fire scientist Park Williams.

What happens with U.S. hurricane and fire seasons drives the end-of-year statistics for total damage costs of weather disasters, said Ernst Rauch, chief climate and geo scientist for insurance giant Munich Re. But so far this year, he said, wealthier regions have seen the biggest economic losses.

But when poorer countries are hit, they are less prepared and their people can't use air conditioning or leave so there's more harm, said Hausfather, climate director of the Breakthrough Institute. While hundreds of people died in the Pacific Northwest heat wave, he said the number would have been a much higher in poor areas.

Madagascar, an island nation off East Africa, is in the middle of back-to-back droughts that the United Nations warns are pushing 400,000 people toward starvation.

Though it's too early to say the summer of 2021 will again break records for climate disasters, "We're certainly starting to see climate change push extreme events into new territories where they haven't been seen before," Hausfather said.

The number of weather, water and climate disasters so far this year is only slightly higher than the average of recent years, said disaster researcher Guha-Sapir. Her group's database, which she said still is missing quite a few events, shows 208 such disasters worldwide through July — about 11% more than the last decade's average, but a bit less than last year.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 29 of 75

Last year, the record-shattering heat that came out of nowhere was in Siberia, where few people live, but this year it struck Portland, Oregon, and British Columbia, which gets more western media attention, Hausfather said.

What's happening is "partly an increase in the statistics of these extreme events, but also just that the steady drumbeat, the pile on year-on-year ... takes its cumulative toll on all of us who are reading these headlines" said Georgia Tech climate scientist Kim Cobb.

"This pattern of recent Northern Hemisphere summers has been really quite stark," said University of Exeter climate scientist Peter Stott.

While overall temperature rise is "playing out exactly as we said 20 years ago, ... what we are seeing in terms of the heat waves and the floods is more extreme than we predicted back then," Stott said.

Climate scientists say there is little doubt climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas is driving extreme events.

Aside from dramatic floods and fires, heat waves are a major risk to prepare for in the future, Guha-Sapir said .

"It's going to be a very big deal in the Western countries because the most susceptible to sudden peaks of heat are older people. And the demographic profile of the people in Europe is very old," she said. "Heat waves are going to be a real issue in the next few years."

## McLaughlin edges Muhammad in battle of world-record hurdlers

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Sydney McLaughlin broke the world record. Dalilah Muhammad broke it, too.

Only one of the world's best hurdlers could win the Olympic gold medal — and McLaughlin came out ahead in the latest installment of the best rivalry in track.

The 21-year-old from New Jersey won the 400-meter hurdles title Wednesday, finishing in 51.46 seconds in yet another history-making day on the speedy Olympic oval.

"Iron sharpening iron," McLaughlin called the latest in her series of showdowns with Muhammad, each one faster than the last. "Every time we step on the track, it's always something fast."

McLaughlin came from behind after the last hurdle to top the defending Olympic champion. Muhammad's time of 51.58 also beat McLaughlin's old record of 51.9, set at Olympic trials in June. But in this race, it was only good enough for the silver.

For McLaughlin, it was a muted celebration — in part, because traversing 400 meters while clearing 10 hurdles at 17 miles-per-hour is more exhausting than she makes it look.

"There was some lactic" acid building up, she said.

She sat on the ground, gave a serious look toward the scoreboard — yep, it's a record ... again — then got up and moved toward the hand-sanitizing station. Muhammad came over and gave her a congratulatory hug. They'll meet again. World championships are next July.

"No mixed emotions," Muhammad said. "Sure, there are always things you want to do better. But you use this as a springboard to the next. This is not my last race."

Impressive as McLaughlin's race was, this record didn't really surprise anyone.

McLaughlin and Muhammad, a New York City native who went to Southern Cal, have been trading the record, and the wins, for two years. Muhammad first broke the mark at U.S. Nationals in Des Moines, Iowa, in 2019, then lowered it to 52.16, at the world championships in Qatar.

McLaughlin broke that record earlier this summer at Olympic trials, running 51.9 to become the first woman to crack 52 seconds.

It felt inevitable that the mark would go down again on a fast track in perfect, hot-and-humid running conditions in Tokyo.

Only a day earlier, Norway's Karsten Warholm crushed his old world record in the men's 400 hurdles, finishing in 45.94. Runner-up Rai Benjamin's 46.17 also beat the old mark. Six runners in that race set national, continental or world records.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 30 of 75

It was a lot to live up to for the M&M duo, whose race was even more eagerly anticipated. They exceeded expectations, and left everyone else in the race behind.

"I just went out like crazy for the first 300 to be with them," said bronze medalist Femke Bol of the Netherlands, who set a European record and whose time of 52.03 would've been a world record six weeks ago. "And I died a bit."

Starting from Lane 7, Muhammad came out of the blocks and made up the lag quickly — too quickly? — as they cruised down the backstretch.

Slowly, steadily, McLaughlin drew even, and they were at nearly a draw when they reached the final 100 meters. As McLaughlin and Muhammad scaled the last hurdle, it was McLaughlin who moved ahead and started inching away.

The .12-second margin was close — but not as close as in Doha, when McLaughlin lost by .07 in a race that changed her thinking.

That world championship race showed how good McLaughlin really was, but left her with an undisputable reality. Muhammad, now 31 and a late bloomer who didn't have a sponsor or a spot at the London Olympics in 2012, was better.

McLaughlin changed coaches, joining Bobby Kersee, whose expertise has helped produce what could be a wing of a track and field Hall of Fame: Jackie Joyner-Kersee, Florence Griffith Joyner, Allyson Felix.

Now, McLaughlin.

"This is his 11th Olympics he's coaching, you know he's been around the block a few times," McLaughlin said of Kersee. "And he knew exactly what it was going to take to get me to this point."

Kersee had McLaughlin work at shorter distances, jump off the opposite foot, run indoors more and just get used to different situations. They also worked on staying focused.

Nothing seemed to bother her in Tokyo — not the quarantine rules, the early wake-up times (4 a.m. for the first round) or a drenching rainstorm that hit during the semifinals.

Neither did the expectations of the Olympics or the race. That sort of spotlight has hindered other Olympians. Along with Kersee, McLaughlin credited her faith for helping her cut through the pressure to focus on the race.

"I think it's a weight that you put on yourself that doesn't really exist," she said. "It's the fear of something that hasn't happened yet in your mind that you're assuming has already happened. It's really just making sure that your thoughts are positive."

Her gold medal was proof that her mindset had worked.

It's also the latest in a journey she's been on since she burst onto the international scene in 2016. She was 16, one of the freshest faces in sports, and she came to Olympic trials with stories of how she could juggle, and ride a unicycle, and do both at the same time.

She earned a spot on the U.S. Olympic team in one of the most stacked events on the program, Muhammad, already in her prime, won a gold medal in Rio de Janeiro. McLaughlin was out in the semifinal round. A great learning experience.

She had the good fortune to come of age at a time when another woman was redefining the hurdles game.

Before Muhammad broke it, the world record had stood at 52.34 for 16 years.

"I told Dalilah all the time, it's a little soft. I think we can go faster," said her coach, Boogie Johnson. "She's like, 'You think so?' I'm like, 'Yeah, if we do this, this and this.' We just changed the mindset."

Once an undercard on the track and field schedule, the 400-meter hurdles is now one of the best races at the Olympics.

McLaughlin won it this time.

Muhammad is back to the drawing board.

"I think it's two athletes wanting to be their best," McLaughlin said, "and knowing there's another great girl who's going to help you get there."

## Iranians fear new bill will restrict internet even further

By MEHDI FATTAHI and ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — For Ali Hedielloo, a 40-year-old making wooden furniture in Iran's capital, Instagram is more than just a surfeit of glossy images. Like an estimated 1 million other Iranians, it's how he finds customers, as the app has exploded into a massive e-commerce service in the sanctions-hit country.

But now, the social media platform has come under threat. Iran moved last week toward further government restrictions on Instagram and other apps, as hard-line lawmakers agreed to discuss a bill that many fear will undermine communication, wipe out livelihoods and open the door to the banning of key social media tools.

"I and the people working here are likely to lose our jobs if this bill becomes effective," said Hedielloo from his dimly lit workshop in the southern suburbs of Tehran, where he sands bleached wood and snaps photos of adorned desks to advertise.

The bill has yet to be approved by Iran's hard-liner dominated parliament, but it is already stirring anxiety among young Iranians, avid social media users, online business owners and entrepreneurs. Iran is a country with some 94 million internet devices in use among its over 80 million people. Nearly 70% of Iran's population uses smartphones.

Over 900,000 Iranians have signed a petition opposing the bill. The protest comes at a tense time for Iran, with Ebrahim Raisi, the former judiciary chief and hard-line protege of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, assuming the country's highest civilian position this week. Journalists, civil society advocates and government critics have raised the alarm about the possible increase of social repression once he takes office.

The draft legislation, first proposed this spring by conservative lawmakers, requires major foreign tech giants such as Facebook to register with the Iranian government and be subject to its oversight and data ownership rules.

Companies that host unregistered social media apps in Iran would risk penalties, with authorities empowered to slow down access to the companies' services as a way to force them to comply. Lawmakers have noted that the crippling U.S. sanctions on Iran make the registration of American tech companies in the country impossible, effectively ensuring their ban.

The law would also criminalize the sale and distribution of virtual private networks and proxies — a critical way Iranians access long-blocked social media platforms like Facebook, Telegram, Twitter and YouTube. It also would bar government officials from running accounts on banned social media platforms, which they now use to communicate with citizens and the press. Even the office of the supreme leader has a Twitter account with over 890,000 followers.

And finally, the bill takes control of the internet away from the civilian government and places it under the armed forces.

The bill's goal, according to its authors, is to "protect users and their rights." Hard-liners in the government have long viewed social messaging and media services as part of a "soft war" by the West against the Islamic Republic. Over time, Iran has created what some have called the "halal" internet — the Islamic Republic's own locally controlled version of the internet aimed at restricting what the public can see.

Supporters of the bill, such as hard-line lawmaker Ali Yazdikhah, have hailed it as a step toward an independent Iranian internet, where "people will start to prefer locally developed services" over foreign companies.

"There is no reason to worry, online businesses will stay, and even we promise that they will expand too," he said.

Internet advocates, however, fear the measures will tip the country toward an even more tightly controlled model like China, whose "Great Firewall" blocks access to thousands of foreign websites and slows others.

Iran's outgoing Information Technology Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi, whom the hard-line judiciary summoned for prosecution earlier this year over his refusal to block Instagram, warned that the bill would curtail access to information and lead to full-blown bans of popular messaging apps. In a letter

to Raisi last month, he urged the president-elect to reconsider the bill.

Facebook, which owns Instagram, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Social media is a highly contested space in Iran, where the government retains tight control over newspapers and remains the only entity allowed to broadcast on television and radio. Over recent years, anti-government protesters have used social media as a communication tool to mobilize and spread their message, prompting authorities to cripple internet services.

During the turmoil in the fall of 2019, for instance, the government imposed a near-complete internet blackout. Even scattered demonstrations, such as the recent protests over water shortages in Iran's southwest, have seen disruptions of mobile internet service.

But many ordinary Iranians, reeling from harsh American sanctions that have severed access to international banking systems and triggered runaway inflation, remain more preoccupied with the bill's potential financial fallout.

As the coronavirus ravages Iran, a growing number of people like Hedielloo have turned to Instagram to make a living — tutoring and selling homemade goods and art. Over 190,000 businesses moved online over the past year.

Although much about the bill's fate remains uncertain, experts say it already has sent a chill through commerce on Instagram, where once-hopeful users now doubt they have a future on the app.

"I and everyone else who is working in cyberspace is worried," said Milad Nouri, a software developer and technology analyst. "This includes a teenager playing online games, a YouTuber making money from their channel, an influencer, an online shop based on Instagram."

He added: "Everyone is somehow stressed."

## Hot, gusty weather could mean explosive fire growth in West

GREENVILLE, Calif. (AP) — Thousands of firefighters have prepared for a tougher fight against California's largest wildfire as extremely dangerous weather returns, threatening to stoke flames into explosive growth.

Firefighters were able to save homes and hold large stretches of the blaze but a red flag warning was scheduled for Wednesday afternoon through Thursday because of hot, bone-dry conditions with winds up to 40 mph. That could drive flames through timber, brush and grass, especially along the northern and northeastern sides of the vast blaze.

"I think we definitely have a few hard days ahead of us," said Shannon Prather with the U.S. Forest Service.

The Dixie Fire jumped perimeter lines in a few spots Tuesday, prompting additional evacuation orders for some 15,000 people, fire officials said.

Firefighters prevented flames on Monday from reaching homes in the small Northern California community of Greenville near the Plumas National Forest as the 3-week-old fire grew to over 395 square miles (1,024 square kilometers) across Plumas and Butte counties.

On Tuesday, spot fires jumped some of the perimeters and burned several acres of brush on the western side of the blaze, even though crews had cut back areas of unburned fuel with bulldozers and dumped some 230,000 gallons (870,600 litres) of fire retardant, said Mike Wink, a state fire operations section chief.

Heat from the flames also created a pyrocumulus cloud, a massive column of smoke that rose 30,000 feet (10,000 yards) in the air, he said.

The fire has threatened thousands of homes and destroyed 67 houses and other buildings since breaking out July 14. It was 35% contained.

About 150 miles (240 kilometers) west of California's Dixie Fire, the lightning-sparked McFarland Fire threatened remote homes along the Trinity River in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. The fire was only 5% contained. It was burning fiercely through drought-stricken vegetation and had doubled in size every day, fire officials warned.

Similar risky weather was expected across Southern California, where heat advisories and warnings were issued for interior valleys, mountains and deserts for much of the week.

Heat waves and historic drought tied to climate change have made wildfires harder to fight in the Ameri-



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 33 of 75

can West. Scientists say climate change has made the region much warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive.

More than 20,000 firefighters and support personnel were battling 97 large, active wildfires covering 2,919 square miles (7,560 square kilometers) in 13 U.S. states, the National Interagency Fire Center said.

Montana had 25 active large blazes, followed by Idaho with 21 and Oregon with 13. California had 11.

In Hawaii, firefighters gained control over the 62-square-mile (160-square-kilometer) Nation Fire that forced thousands of people to evacuate over the weekend and destroyed at least two homes on the Big Island.

In southern Oregon, lightning struck parched forests hundreds of times in a 24-hour period, igniting 50 new wildfires. But firefighters and aircraft attacked the flames before they spread out of control and no homes were immediately threatened.

Meanwhile, Oregon's Bootleg Fire, the nation's largest at 647 square miles (1,676 square kilometers), was 84% contained and firefighters were busy mopping up hot spots and strengthening fire lines.

"Crews are working tirelessly to ensure we are as prepared as we can be for the extreme fire weather forecast for the next couple days," a U.S. Forest Service update said.

## Trump-backed Carey, centrist Brown win Ohio US House races

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Mike Carey, a coal lobbyist backed by former President Donald Trump, beat a bevy of Republicans in central Ohio, while Cuyahoga County Council member Shontel Brown pulled out a victory for the Democratic establishment in Cleveland, in a pair of primary elections for open House seats Tuesday.

The special elections were both viewed as a measure of voters' influences, though low turnout and huge candidate fields complicated interpreting the results too broadly. In both races, party leaders showed they still held sway.

Carey's race reinforced Trump's status as GOP kingmaker, particularly after the former president's preferred candidate lost a special election in Texas last week. Brown's primary win over progressive Nina Turner handed another blow to a liberal wing that has been challenging the Democratic old guard with a more confrontational style.

Turner, a leading national voice for Bernie Sanders' presidential campaigns, was for many months the best known and most visible among 13 Democrats running in the fiercely fought primary and the choice of Sanders, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and others.

But Brown, a centrist backed by Hillary Clinton, influential House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn, the Congressional Black Caucus, leading unions and many local leaders, prevailed after a surge in national attention to her campaign in the weeks leading up to the election.

In the heavily Democratic 11th Congressional District, she is strongly favored in the Nov. 2 general election over Laverne Gore, a business owner, consultant, trainer and community activist who won the Republican nomination.

In her victory speech, Brown said she has not sought "headlines or attention" in her nine years as a local legislator, but effectiveness and making headway.

"Things I've done haven't gotten a lot of attention. They're not sexy," she said. "But I don't need the credit. I just need to make sure the people I have been called to serve are getting the resources they need. I'm not about lip service. I'm about public service."

Turner said she knew the campaign would be an uphill battle.

"While we didn't cross the river, we inspired thousands to dream bigger and expect more," she said in a Twitter statement. "We couldn't overcome the influence of dark money, but we left our mark on OH11 and this nation."

The race came at a pivotal moment for the progressive movement. Centrists have been ascendant in the early months of the President Joe Biden era, while the party's left flank has faced a series of defeats — in New York City's mayoral race, a Virginia gubernatorial primary and a Louisiana House race.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 34 of 75

Meanwhile, a contingent of moderates are worried that a leftward drift could cost the party seats in the next year's midterm elections. Biden hasn't heeded the left's calls for more aggressive action on such issues as voting rights and immigration.

That's left progressive leaders searching for new strategies that can bolster its influence. Turner would have added another voice to those efforts, but Brown successfully used her history of biting criticism of fellow Democrats — she once likened supporting Biden to being forced to eat excrement — against her.

The political newcomer Carey defeated a crowd of other Republican candidates in his Columbus-area race, including some with establishment backing and experience in state politics.

He'll take on Democratic state Rep. Allison Russo, a health policy consultant who won the Democratic nomination, in the GOP-leaning 15th Congressional District this fall.

Trump quickly celebrated Carey's win Tuesday in a statement.

"Thank you to Ohio and all of our wonderful American patriots," he said. "Congratulations to Mike and his family. He will never let you down!"

Democratic U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown tweeted congratulations to Russo, pledging to "get to work to elect a champion for Ohio working families this November."

The GOP result was a blow to former U.S. Rep. Steve Stivers, a moderate Republican who retired from the seat in May and endorsed state Rep. Jeff LaRe, a security executive with law enforcement experience, in the race.

But Stivers pledged he'd support Carey this fall and LaRe called for Republican to "all work together to keep central Ohio red for decades to come."

Tuesday's results come as recent polling shows Democrats are generally upbeat about their party's future and the job Biden is doing, while the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll reflected widespread unease among Republicans over everything from the direction of the country to the state of American democracy and Biden's performance. Most want Trump to have at least some influence over their party's future direction.

All of the candidates in the Columbus-area GOP primary billed themselves as conservatives and many boasted more legislative-branch experience than Carey, including LaRe, state Sens. Bob Peterson and Stephanie Kunze and former state Rep. Ron Hood. In the end, they divided the vote and left Carey with only about 37% of the vote to win.

By contrast, with nearly all votes counted, more than 94% of votes in the Cleveland-area 11th District voted for either Brown and Turner, dividing the rest among the other 11 candidates.

## For Missouri congresswoman, eviction fight is personal

By BRIAN SLODYSKO and JIM SALTER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Roughly two decades before she was elected to Congress, Rep. Cori Bush of Missouri lived in a Ford Explorer with her then-husband and two young children after the family had been evicted from their rental home.

So for Bush, a freshman Democrat from St. Louis, the debate over whether to revive the moratorium on evictions during the pandemic is deeply personal. To dramatize her point, she started to sleep outside the U.S. Capitol last Friday to call attention to the issue as part of the effort to pressure President Joe Biden and Congress to act.

On Tuesday, she won. After coming under intense pressure, the Biden administration issued a new eviction moratorium that will last until October 3, temporarily halting evictions in counties with "substantial and high levels" of virus transmissions, which covers areas where 90% of the U.S. population lives.

Bush's experience sets her apart from the more conventional partisan sniping and grandstanding in the capital because of her direct connection to an urgent problem affecting millions of Americans.

"I know what it's like to be evicted and have to live out of my car with my two babies," Bush said in an interview Saturday. "As long as I am a sitting U.S. congressperson, I will not keep my mouth shut about it."

Bush was a prominent part of a larger push among progressives to stop evictions, and the Biden admin-

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 35 of 75

istration moved quickly to provide a policy response. It thrust her swiftly into meetings with top congressional leaders and administration officials and she was sought after for interviews.

She met Monday with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, and had a brief chat with Vice President Kamala Harris — attention that punctuates a political rise that took Bush from leading protests against police brutality in Ferguson, Missouri, to the halls of Congress in little more than five years.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Tuesday gave a salute to Bush “for her powerful action to keep people in their homes.”

Before reversing course, the Biden administration initially argued it didn’t have legal authority to extend the moratorium again, pointing to a Supreme Court opinion in June that suggested Congress should pass legislation to do so.

A last-minute attempt to pass a bill through the House also came up short Friday. Then the chamber adjourned and lawmakers left town for an extended August recess — a response Bush says “failed to meet this moment.”

On Tuesday, before the administration’s announcement, Bush said: “Am I supposed to just go home? No, I’m an organizer. I am an activist. So I fell back into what I know how to do.”

It is activism borne of personal experience.

In 2001, Bush became ill while pregnant with her second child and had to quit her job at a preschool. The lost income led to their eviction.

For about three months the couple lived out of their Explorer with two playpens in the back. She said that, at the time, she was working in a low-wage job. Eventually, her family, already struggling themselves, was able to help her find a home.

“I don’t want anyone else to have to go through what I went through, ever,” Bush said while wiping away tears.

The couple later divorced and Bush went back to school, earning a nursing degree. She also became a pastor.

Her life changed in 2014 when a white police officer fatally shot Michael Brown, a Black and unarmed 18-year-old, in the St. Louis suburb of Ferguson, Missouri.

Bush joined the thousands of activists in the protests that followed the shooting and quickly became a leader of the movement that sought police and criminal justice reform in Ferguson and throughout the St. Louis region. She was back on the streets again three years later after a white St. Louis police officer was acquitted in the shooting death of a Black suspect.

Her activism fueled an interest in politics. She ran unsuccessfully in the Democratic primary for the U.S. Senate in 2016, followed by another losing primary race for a St. Louis’ congressional seat in 2018, in which she was defeated by roughly 20 percentage points.

Two years later, her supporters sensed a change in the political landscape in the aftermath of George Floyd’s death. With backing from the progressive group Justice Democrats, she sought a rematch against longtime Democratic Rep. William Lacy Clay — and won.

“They counted us out,” Bush said after her primary win. “They called me — I’m just the protester, I’m just the activist with no name, no title and no real money. That’s all they said that I was. But St. Louis showed up today.”

She won easily in heavily Democratic St. Louis in November.

The Rev. Darryl Gray, a political adviser to Bush, said her tenacity was apparent early in her failed 2016 bid for Senate, when she was willing to campaign in rural and very conservative corners of the state.

“She wasn’t afraid to show up and speak for justice in places where people would warn us about going, some of these ‘sunset towns,’” Gray said. “She knew she wouldn’t get support, but people respected the fact she showed up.”

Still, there are some who questioned the decision to pick a fight with congressional leadership and the president from her own party. Administration and congressional officials also noted that much of the money Congress had allocated to provide housing assistance has not been distributed by states.

House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn said he was “sensitive” to Bush’s aim, but suggested she may be wag-

ing the wrong battle.

"It's not the federal government that's doing it," Clyburn said. "If you've appropriated \$46 billion for the country, and only \$3 billion has been used, then that's not Congress. ... It's on whoever has got the money tied up."

Tuesday evening, after the administration made its announcement, Bush tweeted out a photo of her and others sitting on the Capitol steps with a one-word caption: Grateful.

## **CDC issues new eviction ban for most of US through Oct. 3**

By JOSH BOAK, LISA MASCARO and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a new eviction moratorium that would last until Oct. 3, as the Biden administration sought to quell intensifying criticism from progressives that it was allowing vulnerable renters to lose their homes during a pandemic.

The ban announced Tuesday could help keep millions in their homes as the coronavirus' delta variant has spread and states have been slow to release federal rental aid. It would temporarily halt evictions in counties with "substantial and high levels" of virus transmissions and would cover areas where 90% of the U.S. population lives.

The announcement was a reversal for the Biden administration, which allowed an earlier moratorium to lapse over the weekend after saying a Supreme Court ruling prevented an extension. That ripped open a dramatic split between the White House and progressive Democrats who insisted the administration do more to prevent some 3.6 million Americans from losing their homes during the COVID-19 crisis.

Speaking at the White House on Tuesday, Biden said he pushed the CDC to again consider its options. But he still seemed hesitant as to whether the new moratorium could withstand lawsuits about its constitutionality, saying he has sought the opinions of experts as to whether the Supreme Court would approve the measure.

"The bulk of the constitutional scholarship says that it's not likely to pass constitutional muster," Biden said. "But there are several key scholars who think that it may and it's worth the effort."

The president added that the moratorium — even if it gets challenged in court — "will probably give some additional time" for states and city to release billions of dollars in federal relief to renters.

Politically, the extension could help heal a rift with liberal Democratic lawmakers who were calling on the president to take executive action to keep renters in their homes. The administration had spent the past several days scrambling to reassure Democrats and the country that it could find a way to limit the damage from potential evictions through the use of federal aid.

But pressure mounted as key lawmakers said it was not enough.

Top Democratic leaders joined Rep. Cori Bush, D-Mo., who has been camped outside the U.S. Capitol for several days. The freshman congresswoman once lived in her car as a young mother and pointed to that experience to urge the White House to prevent widespread evictions.

As she wiped her eyes before a crowd at the Capitol after the CDC's announcement, Bush said she was shedding "joyful tears."

"My God, I don't believe we did this," she said. "We just did the work, just by loving folks to keep millions in their homes."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said it was a day of "extraordinary relief."

"The imminent fear of eviction and being put out on the street has been lifted for countless families across America. Help is Here!" Pelosi said in a statement.

Administration officials had previously said a Supreme Court ruling stopped them from setting up a new moratorium without congressional backing. When the court allowed the eviction ban to remain in place through the end of July by a 5-4 vote, one justice in the majority, Brett Kavanaugh, wrote that Congress would have to act to extend it further.

But on Tuesday, the CDC cited the slow pace of state and local governments disbursing housing aid as justification for the new moratorium.

Aside from the moratorium, Biden has insisted that federal money is available — some \$47 billion pre-



viously approved during the pandemic — that needs to get out the door to help renters and landlords.

“The money is there,” Biden said.

The White House has said state and local governments have been slow to push out that federal money and is pressing them to do so swiftly.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen briefed House Democrats Tuesday about the work underway to ensure the federal housing aid makes it to renters and landlords. She provided data so that lawmakers could see how their districts and states are performing with distributing the relief, according to a person on the call.

The treasury secretary tried to encourage Democrats to work together, even as lawmakers said Biden should act on his own to extend the eviction moratorium, according to someone on the private call who insisted on anonymity to discuss its contents.

Yellen said on the call, according to this person, that she agrees “we need to bring every resource to bear” and that she appreciated the Democrats’ efforts and wants “to leave no stone unturned.”

The CDC put the initial eviction ban in place as part of the COVID-19 response when jobs shifted and many workers lost income. The ban was intended to hold back the spread of the virus among people put out on the streets and into shelters, but it also penalized landlords who lost income as a result.

National Apartment Association president and CEO Bob Pinnegar said the organization “has always held the same position -- the eviction moratorium is an unfunded government mandate that forces housing providers to deliver a costly service without compensation and saddles renters with insurmountable debt.”

Democratic lawmakers said they were caught by surprise by Biden’s initial decision to end the moratorium even though the CDC indicated in late June that it probably wouldn’t extend the eviction ban beyond the end of July.

Rep. Maxine Waters, the powerful chair of the Financial Services Committee, has been talking privately for days with Yellen and urged the treasury secretary to use her influence to prod states to push the money out the door. But Waters also called on the CDC to act on its own.

After the CDC’s announcement Tuesday, Waters released a statement thanking Biden “for listening and for encouraging the CDC to act! This extension of the moratorium is the lifeline that millions of families have been waiting for.”

## **EXPLAINER: Where does harassment report leave Andrew Cuomo?**

By The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s monthslong fall from grace reached a nadir Tuesday, when investigators said they substantiated sexual harassment allegations against him from 11 women, many of whom have worked for him.

Cuomo, once widely beloved for his telegenic response to the coronavirus pandemic, continues to deny the allegations and maintains he isn’t going anywhere — but his political future might soon be out of his own hands.

Here are the takeaways from the report and Cuomo’s response, along with what happens next:

**WHAT WAS CUOMO ACCUSED OF DOING?**

Multiple women accused Cuomo of sexual harassment and assault. The public allegations, which started in December and cascaded over the winter, ranged from inappropriate comments to forced kisses and groping.

**DID THE ATTORNEY GENERAL’S PROBE FIND CUOMO GUILTY?**

Well, no. A probe can’t find anyone guilty — that’s for a judge and jury to decide. Plus, the probe was civil, not criminal, in nature. But investigators did find the 11 women were telling the truth about Cuomo’s behavior and that Cuomo created a hostile work environment “rife with fear and intimidation.”

**BUT WILL CUOMO BE CHARGED?**

State Attorney General Letitia James, who oversaw the probe, said there would be no criminal referral but local police and prosecutors can use the evidence and findings to build their own cases. The district attorney in New York’s capital, Albany, said Tuesday he was requesting James’ investigative materials and

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 38 of 75

encouraged victims to come forward.

CUOMO TOLD THE PUBLIC TO WAIT TO JUDGE HIM UNTIL THE INVESTIGATION WAS COMPLETE. WHAT DOES HE SAY NOW?

Cuomo is more defiant than ever, refuting allegations in a taped response and saying “the facts are much different than what has been portrayed” and that he “never touched anyone inappropriately or made inappropriate sexual advances.” He also alleged that the investigation itself was fueled by “politics and bias.”

HOW IS CUOMO EXPLAINING HIS BEHAVIOR?

Cuomo apologized for making staffers feel uncomfortable, but chalked up some of the allegations to misunderstandings caused by generational and cultural differences (he’s Italian American) while flat-out denying the more serious allegations. Accompanied by multiple slideshows of Cuomo and other politicians embracing members of the public, the governor said the gesture was inherited from his parents and meant to convey warmth.

IS ANYONE PRESSURING CUOMO TO RESIGN?

Lots of people. President Joe Biden — once Cuomo’s close ally — said Tuesday that, while he hadn’t read the report, he thought Cuomo should quit. Both U.S. senators for New York, Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, say he should resign. So does U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the governors of neighboring New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Connecticut, and many other Democrats.

OK, SO WHAT’S NEXT IF CUOMO DOESN’T RESIGN?

The state Assembly has the power to bring impeachment charges against Cuomo and aims to wrap up its own probe “as quickly as possible,” according to Speaker Carl Heastie, a Democrat who said it was clear Cuomo could no longer remain in office. The Assembly could theoretically vote to launch impeachment proceedings before the probe is finished.

WHY CAN’T NEW YORKERS JUST RECALL CUOMO?

This isn’t California. New York has no mechanism to remove elected officials via recall.

FINE. HOW DOES IMPEACHMENT IN NEW YORK WORK?

New York impeachments start in the Assembly, and if a majority of members vote to impeach Cuomo, the matter moves to the Impeachment Court. In this case, that court would comprise the state Senate — minus its majority leader — and the seven judges of the state’s highest court. Two-thirds of the court would need to vote to convict to remove Cuomo.

HAS A GOVERNOR OF NEW YORK EVER BEEN IMPEACHED?

Once, in 1913. Gov. William Sulzer was ousted after less than a year in office. He claimed his impeachment was retribution for turning his back on the powerful Tammany Hall Democratic machine.

IF CUOMO LEAVES OFFICE, WHO WOULD BECOME GOVERNOR?

Kathy Hochul, the 62-year-old lieutenant governor. The Democrat from western New York once served in Congress, but has a limited public profile in the state.

IS CUOMO IN ANY OTHER TROUBLE?

James is also investigating into whether Cuomo broke the law in having members of his staff help write and promote his pandemic leadership book, “American Crisis: Leadership Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic,” for which he was set to earn more than \$5 million. Federal investigators are also probing the state’s handling of data related to nursing home deaths.

IF HE ISN’T OUSTED, WILL VOTERS HAVE A SAY?

So far, all signs point to him running for a fourth term in 2022, and he has begun fundraising. Some polling earlier this year suggested the public’s support for Cuomo had slipped, but not dramatically so. No other Democrats have officially issued a primary challenge. On the Republican side, possible opponents include U.S. Rep. Lee Zeldin and Andrew Giuliani, son of Rudy.

WAS THIS PROBE POLITICAL?

James has denied having any political motivations for the probe, which was authorized by Cuomo, and has not said publicly whether she is interested in running for governor. While her office oversaw the probe, it was conducted by two outside lawyers, Anne Clark and Joon Kim, who spoke with 179 people — includ-

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 39 of 75

ing Cuomo himself.

**DID THE INVESTIGATION UNCOVER ANY ALLEGATIONS THAT WE DIDN'T ALREADY KNOW ABOUT?**

Yes — according to the report, a state trooper on Cuomo's security detail said Cuomo ran his hand or fingers across her stomach and her back, kissed her on the cheek, asked for her help in finding a girlfriend and asked why she didn't wear a dress. The report also included an allegation from a woman working for an energy company who said Cuomo touched her chest at an event and brushed his hand between her shoulder and breasts.

**HOW DID CUOMO RETALIATE AGAINST A FORMER EMPLOYEE?**

The former employee in question is Lindsey Boylan, Cuomo's first public accuser. Investigators said Cuomo's team sent reporters Boylan's personnel records within hours of Boylan's December tweet alleging sexual harassment. They also said the governor's circle circulated a letter that "attacked" Boylan's alleged work conduct and theorized she was funded by far-right Republicans.

**WHAT WERE CUOMO'S ACCUSERS' RESPONSES TO THE REPORT?**

Charlotte Bennett, a former aide to whom Cuomo personally apologized in a taped response to the findings, called the apology "meaningless" and said that if the governor were truly sorry, he would step down. A lawyer for two accusers called Cuomo's response "laughable" and "manipulative." Boylan's attorney expressed gratitude toward investigators.

**WILL CUOMO TALK ABOUT THIS ON HIS BROTHER'S SHOW?**

Probably not. The governor's brother, Chris Cuomo, is a CNN anchor. The fraternal duo — sons of the late Gov. Mario Cuomo — grabbed headlines in the early days of the pandemic for their banter on the younger Cuomo's primetime show, but Chris Cuomo has since been barred from covering his brother. Tuesday's report also detailed how Chris Cuomo advised his older brother.

## **Analysis: Delta variant upends politicians' COVID calculus**

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's administration drew up a strategy to contain one coronavirus strain, then another showed up that's much more contagious.

This week — a month late — Biden met his goal of 70% of U.S. adults having received at least one COVID-19 shot. Originally conceived as an affirmation of American resiliency to coincide with Independence Day, the belated milestone offered little to celebrate. Driven by the delta variant, new cases are averaging more than 70,000 a day, above the peak last summer when no vaccines were available. And the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is drawing criticism from experts in the medical and scientific community for its off-and-on masking recommendations.

But the delta variant makes no distinctions when it comes to politics. If Biden's pandemic response is found wanting, Republican governors opposed to pandemic mandates also face an accounting. They, too, were counting on a backdrop of declining cases. Instead unvaccinated patients are crowding their hospitals.

The Biden administration's process-driven approach succeeded in delivering more than enough vaccine to protect the country, sufficient to ship 110 million doses overseas. When the president first set his 70% vaccination target on May 4, the U.S. was dispensing around 965,000 first doses per day, a rate more than twice as fast as needed to reach the July 4 goal.

Then things started to happen.

While the White House was aware of public surveys showing swaths of the population unwilling or unmotivated to get a shot, officials didn't anticipate that nearly 90 million Americans would continue to spurn lifesaving vaccines that offer a pathway back to normalcy. The spread of misinformation about the vaccines enabled a festering fog of doubt that has clung close to the ground in many communities, particularly in Republican-led states.

Yet on May 13, when the CDC largely lifted its mask-wearing guidance for fully vaccinated adults indoors, topline indicators were still flashing green. The agency said unvaccinated people should keep wearing masks — and get their shots soon. Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris celebrated by doffing their masks and

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 40 of 75

strolling in the Rose Garden of the White House. Around the country, an everyday celebration spread to coffee shops, supermarkets, beer gardens and restaurants. People planned weddings and music festivals.

Drowned out in the applause were expert warnings that there was no way to tell who was and who wasn't vaccinated, and a country restless for an end to the pandemic was essentially being placed on the honor system.

"The single biggest mistake of the Biden presidency when it comes to COVID 19 was the CDC's precipitous and chaotic change in masking guidance back in May," said Dr. Leana Wen, a former Baltimore health commissioner and commentator. "It had the direct result of giving people the impression the pandemic was over. It allowed unvaccinated people to have free rein and behave as if they were vaccinated, and therefore we have the surge of the delta variant."

"I think they were naive," Dr. Paul Offit, director of the Vaccine Education Center at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, said of the CDC. "They saw it as a carrot, as a gift."

Meanwhile, the delta variant had arrived, and in a matter of weeks would become the dominant strain in circulation.

CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky recently confirmed just how much more contagious delta is. "If you get sick with the alpha variant, you could infect about two other unvaccinated people," she said. "If you get sick with the delta variant, we estimate that you could infect about five other unvaccinated people — more than twice as many as the original strain."

Last week, the CDC reversed course on masks, recommending that even vaccinated people again mask up indoors in areas where the virus is on the march, now most of the country.

The immediate reason was a report by disease detectives of a recent outbreak in Provincetown, Massachusetts. The delta variant was to blame and a majority of those infected had been vaccinated. Although very few vaccinated people got sick enough to be hospitalized, the initial findings showed vaccinated people with breakthrough infections were carrying about as much virus as unvaccinated people.

The report fed vaccine doubts in some quarters. Wen, the former health commissioner, said the CDC should have put the Provincetown report in a fuller context that showed vaccines do keep protecting. CDC did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Back on July 4 Biden proclaimed that the nation was declaring its independence from the virus. In recent weeks, he seemed to have moved on from the pandemic. The president was focused on securing a bipartisan deal on infrastructure and on selling the separate Democrats-only legislation to carry out his ambitious domestic agenda. The number of White House COVID-19 briefings dwindled.

"We celebrated prematurely," said Ali Mokdad, an infectious disease expert with the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington in Seattle. Biden's 70% goal was a solid step, said Mokdad, but about half the population is not yet fully vaccinated.

Now vaccinations are again edging upward, but the data don't show a dramatic increase.

Meanwhile, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, Republicans dismissive of mask requirements, are staring at surges in their states. Together, Florida and Texas accounted for about one-third of new cases nationally in the past week. DeSantis doubled down on defiance Tuesday, blaming "media hysteria" and people spending more time indoors in the sweltering summer.

"Even among a lot of positive tests, you are seeing much less mortality that you did year-over-year," he said at a Miami-area news conference. "Would I rather have 5,000 cases among 20-year-olds or 500 cases among seniors? I would rather have the younger."

Offit, the Philadelphia vaccines expert, says "it's hard to watch" DeSantis say he won't abide mask mandates. "Why not?" asked Offit. "That is why his state leads the league in cases."

## CDC issues new eviction ban for most of US through Oct. 3

By JOSH BOAK, LISA MASCARO and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a new eviction moratorium that would last until Oct. 3, as the Biden administration sought to quell intensifying criticism from progres-



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 41 of 75

sives that it was allowing vulnerable renters to lose their homes during a pandemic.

The ban announced Tuesday could help keep millions in their homes as the coronavirus' delta variant has spread and states have been slow to release federal rental aid. It would temporarily halt evictions in counties with "substantial and high levels" of virus transmissions and would cover areas where 90% of the U.S. population lives.

The announcement was a reversal for the Biden administration, which allowed an earlier moratorium to lapse over the weekend after saying a Supreme Court ruling prevented an extension. That ripped open a dramatic split between the White House and progressive Democrats who insisted the administration do more to prevent some 3.6 million Americans from losing their homes during the COVID-19 crisis.

Speaking at the White House on Tuesday, Biden said he pushed the CDC to again consider its options. But he still seemed hesitant as to whether the new moratorium could withstand lawsuits about its constitutionality, saying he has sought the opinions of experts as to whether the Supreme Court would approve the measure.

"The bulk of the constitutional scholarship says that it's not likely to pass constitutional muster," Biden said. "But there are several key scholars who think that it may and it's worth the effort."

The president added that the moratorium — even if it gets challenged in court — "will probably give some additional time" for states and city to release billions of dollars in federal relief to renters.

Politically, the extension could help heal a rift with liberal Democratic lawmakers who were calling on the president to take executive action to keep renters in their homes. The administration had spent the past several days scrambling to reassure Democrats and the country that it could find a way to limit the damage from potential evictions through the use of federal aid.

But pressure mounted as key lawmakers said it was not enough.

Top Democratic leaders joined Rep. Cori Bush, D-Mo., who has been camped outside the U.S. Capitol for several days. Overnight Monday Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rep. Jimmy Gomez, D-Calif., and others gave her a brief reprieve so she could rest indoors. The freshman congresswoman once lived in her car as a young mother and pointed to that experience to urge the White House to prevent widespread evictions.

As she wiped her eyes before a crowd at the Capitol after the CDC's announcement, Bush said she was shedding "joyful tears."

"My God, I don't believe we did this," she said. "We just did the work, just by loving folks to keep millions in their homes."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said it was a day of "extraordinary relief."

"The imminent fear of eviction and being put out on the street has been lifted for countless families across America. Help is Here!" Pelosi said in a statement.

Administration officials had previously said a Supreme Court ruling stopped them from setting up a new moratorium without congressional backing. When the court allowed the eviction ban to remain in place through the end of July by a 5-4 vote, one justice in the majority, Brett Kavanaugh, wrote that Congress would have to act to extend it further.

But on Tuesday, the CDC cited the slow pace of state and local governments disbursing housing aid as justification for the new moratorium.

Aside from the moratorium, Biden has insisted that federal money is available — some \$47 billion previously approved during the pandemic — that needs to get out the door to help renters and landlords.

"The money is there," Biden said.

The White House has said state and local governments have been slow to push out that federal money and is pressing them to do so swiftly.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen briefed House Democrats Tuesday about the work underway to ensure the federal housing aid makes it to renters and landlords. She provided data so that lawmakers could see how their districts and states are performing with distributing the relief, according to a person on the call.

The treasury secretary tried to encourage Democrats to work together, even as lawmakers said Biden should act on his own to extend the eviction moratorium, according to someone on the private call who

insisted on anonymity to discuss its contents.

Yellen said on the call, according to this person, that she agrees "we need to bring every resource to bear" and that she appreciated the Democrats' efforts and wants "to leave no stone unturned."

The CDC put the initial eviction ban in place as part of the COVID-19 response when jobs shifted and many workers lost income. The ban was intended to hold back the spread of the virus among people put out on the streets and into shelters, but it also penalized landlords who lost income as a result.

National Apartment Association president and CEO Bob Pinnegar said the organization "has always held the same position -- the eviction moratorium is an unfunded government mandate that forces housing providers to deliver a costly service without compensation and saddles renters with insurmountable debt."

Democratic lawmakers said they were caught by surprise by Biden's initial decision to end the moratorium even though the CDC indicated in late June that it probably wouldn't extend the eviction ban beyond the end of July.

Rep. Maxine Waters, the powerful chair of the Financial Services Committee, has been talking privately for days with Yellen and urged the treasury secretary to use her influence to prod states to push the money out the door. But Waters also called on the CDC to act on its own.

After the CDC's announcement Tuesday, Waters released a statement thanking Biden "for listening and for encouraging the CDC to act! This extension of the moratorium is the lifeline that millions of families have been waiting for."

## Huge California fire grows as heat spikes again across state

GREENVILLE, Calif. (AP) — California's largest wildfire exploded again after burning for nearly three weeks in remote mountains and officials warned Tuesday that hot, dry weather would increase the risk of new fires across much of the state.

Firefighters saved homes Monday in the small northern California community of Greenville near the Plumas National Forest as strong winds stoked the Dixie Fire, which grew to over 395 square miles (1,024 square kilometers) across Plumas and Butte counties.

"Engines, crews and heavy equipment shifted from other areas to increase structure protection and direct line construction as the fire moved toward Greenville," the state Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, known as Cal Fire, said Tuesday morning.

Evacuations were ordered for the community of about 1,000 people as well as for the east shore of nearby Lake Almanor, a popular resort area. About 3,000 homes were threatened by the blaze that has destroyed 67 houses and other buildings since breaking out July 14. It was 35% contained.

Crews contended with dry, hot and windy conditions "and the forecast calls for the return of active fire behavior," Cal Fire said.

Similar weather was expected across Southern California, where heat advisories and warnings were issued for interior valleys, mountains and deserts for much of the week.

Heat waves and historic drought tied to climate change have made wildfires harder to fight in the American West. Scientists say climate change has made the region much warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive.

More than 20,000 firefighters and support personnel were battling 97 large, active wildfires covering 2,919 square miles (7,560 square kilometers) in 13 U.S. states on Tuesday, the National Interagency Fire Center said.

Dry conditions and powerful winds made for dangerous fire conditions again on Tuesday in Hawaii.

Firefighters gained control over the 62-square-mile (160-square-kilometer) Nation Fire that forced thousands of people to evacuate over the weekend and destroyed at least two homes on the Big Island.

About 150 miles (240 km) west of California's Dixie Fire, the lightning-sparked McFarland Fire threatened remote homes along the Trinity River in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. The nearly 25-square-mile (65-square-mile) fire was 5% contained Tuesday.

In southern Oregon, lightning struck parched forests hundreds of times in a 24 hour-period, igniting 50

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 43 of 75

new wildfires as the nation's largest blaze burned less than 100 miles (161 kilometers) away, officials said Monday.

Firefighters and aircraft attacked the new fires before they could spread out of control. No homes were immediately threatened.

Oregon's Bootleg Fire, the nation's largest at 647 square miles (1,676 square kilometers), was 84% contained and is not expected to be fully under control until Oct. 1.

## **Black women, across generations, heed Biles' Olympic example**

BY AARON MORRISON, ASTRID GALVAN and DEEPTI HAJELA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Naomi Osaka. Simone Biles. Both are prominent young Black women under the pressure of a global Olympic spotlight that few human beings ever know. Both have faced major career crossroads at the Tokyo Games. Both cited pressure and mental health.

The glare is even hotter for these Black women given that, after years of sacrifice and preparation, they are expected to perform, to be strong, to push through. They must work harder for the recognition and often are judged more harshly than others when they don't meet the public's expectations.

So when New York city resident Natelegé Whaley heard that Black women athletes competing in the Tokyo Olympics were asserting their right to take care of their mental health, over the pressure to perform a world away, she took special notice.

"This is powerful," said Whaley, who is Black. "They are leading the way and changing the way we look at athletes as humans, and also Black women as humans."

Being a young Black woman — which, in American life, comes with its own built-in pressure to perform — entails much more than meets the eye, according to several Black women and advocates who spoke to The Associated Press.

The Tokyo Games show signs of signaling the end of an era — one in which Black women on the world stage give so much of themselves that they have little to nothing left, said Patrisse Cullors, an activist and author who co-founded the Black Lives Matter movement eight years ago.

"Black women are not going to die (for public acceptance). We're not going to be martyrs anymore," said Cullors, who resigned her role as director of a BLM nonprofit foundation in May. "A gold medal is not worth someone losing their minds. I'm listening to Simone and hearing her say, 'I'm more important than this competition.'"

She added: "Activism and organizing is just one contribution that I've given. And we all need to know when enough is enough for us."

Biles' message also resonated with Whaley, who co-created an event series in New York City called Brooklyn Recess to preserve the culture of Double Dutch, a rope jumping sport popular in Black communities. Early on, Whaley and co-creator Naima Moore-Turner found they were talking a lot about a mental health component to their events.

"People will say, 'Let Black women lead, because they know,'" said Whaley, a 32-year-old freelance race and culture writer.

"It's like, (Black women) know not because we're some sort of special humans who are supernatural," she said. "It's because we live at those intersections where we have no choice but to know."

### ATHLETES AT THE FOREFRONT

The world's greatest living Olympian, swimmer Michael Phelps, has been credited with elevating a conversation about sports and mental health. But when Phelps hung up his goggles five years ago, he was less likely to be burdened by the chronic health disparities, sexual violence, police brutality and workplace discrimination that Black women, famous or not, endure daily.

Still, the Black women Olympic athletes, echoed by many of their sisters in the U.S. and around the world, stepped forward and said they need to protect their mental health. They didn't ask for sympathy or permission. They demanded people respect their decisions and let them be.

"I say put mental health first because if you don't, then you're not going to enjoy your sport and you're

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 44 of 75

not going to succeed as much as you want to," Biles, 24, said after pulling out of the women's team gymnastics final on July 27. Before the Tokyo Games, she was already the most decorated American gymnast in modern times.

Prioritizing mental wellness "shows how strong of a competitor and person that you really are, rather than just battle through it," she said.

Biles went on to win a bronze medal in the balance beam competition on Tuesday.

Four-time Grand Slam winner Naomi Osaka, 23, first raised concerns about her mental health in June when she avoided speaking to the press during the French Open, and ultimately pulled herself out of the competition until the Tokyo Games. Although Osaka was eliminated from Olympic medal competition, she reiterated her concern for her own well-being.

"I definitely feel like there was a lot of pressure for this," Osaka said after the Olympic defeat. Weeks earlier, she had written an op-ed for Time magazine in which she said: "It's OK to not be OK, and it's OK to talk about it."

Some of these attitudes might be about age. Many young people feel empowered to speak about mental health in a way previous generations have not.

Biles and Osaka, born months apart in 1997, are members of Gen Z, the first generation whose entire lives have been online. Gen Z-ers are notably more open about mental health struggles, said Nicole O'Hare, a licensed counselor in the Phoenix area.

"It's so beautiful to witness this sort of normalization of mental health and asking for help," O'Hare said. "They're really pushing that barrier and saying I can't, I need help, I'm struggling, I need support. ... If we really listen to what they're asking, we can hear a whole lot."

## FACING MORE CHALLENGES

Even with the increased discussion, the overlooking of Black women's mental and emotional wellness is far from new.

Before slavery's abolition, enslaved Black women rarely enjoyed agency over their bodies or their families. They were wet nurses to enslavers' wives, objectified for sexual desires and made to toil in fields and homes without credit for successes or innovations. After slavery was abolished in 1865, Black women gained the right to vote with ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920, 50 years after Black men.

More recently, Black women's mental health is likely to be impacted by disparities in health and socioeconomics. African American women have a maternal mortality rate three times higher than white women, and are more likely to report not being believed when they seek treatment for pain from medical professionals.

While they are architects and leaders of the modern movement against police violence, Black women are also victims of it. And with various studies showing Black people as much as three times as likely as white people to be fatally shot by police, Black women are more often grieving the loss of family members or close friends to police violence.

They are also more likely to experience sexual assault in their lifetimes, an issue that likely resonates with Biles, who reported being assaulted by Larry Nassar, the former USA Gymnastics team doctor convicted of criminal sexual conduct with minors. And in the workplace, Black women are paid between 48 to 68 cents for every dollar paid to a white man, according to the National Partnership for Women and Families.

During the U.S. Open last year, following a summer of protests and civil unrest, Osaka had the names of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and other Black Americans killed by police or vigilantes emblazoned on face masks.

But such activism is not a burden for Black women alone, Cullors said, adding that they could simply prioritize themselves if that's what they consider best.

The message is also resonating beyond well-known figures like Cullors. Liz Dwyer, a Black woman who is a writer and editor in Los Angeles, celebrated Biles on Twitter and declared that "Black women are no longer willing to be the mental health mule."

"The whole society gets the benefits from the work that we do," Dwyer said. "And yet the racism and sexism, worrying about the rise of hate crimes, worrying about the safety of your children, worrying about



your children being profiled and put in the school to prison pipeline ... that all takes a toll."

Melanie Campbell, president and CEO of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation and convener of the Black Women's Roundtable, is of a different generation than Biles and Osaka. She said she has been inspired by their leadership on mental health.

"It motivates me to keep advocating, to keep pushing for civil rights because you see this generation is stepping up," said Campbell, who was recently arrested while engaging in civil disobedience during a voting rights campaign led by Black women.

"All of us have a role to play," she said. "I can speak about these issues and still be who I am."

## Belarus sprinter says punishment awaited her back home

By DANIEL KOZIN and DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — A Belarusian Olympic sprinter who had a public feud with officials from her team at the Tokyo Games said Tuesday that they "made it clear" she would face punishment if she returned home to an autocratic government that has relentlessly stifled any criticism.

Waiting to leave Japan to seek refuge in Europe, Krystsina Tsimanouskaya said she hopes she can continue her career, but for now her safety is the priority. After she criticized the management of her team on social media, she accused officials of hustling her to the airport and trying to put her on a plane back to Belarus.

In the dramatic standoff, several countries offered help, and Poland granted her a humanitarian visa Monday. On Wednesday morning at Tokyo's Narita International Airport, she boarded a plane that left the gate for Vienna, though it was not immediately clear if that would be her final destination.

Team officials "made it clear that, upon return home, I would definitely face some form of punishment," the 24-year-old sprinter told The Associated Press in a videocall interview from Tokyo. "There were also thinly disguised hints that more would await me."

She added that she believed she would be kicked off the national team. She hopes to be able to continue running once she has reached safety.

"I would very much like to continue my sporting career because I'm just 24, and I had plans for two more Olympics at least," she said. But "for now, the only thing that concerns me is my safety."

Asked what made her fear she would be in danger at home, Tsimanouskaya said that "the key phrase was that 'we didn't make the decision for you to go home, it was decided by other people, and we were merely ordered to make it happen.'"

Reached by phone Tuesday, Dzmitry Dauhaliouak, the head of Belarus' delegation at the Games, declined to comment, saying that he has "no words."

Earlier, Belarus' National Olympic Committee told a state-run news agency that it was closely monitoring the situation and cooperating with the International Olympic Committee.

In the interview, Tsimanouskaya also expressed worry for her parents, who remain in Belarus. Her husband, Arseni Zdanevich, told the AP that he decided to leave the country when Tsimanouskaya told him she wasn't coming back.

"It was all very sudden. I only had an hour to collect my things," Zdanevich said from Ukraine, where he said he feels safe even though police are investigating whether a Belarus activist's death there was murder. He hopes to join his wife in Poland, which is home to a significant Belarusian community.

The couple's fears reflect the lengths the Belarus' authoritarian government has at times gone to in its crackdown on dissent, including recently diverting a plane to the capital of Minsk and arresting a journalist aboard. President Alexander Lukashenko maintained that a bomb threat against the flight forced it to change course, but European officials denounced the move as an act of air piracy.

Lukashenko appears to have a particular interest in his country's Olympic team: He and his son, Viktor, have led the Belarus National Olympic Committee for more than 25 years. Both were banned from the Tokyo Games by the IOC, which investigated complaints from athletes that they faced intimidation during the crackdown on anti-government protests over the last year.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 46 of 75

The current standoff began after Tsimanouskaya's criticism of how officials were managing her team set off a massive backlash in state-run media back home, where the government has cracked down on dissent since a presidential election a year ago triggered a wave of unprecedented mass protests.

The runner said on Instagram that she was put in the 4x400 relay even though she has never raced in the event. She was then barred from competing in the 200 meters.

Tsimanouskaya waged — and lost — a legal fight to run in that event. The Court of Arbitration for Sport said in a statement that it denied Tsimanouskaya's request for an interim ruling that would have allowed her to run at the Olympic Stadium on Monday. The heats were held in the morning and the semifinals were in the evening.

On Tuesday, Tsimanouskaya called on international sports authorities "to investigate the situation, who gave the order, who actually took the decision that I can't compete any more." She suggested possible "sanctions against the head coach who approached me and who deprived me of the right to compete in the Olympic Games."

At the same time, she said that "the athletes aren't guilty of anything, and they should keep competing."

Athletes seeking asylum at global sporting events is nothing new — such requests were especially frequent during the Cold War but they have also happened occasionally in the decades since.

But Tsimanouskaya's circumstances appear to differ from the typical situation, though some, including her head coach, have suggested she was planning something all along. Tsimanouskaya dismissed that, saying she only spoke out when she learned she would be participating in an event she had never competed in.

"Everything that is happening now absolutely wasn't in my plans," Tsimanouskaya said.

European leaders have condemned her treatment. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas told the daily Rheinische Post that "the rulers in Minsk have shown with their attempted kidnapping of Krystsina Tsimanouskaya that they scorn their own athletes and with this also the Olympic principles."

Maas called Lukashenko's regime "politically and morally bankrupt," adding that the overwhelming support for the sprinter showed that "the spirit of friendship and respect is alive. Sportsmanship and solidarity are stronger than the violence which Mr. Lukashenko uses to cling to power."

Still, the athlete declined to link her problems to the larger struggle in Belarus.

"I don't want to get involved in politics," she said. "For me, my career is important, only sports is important, and I'm only thinking about my future, about how I can continue my career."

## Officer dead, suspect killed in violence outside Pentagon

By LOLITA C. BALDOR, ERIC TUCKER and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Pentagon police officer died after being stabbed Tuesday during a burst of violence at a transit center outside the building, and a suspect was shot by law enforcement and died at the scene.

The Pentagon, the headquarters of the U.S. military, was temporarily placed on lockdown after a man attacked the officer on a bus platform shortly after 10:30 a.m. The ensuing violence, which included a volley of gunshots, resulted in "several casualties," said Woodrow Kusse, the chief of the Pentagon Force Protection Agency, which is responsible for security in the facility.

The deaths of the officer and the suspect were first confirmed by officials who were not authorized to discuss the matter and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity. The Fairfax County Police Department also tweeted condolences about the officer's death. Officials said they believe two bystanders were injured.

The suspect was identified by multiple law enforcement officials as Austin William Lanz, 27, of Georgia.

The officer was ambushed by Lanz, who ran at him and stabbed him in the neck, according to two of the law enforcement officials. Responding officers then shot and killed Lanz. Investigators were still trying to determine a motive for the attack and were digging into Lanz's background, including any potential history of mental illness or any reason he might want to target the Pentagon or police officers.

The officials could not discuss the investigation publicly and spoke to The AP on condition of anonymity.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 47 of 75

Lanz had enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in October 2012 but was "administratively separated" less than a month later and never earned the title Marine, the Corps said in a statement.

Lanz was arrested in April in Cobb County, Georgia, on criminal trespassing and burglary charges, according to online court records. The same day, a separate criminal case was filed against Lanz with six additional charges, including two counts of aggravated battery on police, a count of making a terrorist threat and a charge for rioting in a penal institution, the records show.

A judge reduced his bond in May to \$30,000 and released him, imposing some conditions, including that he not ingest illegal drugs and that he undergo a mental health evaluation. The charges against him were still listed as pending. A spokesman for the Cobb County Sheriff's Office confirmed that Lanz had been previously held at the agency's detention center but referred all other questions to the FBI's field office in Washington.

An attorney who represented Lanz in the Georgia cases didn't immediately respond to a phone message and email seeking comment, and messages left with family members at Lanz's home in the Atlanta suburb of Acworth, Georgia, were not immediately returned.

Tuesday's attack on a busy stretch of the Washington area's transportation system jangled the nerves of a region already primed to be on high alert for violence and potential intruders outside federal government buildings, particularly following the Jan. 6 riot at the Capitol.

At a Pentagon news conference, Kuse declined to confirm that the officer had been killed or provide even basic information about how the violence had unfolded or how many might be dead. He would only say that an officer had been attacked and that "gunfire was exchanged."

Kuse and other officials declined to rule out terrorism or provide any other potential motive. But Kuse said the Pentagon complex was secure and "we are not actively looking for another suspect at this time." He said the FBI was leading the investigation.

"I can't compromise the ongoing investigation," Kuse said.

The FBI confirmed only that it was investigating and there was "no ongoing threat to the public" but declined to offer details or a possible motive.

Later Tuesday, the Pentagon Force Protection Agency issued a statement confirming the loss of the officer, and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin expressed his condolences and said flags at the Pentagon will be flown at half-staff.

"This fallen officer died in the line of duty, helping protect the tens of thousands of people who work in — and who visit — the Pentagon on a daily basis," Austin said in a statement. "This tragic death today is a stark reminder of the dangers they face and the sacrifices they make. We are forever grateful for that service and the courage with which it is rendered."

Tuesday's violence occurred on a Metro bus platform that is part of the Pentagon Transit Center, a hub for subway and bus lines. The station is steps from the Pentagon building, which is in Arlington County, Virginia, just across the Potomac River from Washington.

An Associated Press reporter near the building heard multiple gunshots, then a pause, then at least one additional shot. Another AP journalist heard police yelling "shooter."

A Pentagon announcement said the facility was on lockdown, but that was lifted after noon, except for the area around the crime scene.

Austin and Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were at the White House meeting with President Joe Biden at the time of the shooting. Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Austin returned to the building and went to the Pentagon police operations center to speak to the officers there.

It was not immediately clear whether any additional security measures might be instituted in the area.

In 2010, two officers with the Pentagon Force Protection Agency were wounded when a gunman approached them at a security screening area. The officers, who survived, returned fire, fatally wounding the gunman, identified as John Patrick Bedell.

**Judge blocks Texas troopers from stopping migrant transports**

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 48 of 75

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A federal judge Tuesday blocked Texas from allowing state troopers to stop vehicles carrying migrants on the grounds that they may spread COVID-19 as worries and new cases are rising along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The temporary order by U.S. District Judge Kathleen Cardone of El Paso is at least a short-term victory for the Biden administration, which had warned that Republican Gov. Greg Abbott's plan would create more problems amid high levels of summer border crossings in Texas — particularly in the Rio Grande Valley, which one U.S. official called the "epicenter of the current surge."

In a sign of the growing strain, local officials there who have rebuffed Abbott's hardline immigration actions to jail border crossers and build new barrier declared a local state of disaster this week as COVID-19 cases climb and capacity at migrant shelters is stretched.

Cardone said Abbott's directive would have the effect of "exacerbating the spread of COVID-19." She scheduled another hearing for next week.

Abbott spokesman Renae Eze said the decision was "based on limited evidence" and that their office looked forward to providing evidence to the court.

Like Texas, the Biden administration is also raising concerns about the much more contagious delta variant as large numbers of noncitizens continue arriving at Texas' southern border. On Monday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention renewed emergency powers that allow federal authorities to expel families at the border on grounds it prevents the spread of the coronavirus.

But in suing Texas, the Justice Department accused Abbott of potentially worsening the spread of COVID-19, saying in court filings that impeding the transfer of migrants would prolong the detention of unaccompanied children in "increasingly crowded" facilities.

Hidalgo County Judge Richard Cortez, a Democrat who is the top elected official in the Rio Grande Valley's largest county, said Tuesday that typically about 8% of migrants tested for COVID-19 were positive. He said that number is now at 16% — roughly in line with Texas' overall positivity rate of 17%, according to state health figures.

"It's not getting better. It's getting worse," said Cortez, defending his local disaster order.

Critics have accused Abbott, who is up for a third term in 2022, of trying to deflect blame for Texas' rapidly surging COVID-19 numbers on migrants as he rejects calls to reinstate mask mandates and other pandemic restrictions. On Tuesday, Texas surpassed 7,000 hospitalized virus patients for the first time since February and reported more than 11,000 new cases.

Abbott last week had authorized Texas' growing presence of state troopers along the border to "stop any vehicle upon reasonable suspicion" that it transports migrants. Troopers could then reroute vehicles back to their point of origin or impound them. Civil rights groups and immigration advocates have expressed concerns that the directive to troopers could invite racial profiling.

Border crossings usually slow during stifling — and sometimes fatal — summer heat. But U.S. authorities revealed Monday that they likely picked up 19,000 unaccompanied children in July, exceeding the previous high of 18,877 in March. The June total was 15,253, according to David Shahoulian, assistant secretary for border and immigration policy at the Department of Homeland Security, who singled out the Rio Grande Valley for having the largest numbers.

Overall, U.S. authorities stopped migrants about 210,000 times at the border in July, up from 188,829 in June and the highest in more than 20 years. But the numbers aren't directly comparable because many cross repeatedly under a pandemic-related ban known as Title 42, which is named for a 1944 public health law.

The CDC said Monday that the ban would remain until its director "determines that the danger of further introduction of COVID-19 into the United States from covered noncitizens has ceased to be a serious danger to the public health."

## Missouri governor pardons gun-waving St. Louis lawyer couple

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

O'FALLON, Mo. (AP) — Missouri Gov. Mike Parson announced Tuesday that he made good on his promise



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 49 of 75

to pardon a couple who gained notoriety for pointing guns at social justice demonstrators as they marched past the couple's home in a luxury St. Louis enclave last year.

Parson, a Republican, on Friday pardoned Mark McCloskey, who pleaded guilty in June to misdemeanor fourth-degree assault and was fined \$750, and Patricia McCloskey, who pleaded guilty to misdemeanor harassment and was fined \$2,000.

"Mark McCloskey has publicly stated that if he were involved in the same situation, he would have the exact same conduct," the McCloskeys' lawyer Joel Schwartz said Tuesday. "He believes that the pardon vindicates that conduct."

The McCloskeys, both lawyers in their 60s, said they felt threatened by the protesters, who were passing their home in June 2020 on their way to demonstrate in front of the mayor's house nearby in one of hundreds of similar demonstrations around the country after George Floyd's death. The couple also said the group was trespassing on a private street.

Mark McCloskey emerged from his home with an AR-15-style rifle, and Patricia McCloskey waved a semiautomatic pistol, according to the indictment. Photos and cellphone video captured the confrontation, which drew widespread attention and made the couple heroes to some and villains to others. No shots were fired, and no one was hurt.

Special prosecutor Richard Callahan said his investigation determined that the protesters were peaceful.

"There was no evidence that any of them had a weapon and no one I interviewed realized they had ventured onto a private enclave," Callahan said in a news release after the McCloskeys pleaded guilty.

Several Republican leaders — including then-President Donald Trump — spoke out in defense of the McCloskeys' actions. The couple spoke on video at last year's Republican National Convention.

Mark McCloskey, who announced in May that he was running for a U.S. Senate seat in Missouri, was unapologetic after the plea hearing.

"I'd do it again," he said from the courthouse steps in downtown St. Louis. "Any time the mob approaches me, I'll do what I can to put them in imminent threat of physical injury because that's what kept them from destroying my house and my family." He echoed those comments in a statement issued Tuesday by his campaign and added: "Today we are incredibly thankful that Governor Mike Parson righted this wrong and granted us pardons."

Because the charges were misdemeanors, the McCloskeys did not face the possibility of losing their law licenses or their rights to own firearms.

The McCloskeys were indicted by a grand jury in October on felony charges of the unlawful use of a weapon and evidence tampering. Callahan later amended the charges to give jurors the alternative of convictions of misdemeanor harassment instead of the weapons charge.

Parson's legal team has been working through a backlog of clemency requests for months.

He hasn't yet taken action on longtime inmate Kevin Strickland, who several prosecutors now say is innocent of a 1978 Kansas City triple homicide. Parson could pardon Strickland, but he has said he's not convinced he is innocent.

Missouri's Democratic leader contrasted Parson's treatment of Strickland's case with the McCloskeys in bitter denunciations of the governor's action.

"It is beyond disgusting that Mark and Patricia McCloskey admitted they broke the law and within weeks are rewarded with pardons, yet men like Kevin Strickland, who has spent more than 40 years in prison for crimes even prosecutors now say he didn't commit, remain behind bars with no hope of clemency," Missouri House Democratic Minority Leader Crystal Quade said in a statement.

Democratic state Rep. LaKeySha Bosley said, "The governor's stunt ominously underscores that under his watch, justice belongs only to the privileged elite in this state."

## A combined Final Four? Gender equity report calls for it

By AARON BEARD AP Basketball Writer

The NCAA men's basketball tournament typically has the biggest spotlight when it reaches the Final Four,

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 50 of 75

with the best teams – or luckiest – to have survived March Madness playing the final games to determine a national champion.

Now imagine how it could look with the women's tournament bringing its Final Four to the same city on the same weekend.

The idea of a combined Final Four sounds attractive as a showcase for Division I college basketball and it is also one of the key recommendations in a scathing report examining how the NCAA conducts its championship events when it comes to gender equity.

The review by law firm Kaplan Hecker & Fink LLP came after the NCAA failed to provide similar amenities to the teams in the men's and women's tournaments earlier this year. The report is full of recommendations, but the one that drew the most immediate attention is combining the national semifinals into one action-packed weekend in a single city.

The idea would be to potentially increase the sponsorship and promotional opportunities to help grow the women's game. That would be a way to remedy a system that thus far, according to the report, has been "designed to maximize the value and support" for the men's tournament as the NCAA's primary revenue-producing event.

The report calls a combined Final Four "the best available means to grow women's basketball and create equity" between the tournaments and suggests moving to that model "preferably no later" than the 2022-23 season. It also suggests holding them for at least 3-4 years for the NCAA to fully assess the impact.

"Put simply," the review states, "without combining the Final Fours, the women's championship will continue to have a different look and feel from the men's championship" until the NCAA's multimedia agreement with CBS and Turner to carry the tournament expires in 2032.

"The suggestion that we test it makes sense particularly from the sponsorship side of the equation as we are limited by the current men's basketball contract to change any of the broadcasting and sponsorship elements to 2032 at the earliest," said Rich Ensor, commissioner of the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference. "It's unfortunate we can't separate those agreements earlier."

A combined Final Four makes sense to Kirk Wakefield, a professor of retail marketing at Baylor's Hankamer School of Business.

"The research I've done for years shows that the physical facilities and environment that you're having any event matters: the venue location, the attractiveness, the whole experience for sure matters," Wakefield said. "So if they are demonstrably different, then people respond to that."

Part of that value is in perception, with Wakefield noting that pairing the events would help in the "positioning of it in people's minds to see it as comparable." As the report notes, two tournament's worth of fan bases showing up in a city could create additional tickets to the women's event.

"What is true in general in promotion and marketing is it's better to make the big bigger rather than trying to go promote the thing that's not as big separately," Wakefield said. "You're better off making that big weekend the biggest weekend you can than trying to come to Tuesday night because you're just working against the odds."

But there are obstacles, starting with the fact that the NCAA has already announced Final Four venue choices through 2026. The men are set to play in New Orleans in 2022, followed by Houston, Phoenix, San Antonio and Indianapolis. The women will play in Minneapolis next spring, followed by Dallas, Cleveland, Tampa and Phoenix.

The report notes the recommendation doesn't come "lightly," noting it would require the NCAA to work with host cities to change plans. And host cities would need to find enough hotel and event space to manage a bigger event than planned, a challenge faced to an even greater degree by multiple venues in Indiana and Texas to keep the each of the 2021 tournaments held entirely in one state due to COVID-19 protocols.

"It is critical, however, to make this change and to do so quickly to take advantage of the current momentum, to demonstrate the NCAA's significant commitment to change... and to capture the strategic value that combined Final Fours could yield for future contract negotiations," the report states.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 51 of 75

Stanford coach Tara VanDerveer texted AP: "I am not sure about a double tournament??? Who gets the best hotels? Etc? But I am open to it!"

Washington State men's basketball coach Kyle Smith said he supported holding all national championships — all three divisions, both men and women — in a single site while UConn women's coach Geno Auriemma said "it's worth a shot" to combine the Final Fours.

"It's worth a try," Auriemma said. "It's been done successfully with tennis and the Olympics. Will there be enough coverage spread around that no one gets lost in the shuffle there? That's the question."

## **Biles returns to Olympic competition, wins bronze on beam**

By WILL GRAVES AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Simone Biles isn't going home with a fistful of gold medals. A mental block — one brought on by exhaustion or stress or something the American gymnastics star still can't quite grasp — that forced her to pull out of four Olympic finals saw to that.

Yet standing on the podium Tuesday, a bronze medal hanging around her neck and tears in her eyes, the 24-year-old Biles may have claimed something far more valuable: a piece of herself back.

From the "twisties" that have haunted her for a week. From the endless speculation about her state of mind. From the hype machine — one, admittedly, she fed into at times — that set expectations so high coming to Tokyo nothing short of the impossible would have been enough.

It all became too much. A week ago, her internal wires got crossed when she hopped on uneven bars during practice. Suddenly, she couldn't spin. She could barely move. She still doesn't quite know why. And if she's being honest, the wires still aren't reconnected. She's not sure when they will be.

"It was something that was so out of my control," Biles said. "But the outcome I had, at end of the day, my mental and physical health is better than any medal. So I couldn't be mad."

Biles and coach Cecile Landi adjusted her balance beam routine to ease her anxiety, switching out a dismount that required her to twist for one with two simpler backflips instead, a skill she hadn't done in competition in 12 years, half a lifetime ago. Even with the degree of difficulty lowered, she earned a 14.000, good enough for third behind Chinese teammates Guan Chenchen and Tang Xijing.

Afterward, she chatted with IOC President Thomas Bach, then wiped away tears after accepting her seventh Olympic medal, tied with Shannon Miller for the most by an American gymnast. A wave of relief washed over her following a turbulent eight days that shifted the focus from the Tokyo Games to the mental health of the athletes who compete under the rings.

"We're not just entertainment, we're humans," Biles said. "And there are things going on behind the scenes that we're also trying to juggle with as well, on top of sports."

Biles thought she had it under control. Then the Americans finished a surprising second to the Russian team in qualifying. She sensed the weight of the world on her shoulders. During the first vault rotation in the team final, the weight became too much. Shaken, she took herself out of the final three events and watched as her teammates held on for silver.

The decision made her a touchstone of sorts. Yes, there was a lot of support. She felt "embarrassed" when a trip through the Olympic Village included a steady stream of people coming up to tell her how much she meant to them. There was a lot of hate, too, one of the reasons she moved her Twitter app to the back of her phone, hopefully tamping down the temptation to search her mentions.

"It's not good for me right now," she said.

There was no phone in sight when she appeared on the floor in a red, white and blue leotard with nearly 5,000 crystals stitched on. If she was nervous, it hardly showed. She warmed up and then sat on the floor next to teammate and newly minted all-around champion Sunisa Lee to watch highlights from other sports on a large video board.

Her routine was steady, seemingly immune to the whirl of dozens of cameras capturing her every move. She made a small hop after landing her double-pike, then saluted the stands. One last bow, perhaps, in a career that includes 32 major international medals and a spot atop her sport.

It's far too soon to think about Paris.

"I just need to process this Olympics first," she said.

While she hasn't officially announced her retirement — she's hinted that she might want to stick around in some fashion until the 2024 Games to honor coaches Laurent and Cecile Landi, who are both French — a long layoff awaits. She's headlining a post-Olympic tour through the fall. What happens after that is a mystery, even to Biles.

Two weeks ago, she was a heavy favorite to win four golds. Maybe five. A week ago, her body couldn't do what she'd long trained it to do. Even on Monday, watching others spin their way through their routines made her want to "puke."

Tuesday night offered justice of sorts. Five years ago in Rio de Janeiro, she was stunned when her bronze on beam was met with a shrug of the shoulders, proof of the double standard she is held to. She earned another one in Japan under circumstances no one could have envisioned.

"This one is definitely sweeter," she said.

Even if it's the last.

Biles receding into the background opened up the door for the teammates who have long competed in her considerable shadow. The 18-year-old Lee, who finished fifth on the balance beam, won the Olympic all-around title. She ended up with three medals in Tokyo, including silver in the team final and bronze on uneven bars.

Lee became the fifth straight American woman to capture the all-around title. MyKayla Skinner, placed into the vault final after Biles scratched, soared to silver. On Monday, Jade Carey's long journey to the Olympics ended with a victory on floor exercise after Biles gave her a pep talk following a nightmarish vault performance in which she tripped at the end of the runway and narrowly avoided serious injury.

It wasn't the role Biles expected to fill when she arrived. She did it anyway, repaying those who have spent the last eight years doing the same for her. Asked if there was anything she would change about her experience in Japan, she shook her head.

"Nothing," she said. "I would change nothing."

## DeSantis won't move on masks as Florida COVID wards swell

By TERRY SPENCER, ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and KELLI KENNEDY Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis on Tuesday downplayed a spike in COVID-19 cases that's shattered state hospitalization records and strongly reiterated his vow not to impose a mask mandate or any business restrictions.

With the much more contagious delta variant now spreading exponentially, Florida hit 11,515 hospitalized patients Tuesday, breaking last year's record for the third straight day and up from just 1,000 in mid-June.

DeSantis said he expects hospitalizations to drop in the next couple weeks, asserting that the spike is seasonal as Floridians spend more time together indoors to escape the summer heat and humidity.

DeSantis credited his response to COVID-19, which has focused on vaccinating seniors and nursing home residents, for the fact that fewer Floridians are dying now than last August. A year ago, Florida was averaging about 180 COVID-19 deaths per day during an early August spike, but last week averaged 58 per day. However, 2,400 COVID-19 patients are in an intensive care unit, and deaths general don't spike until a few weeks after hospitalizations.

"Even among a lot of positive tests, you are seeing much less mortality that you did year-over-year," DeSantis said at a Miami-area press conference. "Would I rather have 5,000 cases among 20-year-olds or 500 cases among seniors? I would rather have the younger."

DeSantis also said "media hysteria" on the swelling numbers could cause people having heart attacks or strokes to avoid going to an emergency room for fear of being infected. Doctors interviewed by The Associated Press acknowledged this happened during the early months of the pandemic, but say it's no longer true, and that they're treating the usual number of cardiac patients.

President Joe Biden criticized DeSantis and other officials who have moved to block the reimposition of



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 53 of 75

mask mandates. He called on resistant Republican governors to "get out of the way" of vaccine rules and endorsed New York City's move to require vaccinations to dine indoors or go to the gym.

"If you're not going to help, at least get out of the way of people trying to do the right thing," Biden said.

Dr. O'Neil Pyke, chief medical officer at Jackson North Medical Center in Miami, said many Florida hospitals are facing staffing shortages. Hospitals also report putting emergency room patients in beds in hallways, and some are again banning visitors or postponing elective surgeries.

"They're just coming in faster than we discharge them," said Justin Senior, CEO of Florida Safety Net Hospital Alliance, which represents some of the state's largest hospitals caring for low-income patients. Still, he said few hospitals will run out of room as they can convert non-traditional spaces like conference areas into COVID-19 wards.

Penny Ceasar, who handles admissions at a hospital near Fort Lauderdale, wants the governor to require vaccines for health care workers and masks for everyone. Ceasar said while Westside Regional Medical Center has been getting temporary staff from other states, the alarming number of new patients is taking a toll.

"You're on an emotional rollercoaster because we care for our patients like we care for our families," said Ceasar, a 30-year veteran.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported more than 50,000 new COVID-19 cases in the state over the last three days, raising the seven-day average to one of the highest counts since the pandemic began. In total, the state has seen more than 2.6 million cases and 39,179 deaths.

DeSantis is running for reelection next year while eyeing a 2024 presidential bid. A central tenet of his national image among conservatives is his refusal to impose mask mandates or business restrictions.

"We are not shutting down," DeSantis reiterated Tuesday. "We are going to have schools open. We are protecting every Floridian's job in this state. We are protecting people's small businesses. These interventions have failed time and time again throughout this pandemic, not just in the United States but abroad."

DeSantis did encourage people to get vaccinated, saying shots provide a strong defense against getting seriously ill. About 95% of those hospitalized and almost all recent deaths have been among the unvaccinated, hospital officials have said.

"You can still test positive, but at the end of the day you can turn this from something that was much more threatening to a senior citizen, say, to something that is more manageable," said DeSantis, who has been vaccinated. "That is a huge, huge thing."

The spike has come as DeSantis and local officials have fought over how to protect children and staff as the school year begins.

Broward County's school board reversed a decision to require facial coverings after DeSantis barred mandates and threatened to cut funding from districts that don't comply. Broward's board had responded to the latest science on the virus and the latest recommendations of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But the governor said parents should decide whether their children should wear a mask to school.

## Landlords, tenants fill courts as eviction moratorium ends

By MICHAEL CASEY and PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — Gabe Imondi, a 74-year-old landlord from Rhode Island, had come to court hoping to get his apartment back. He was tired of waiting for federal rental assistance and wondered aloud "what they're doing with that money?"

Hours later, Luis Vertentes, in a different case, was told by a judge he had three weeks to clear out of his one-bedroom apartment in nearby East Providence. The 43-year-old landscaper said he was four months behind on rent after being hospitalized for a time.

"I'm going to be homeless, all because of this pandemic," Vertentes said. "I feel helpless, like I can't do anything even though I work and I got a full-time job."

Scenes like this played out from North Carolina to Virginia to Ohio and beyond Monday as the eviction

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 54 of 75

system, which saw a dramatic drop in cases before a federal moratorium expired over the weekend, rumbled back into action. Activists fear millions will be tossed onto the streets as the delta variant of the coronavirus surges.

The Biden administration allowed the federal moratorium to expire over the weekend and Congress was unable to extend it.

But on Tuesday the administration appeared to offer a reprieve for many. The government planned to put in place a new eviction moratorium that would protect areas where 90% of the U.S. population lives, according to three people familiar with the plans, who insisted on anonymity to discuss the forthcoming announcement.

The move followed protests from Democratic lawmakers over the swift end to the moratorium as the delta variant of the coronavirus surges.

Historic amounts of rental assistance allocated by Congress had been expected to avert a crisis. But the distribution has been painfully slow: Only about \$3 billion of the first tranche of \$25 billion had been distributed through June by states and localities. A second amount of \$21.5 billion will go to the states.

More than 15 million people live in households that owe as much as \$20 billion to their landlords, according to the Aspen Institute. 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.

In Columbus, Ohio, Chelsea Rivera showed up Monday at a Franklin County court after receiving an eviction notice last month. A single mom, she's behind \$2,988 in rent and late fees for the one-bedroom apartment she rents for herself and three young sons.

The 27-year-old said she started to struggle after her hours were cut in May at the Walmart warehouse where she worked. She's applied to numerous agencies for help but they're either out of money, have a waiting list, or not able to help until clients end up in court with an eviction notice.

Rivera said she's preparing herself mentally to move into a shelter with her children.

"We just need help," she said, fighting back tears. "It's just been really hard with everyday issues on top of worrying about where you're going to live."

But there was more optimism in Virginia, where Tiara Burton, 23, learned she would be getting federal help and wouldn't be evicted. She initially feared the worst when the moratorium lifted.

"That was definitely a worry yesterday," said Burton, who lives in Virginia Beach. "If they're going to start doing evictions again, then I'm going to be faced with having to figure out where me and my family are going to go. And that's not something that anyone should have to worry about these days at all."

She was relieved to learn she was approved for assistance through the Virginia Rent Relief Program. Her court hearing was postponed 30 days, during which time she and her landlord can presumably work things out.

"I'm grateful for that," she said. "That's another weight lifted off of my shoulders."

For some tenants, getting assistance has proven impossible.

After her landlord refused federal assistance to cover \$5,000 in back rent, Antoinette Eleby, 42, of Miami, expects an eviction order within two to three weeks. She is sending her five children to live with her mother in another county.

"My main concern is that now that I have an eviction, how will I find another place? Some places will accept you and some will not," said Eleby, whose entire family got COVID-19 earlier this year.

Around the country, courts, legal advocates and law enforcement agencies had been gearing up for evictions to return to pre-pandemic levels, a time when 3.7 million people were displaced from their homes every year, or seven every minute, according to the Eviction Lab at Princeton University.

Some cities with the most cases, according to the Eviction Lab, are Phoenix with more than 42,000 eviction filings, Houston with more than 37,000, Las Vegas with nearly 27,000 and Tampa more than 15,000. Indiana and Missouri also have more than 80,000 filings.

While the moratorium was enforced in much of the country, there were states like Idaho where judges ignored it, said Ali Rabe, executive director of Jesse Tree, a non-profit that works to prevent evictions in the Boise metropolitan area. "Eviction courts ran as usual," she said.

That was much the way things played out in parts of North Carolina, where on Monday Sgt. David Ruppe knocked on a weathered mobile home door in Cleveland County, a rural community an hour west of Charlotte.

"We haven't seen much of a difference at all," he said.

He waited a few minutes on the porch scattered with folding chairs and toys. Then a woman opened the door.

"How are you?" he asked quietly, then explained her landlord had started the eviction process. The woman told Ruppe she'd paid, and he said she'd need to bring proof to her upcoming Aug. 9 court date.

Ruppe, who has two young sons, said seeing families struggle day-after-day is tough.

"There's only so much you can do," he said. "So, if you can offer them a glimmer of hope, words of encouragement, especially if there's kids involved. Being a father, I can relate to that."

## NYC, big employers taking hard line against vaccine holdouts

By MIKE CATALINI and KAREN MATTHEWS Associated Press

New York City, Microsoft, Tyson Foods and the U.S. auto industry joined a cascading number of state and local governments and major employers Tuesday that are taking a hard line against both the surging delta variant and the holdouts who have yet to get vaccinated.

"The goal here is to convince everyone that this is the time. If we're going to stop the delta variant, the time is now. And that means getting vaccinated right now," Mayor Bill de Blasio said in announcing that New York will demand people show proof of COVID-19 vaccination at indoor restaurants, shows and gyms.

The hard-line measure — the first such step taken by a big U.S. city — goes into effect in mid-August. Vaccination cards or state and city apps will be accepted as proof of inoculation.

Meanwhile, meat and poultry giant Tyson Foods said it will require all of its approximately 120,000 U.S. employees to get the shot over the next three months. Microsoft will demand that its roughly 100,000 U.S. employees — as well as visitors and others — show proof of vaccination starting in September.

And an estimated 150,000 unionized workers at the big three U.S. automakers will have to go back to wearing masks starting Wednesday, while nonunion Toyota, with a U.S. workforce of about 36,000, said it will do likewise at most of its sites across the country.

In a surge driven by the highly contagious mutant version of the virus, COVID-19 cases across the U.S. have increased sixfold over the past month to an average of more than 85,000 per day, a level not seen since mid-February. Deaths have climbed over the past two weeks from an average of 254 per day to 386.

Florida has more people now in the hospital with COVID-19 than at any other time during the outbreak — over 11,500. Louisiana reported an all-time high of more than 2,100 hospital patients with the virus, most of them unvaccinated. Both states' vaccination rates are below the national average.

"You're talking and laughing with the patient and then you may walk out of the room, and then maybe an hour or two later you're walking into that room with a crash cart because their condition is deteriorating that fast," said Penny Ceasar, who handles admissions at Westside Regional Medical Center near Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Amid the growing alarm over the way the virus is storming back, vaccinations across the country have begun to tick up slightly in recent weeks, reaching more than a half-million per day on average, but are still far below the peak of 3.4 million per day in April.

Seventy percent of the nation's adults have received at least one shot, and nearly 61% are fully vaccinated — well short of where President Joe Biden wanted the U.S. to be by this point.

Experts say the vaccine is still highly effective at preventing serious illness and death from the delta variant.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a Republican who is running for reelection next year while eyeing a 2024 presidential bid, doubled down Tuesday as the state again broke its record for COVID-19 hospitalizations, insisting that the spike will ease soon and that he will not impose any business restrictions or mask mandates. He encouraged people to get vaccinated.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 56 of 75

"We are not shutting down," DeSantis said. "We are going to have schools open. We are protecting every Floridian's job in this state. We are protecting people's small businesses."

President Joe Biden endorsed New York City's move while criticizing policies in states like Florida and Texas — both led by Republicans — that block mask or vaccine requirements.

"If you're not going to help, at least get out of the way of people trying to do the right thing," Biden said.

The auto industry's decision to mask up again was made by representatives from General Motors, Ford, the parent company of Chrysler, and the United Auto Workers union, and it applies even to employees who have been vaccinated. The move comes just under a month after vaccinated autoworkers were allowed to shed their masks.

As for Tyson, Donnie King, CEO of the Springdale, Arkansas, company, said in a memo to employees that the vaccine requirement is needed to overcome persistent hesitancy to get the shots.

"We did not take this decision lightly. We have spent months encouraging our team members to get vaccinated — today, under half of our team members are," King wrote.

In New York, Sean Ogs, manager of the Woodside Cafe in Queens, said he was "floored" when he heard the news about mandatory vaccinations for customers.

"We've already been in a struggle. I don't know how I'm going to deal with it," Ogs said. "It's going to be extra work. It'll make things impossible."

Debbie McCarthy, a regular at the Woodside Cafe who is unvaccinated, said she was turned away over the weekend from several establishments that had already begun requiring proof.

"I'm a little shocked they would do that," said McCarthy, who said she recovered from COVID-19 months ago and believes her antibodies will protect her from another infection. "Why are they so afraid of people who haven't been vaccinated? I think we should have a choice."

## Melting ice imperils 98% of Emperor penguin colonies by 2100

CHRISTINA LARSON AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — With climate change threatening the sea ice habitat of Emperor penguins, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Tuesday announced a proposal to list the species as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

"The lifecycle of Emperor penguins is tied to having stable sea ice, which they need to breed, to feed and to molt," said Stephanie Jenouvrier, a penguin ecologist at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

Research published Tuesday in the journal *Global Change Biology* found that by 2100, 98% of Emperor penguin colonies may be pushed to the brink of extinction, if no changes are made to current rates of carbon emissions and climate change.

Around 70% of colonies will be in danger sooner, by 2050.

The new study looked at overall warming trends and the increasing likelihood of extreme weather fluctuations due to global warming. And it noted that extremely low levels of sea ice in 2016 led to a massive breeding failure of an Emperor penguin colony in Antarctica's Halley Bay.

That year, seasonal sea ice broke up before penguin chicks had time to develop waterproof adult feathers, and about 10,000 baby birds drowned, Jenouvrier said. The colony did not recover afterward.

Emperor penguins breed exclusively in Antarctica during winter. They endure temperatures of minus 40 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 40 degrees Celsius) and wind speeds approaching 90 miles (144 kilometers) per hour by huddling together in groups of several thousand birds. But they can't survive without sufficient sea ice.

"These penguins are hard hit by the climate crisis, and the U.S. government is finally recognizing that threat," said Sarah Uhlemann, international program director at the nonprofit Center for Biological Diversity.

The U.S. government has previously listed species outside the country as threatened, including the polar bear, which lives in Arctic regions and is also imperiled by climate change and sea ice loss.

Emperor penguins — the world's largest penguins — currently number about 270,000 to 280,000 breeding pairs, or 625,000 to 650,000 individuals. The proposed listing will be published in the Federal Register on Wednesday to open to a 60-day public comment period.



Listing the bird provides protections such as prohibition against importing them for commercial purposes. Potential impacts on penguins must also be evaluated by U.S. marine fisheries currently operating in Antarctica.

"Climate change, a priority challenge for this Administration, impacts a variety of species throughout the world," said Martha Williams, principal deputy director of the wildlife service. "The decisions made by policymakers today and during the next few decades will determine the fate of the Emperor penguin."

## Thousands flee homes outside Athens as heat fuels wildfires

By MICHAEL VARAKLAS and NICHOLAS PAPHITIS Associated Press

TATOI, Greece (AP) — More than 500 firefighters struggled through the night to contain a large forest blaze on the outskirts of Athens, which raced into residential areas Tuesday, forcing thousands to flee. It was the worst of 81 wildfires that broke out in Greece over the past 24 hours, amid one of the country's most intense heatwaves in decades.

Civil Protection chief Nikos Hardalias said the fire north of Athens was "very dangerous," and had been exacerbated by strong winds and tinder-dry conditions due to the heat that reached 45 Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) in the area.

No severe injuries were reported, and authorities said several buildings had been damaged but no detailed breakdown was available. The cause of the blaze was unclear.

"We continue to fight hour by hour, with our top priority being to save human lives," Hardalias said. "We will do so all night."

"These are crucial hours," Hardalias said. "Our country is undergoing one of the worst heatwaves of the past 40 years."

The wind dropped later Tuesday, and the regional governor for greater Athens, Giorgos Patoulis, said this could allow the fire to be tamed after water-dropping aircraft resume operations at first light Wednesday.

"If the winds don't grow it can be brought under control by the early morning so the planes can provide the final solution," he told state ERT TV.

The blaze sent a huge cloud of smoke over Athens, prompting multiple evacuations near Tatoi, 20 kilometers (12 1/2 miles) to the north and forcing the partial closure of Greece's main north-south highway. Residents left their homes in cars and on motorcycles, often clutching pets, heading toward the capital amid a blanket of smoke.

One group stopped to help staff from a riding school push their horses into trucks to escape the flames.

Fire crews went house to house to ensure that evacuation orders were carried out, and 315 people were escorted to safety after calling for help. Authorities said nobody was listed as missing, and Greek media said six people required treatment for light breathing complaints.

As the heat wave scorching the eastern Mediterranean intensified, temperatures reached 42 degrees Celsius (107.6 Fahrenheit) in parts of the Greek capital. The extreme weather has fueled deadly wildfires in Turkey and blazes in Italy, Greece, Albania and across the region.

Wildfires also raged in other parts of Greece, prompting evacuations of villages in Mani and Vassilitsa in the southern Peloponnese region, as well as on the islands of Evia and Kos, authorities said. A total 40 blazes were raging late Tuesday.

The fires prompted Greek basketball star Giannis Antetokounmpo to cancel celebrations planned in Athens for the NBA championship he won recently with the Milwaukee Bucks.

"We hope there are no victims from these fires, and of course we will postpone today's celebration," Antetokounmpo wrote in a tweet.

Earlier, authorities closed the Acropolis and other ancient sites during afternoon hours. The site, which is normally open in the summer from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., will have reduced hours through Friday, closing between midday and 5 p.m.

The extreme heat, described by authorities as the worst in Greece since 1987, has strained the national power supply and fueled the wildfires.

The national grid operator said the power supply to part of the capital was "endangered" after part of the transmission system, damaged and threatened by the fires, was shut down.

Seven water-dropping planes and nine helicopters were involved in the firefighting effort near Athens, including a Beriev Be-200 amphibious aircraft leased from Russia. They ceased operations after dark for safety reasons.

The blaze damaged electricity pylons, adding further strain on the electricity network already under pressure due to the widespread use of air conditioning.

The Greek Fire Service maintained an alert for most of the country for Tuesday and Wednesday, while public and some private services shifted operating hours to allow for afternoon closures.

Hardalias appealed to the public for high vigilance.

"Because the heatwave will continue in coming days, please avoid any activity that could spark a fire," he said.

## Pushback challenges vaccination requirements at US colleges

By TOM DAVIES Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — The quickly approaching fall semester has America's colleges under pressure to decide how far they should go to guard their campuses against COVID-19 while navigating legal and political questions and rising infection rates.

Hundreds of colleges nationwide have told students in recent months they must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 before classes begin.

California State University, the country's largest four-year public university system, joined the list last week, along with Michigan State University and the University of Michigan. Their announcements cited concerns about the highly contagious delta variant and came as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued updated mask guidelines based on new research regarding its spread.

CSU Chancellor Joseph I. Castro called case surges linked to the variant an "alarming new factor that we must consider as we look to maintain the health and well-being of students, employees and visitors."

Yet many more colleges have held off on vaccine mandates in a reflection of the limits school leaders face in adopting safety requirements for in-person classes.

In many Republican-led states, governments have banned vaccine mandates, or school leaders face political pressure to limit their anti-virus actions even among students who live in packed residence halls. Opponents say the requirements tread on personal freedoms.

Some campuses have sidestepped pushback by instead offering enticements, such as prize drawings for free tuition and computers, as they seek to boost student vaccination rates to 80% or higher.

And a few have gone against the grain of their GOP-led states, such as Nova Southeastern in Florida requiring employees to get the shots and Nebraska Wesleyan mandating vaccinations for its 2,000 students.

Private colleges like these have more legal leeway regarding coronavirus rules, experts say. Prominent private universities mandating student vaccinations include Harvard, Yale, Notre Dame, Northwestern, Duke and Stanford.

University of California law professor Dorit Rubinstein Reiss, who writes and teaches about vaccine law, said the biggest legal gray area is whether colleges can require the COVID-19 vaccines while they remain under federal emergency use status.

Courts will likely allow university leaders to take such steps to protect student health, but many colleges can't avoid the reality of states taking a stance against vaccine mandates, Reiss said.

"Especially a state university, going against the prevailing political view is probably going to be short-lived," Reiss said.

Coronavirus politics have been a complicating factor for the vast majority of campuses without vaccine requirements, said Dr. Michael Huey, interim CEO of the American College Health Association, which in April recommended vaccination mandates for all students taking on-campus classes.

"If you set up a situation where you can't require vaccination, you can't ask about vaccine status and you can't have required testing or mitigation strategies, like masking, it can't be safe," said Huey, former

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 59 of 75

executive director of student health services at Emory University in Atlanta.

Indiana University has so far prevailed against a court challenge to its student vaccine requirement, which school officials say is a "clear path forward" to removing limits on in-person classes, sporting events and social activities.

Noah Hamilton, who'll be a sophomore at Indiana's main campus in Bloomington this fall, said he had anxiety about getting the shots and likely wouldn't have done so without the requirement.

"But I don't want to be stuck doing 100 percent online," Hamilton said. "I want to be back on campus and actually trying to have a normal college experience."

Among the some 4,000 college campuses across the country, more than 600 have imposed a vaccine mandate, according to tracking by the Chronicle of Higher Education. But their requirements vary.

The University of Washington and the University of Maryland, for example, are among the public schools mandating shots for both students and employees. The University of Connecticut and the University of Maryland require the doses for students but not faculty or staff.

In some cases, union contracts or state laws prevent schools from requiring staff member vaccinations.

Meanwhile, the University of California and California State University — California's two major state systems, with more than 750,000 total students — initially were holding off on inoculation requirements until at least one COVID-19 vaccine had full Food and Drug Administration approval. But both have now mandated shots for students and employees.

Religious and medical exemptions from vaccine requirements are commonly offered, although the universities are generally making those students undergo frequent COVID-19 testing and wear masks in public areas.

Opponents of student vaccine requirements have gone to federal court challenging mandates issued by Indiana University, the University of Connecticut and the California State system.

In the first ruling among those cases, a judge last month rejected arguments from eight students that Indiana University's requirement violated their constitutional rights to "bodily autonomy" by forcing them to receive unwanted medical treatment.

A court in Chicago also denied an appeal from their attorney, James Bopp, who's been prominent in many conservative political causes. Bopp works with the group America's Frontline Doctors, which criticizes the COVID-19 vaccine and has been widely discredited for spreading disinformation about the coronavirus and unproven treatments.

Bopp said hundreds of people across the country have contacted him wanting to challenge vaccine mandates. He argues the students he represents, primarily young adults, are at low risk of severe COVID-19 illnesses while facing possible dangers from the vaccine being administered under federal emergency use authorization.

"Why are they being targeted for a vaccine that older people aren't required to take even though their risk is enormously greater?" he said.

Indiana University says nearly 85% of its students have reported receiving at least one dose. Purdue University, Indiana's other Big Ten school, isn't requiring vaccinations but is telling students who don't submit documentation that they could face weekly COVID-19 tests.

Purdue, which says at least 60% of students are vaccinated, tried to entice students to get the shots with 10 prize drawings for a full year's tuition.

Many other schools are offering similar incentives, such as the University of Wisconsin's regional campuses giving away 70 \$7,000 scholarships to vaccinated students at sites with at least 70% vaccination rates. Missouri State has a \$150,000 program with prizes that include free tuition, meal plans and computers.

Face masks won't fade away as much as hoped on campuses this fall, either. Purdue and the University of South Carolina were among those in the past week to announce a return to required masks following the new CDC guidance that fully vaccinated people wear them indoors if they live in areas with high virus transmission rates.

Rachel "Rae" Applegate, an incoming Notre Dame freshman, was vaccinated this summer with her 16-year-old sister and said she was hesitant because the vaccines are so new. She also feared a greater

risk of COVID-19 exposure on campus than at home in Evansville, Indiana.

"I can understand people's concerns about not wanting to be told what to do, but to me, this (getting vaccinated) just makes sense," Applegate said. "When we're all together on a campus like this ... and with the variants and everything else, it's like, don't we all want to be as safe as possible?"

## 'This attack happened': Medals to honor Jan. 6 responders

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate has voted to award Medals of Honor to the Capitol Police and the Metropolitan Police Department for protecting Congress during the Jan. 6 insurrection, sending the legislation to President Joe Biden for his signature.

Under the bill, which passed by voice vote with no objections, there will be four medals – to be displayed at the Capitol Police headquarters, the Metropolitan Police Department, the U.S. Capitol and the Smithsonian Institution.

Hundreds of officers from the two police departments responded to the attack and dozens of them were beaten and injured as the mob of former President Donald Trump's supporters pushed past them to break into the building and interrupt the certification of Biden's victory. The police and National Guard troops eventually cleared the building and the count resumed.

The medals are "a recognition that will be on display for people to understand and remember what these officers did," Senate Rules Committee Chairwoman Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn, said in an interview with The Associated Press shortly before she called up the bill for passage.

While introducing the legislation, Klobuchar said children of the future will be able to walk by and see the medals in the Smithsonian, and their parents will tell them: "This happened, this attack happened."

Senate passage comes after 21 House Republicans voted against the measure in June, some of them objecting to the language in the bill that referred to a "mob of insurrectionists." Trump, along with many Republicans still loyal to him, has downplayed the rioting and tried to rebrand it as a peaceful protest, even as law enforcement who responded that day have detailed the violence and made clear the toll it has taken on them. Four officers gave emotional testimony in Congress last week about their mental and physical injuries.

No Senate Republicans objected. The top Republican on the Senate Rules panel, Missouri Sen. Roy Blunt, said the medals recognize "the selflessness, the dedication, the willingness to stand in the way of danger." Blunt said he hopes they will send "a clear message" of appreciation to the two departments.

At least nine people who were there died during and after the rioting, including a woman who was shot and killed by police as she tried to break into the House chamber and three other Trump supporters who suffered medical emergencies. Two police officers died by suicide in the days that immediately followed, and a third officer, Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick, collapsed and died after engaging with the protesters. A medical examiner determined he died of natural causes.

This week, the Metropolitan Police announced that two more of their officers who had responded to the insurrection had died by suicide. Officer Kyle DeFreytag was found dead on July 10 and Officer Gunther Hashida was found dead in his home Thursday.

"We are grieving as a department," the police said in a statement.

While it is unclear what exactly led to their deaths, lawmakers praised them for their service on Jan. 6. Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, said ahead of the bill's passage that her heart goes out to the families of the officers who took their own lives.

"I hope each and every one of us will take time today to thank these courageous men and women who are working so hard to keep us safe, many of whom still bear the physical injuries and the emotional trauma of that dark day in our nation's history," Collins said.

Klobuchar said she doesn't know the reasons for the two officers' deaths in July, but said that "at some point it's not a coincidence."

The suicides are "just one more sad and tragic story of people who were there protecting us who clearly



suffered from that day," she said. "It affected people."

## Tennessee won't incentivize COVID shots but pays to vax cows

By TRAVIS LOLLER Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Tennessee has sent nearly half a million dollars to farmers who have vaccinated their cattle against respiratory diseases and other maladies over the past two years.

But Republican Gov. Bill Lee, who grew up on his family's ranch and refers to himself as a cattle farmer in his Twitter profile, has been far less enthusiastic about incentivizing herd immunity among humans.

Even though Tennessee has among the lowest vaccination rates in the country, Lee has refused to follow the lead of other states that have offered enticements for people to get the potentially life-saving COVID-19 vaccine.

Lee hasn't always been against incentivizing vaccinations.

Tennessee's Herd Health program began in 2019 under Lee, whose family business, Triple L Ranch, breeds Polled Hereford cattle. The state currently reimburses participating farmers up to \$1,500 for vaccinating their herds, handing out \$492,561 over the past two fiscal years, according to documents from the Tennessee Agriculture Department.

Lee, who so far has avoided drawing a serious Republican primary challenge in his 2022 reelection bid, has been accused of complacency in the face of the deadly pandemic. Tennessee's vaccination rates for COVID-19 hover at 39% of its total population, versus over 49% nationally for the fully vaccinated. The state's COVID hospitalizations have more than tripled over the past three weeks and infections have increased more than five-fold.

Speaking at the Tennessee Cattlemen's Association annual conference on Friday, Lee said he did not think incentives were very effective, WBIR-TV reported. "I don't think that's the role of government," he added. "The role of government is to make it available and then to encourage folks to get a vaccine."

In an emailed reply to a question about the contrast to incentivizing vaccination for cattle, spokesperson Casey Black wrote, "Tennesseans have every incentive to get the COVID-19 vaccine – it's free and available in every corner of the state with virtually no wait. While a veterinarian can weigh in on safely raising cattle for consumption, the state will continue to provide human Tennesseans with COVID-19 vaccine information and access."

After Ohio's Republican Gov. Mike DeWine announced the state's Vax-a-Million lottery on May 12, with prizes that included \$1 million and full college scholarships, many other states around the country followed suit with their own incentives. They include custom outfitted trucks in West Virginia, annual passes to the state parks in New Jersey, and gift certificates for hunting and fishing licenses in Arkansas. Last week, President Joe Biden joined the call for incentives, encouraging state and local governments to use federal funds to pay people \$100 to vaccinate.

But Lee has avoided employing any of those tactics and has maintained throughout the pandemic that the decision to vaccinate against COVID-19 is a personal choice.

"We want to encourage Tennesseans to talk to their doctor, to talk to their clergy, to talk to their family members, the trusted voices in their life, in order for them to make a personal decision about whether or not to pursue getting the vaccine," he told reporters recently, "but we encourage that because it is the tool that will most effectively allow us to manage this virus."

Lee was vaccinated against COVID-19 but didn't publicize it, as he did when he received his flu shot.

More recently, Lee's administration has been under fire after the state's vaccination chief was terminated in what she has called an attempt to appease GOP legislators who were outraged over COVID-19 vaccination outreach to minors. At a hearing in June, one Republican lawmaker called an ad promoting vaccination for teenagers "reprehensible" and some went so far as to suggest they might pull the Health Department's funding.

Dr. Michelle Fiscus has been vocal about what she thinks are the political motives for her firing, sharing her positive performance reviews with the press. Fiscus also called out the Health Department for halting

outreach for all childhood vaccinations, not just COVID-19. The department has since restarted outreach, but says it is only targeting parents.

Lee was initially silent on the controversy. Then, at a recent news conference, Lee said he supports Health Commissioner Lisa Piercey and her decisions, although he said he doesn't have a direct hand in them.

Dr. Jason Martin, who has been treating COVID-19 patients in Sumner County since the beginning of the pandemic, has been so disappointed in the state's response that he is exploring running for governor himself. The Democrat wishes Lee would be "excited about incentivizing Tennesseans to take a safe, effective, live-saving vaccine," he said. "It would help us beat COVID, keep our businesses open and thriving, get our kids back to school safely."

Black, Lee's spokesperson, would not answer a question about whether the governor's family farm received money from the Herd Health program, but records from the Agriculture Department do not show anyone with the last name Lee as a recipient.

## Russia hands Navalny ally parole-like sentence over protests

By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — A court in Moscow on Tuesday sentenced a close ally of imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny to 1 1/2 years of parole-like restrictions in a controversial criminal case the government launched against opposition supporters after mass protests shook Russia this year.

The court found Lyubov Sobol guilty of inciting people to violate coronavirus restrictions and for the next 18 months barred her from leaving her home between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., attend mass events or travel outside Moscow and its outlying region. She was also ordered to check in with police three times a month, her lawyer Vladimir Voronin said.

He added that because Sobol had already spent nearly six months under house arrest and other restrictions, the sentence will only remain in place for about a year.

The case against Sobol and several other Navalny allies was launched shortly after nationwide protests over his arrest and jailing rocked Russia all across its 11 time zones on Jan. 23.

Navalny, Russian President Vladimir Putin's most ardent political foe, was arrested a week before that upon returning from Germany, where he spent five months recovering from a nerve agent poisoning that he blames on the Kremlin — an accusation rejected by Russian officials.

In February, Navalny was ordered to serve 2½ years in prison for violating the terms of a suspended sentence from a 2014 embezzlement conviction that he dismissed as politically motivated.

His arrest and jailing sparked a wave of mass protests that appeared to be a major challenge to the Kremlin. The authorities responded with mass arrests of demonstrators and the criminal prosecutions of Navalny's closest associates.

Sobol and others were accused of inciting people to break coronavirus regulations by urging them to join the protests.

The crackdown on Navalny's team didn't stop there. In June, the politician's Foundation for Fighting Corruption, which he launched 10 years ago and has published dozens of colorful and widely watched videos exposing the alleged corruption of senior government officials, was labeled an extremist group, along with the network of regional offices that Navalny had relied on to organize protests.

The ruling not only barred the foundation and the offices from operating, but also prevents people associated with the groups from seeking public office and exposes them to lengthy prison terms.

Last month, the authorities blocked some 50 websites run by Navalny's team or his supporters for allegedly disseminating propaganda of extremist groups and asked Twitter to take down Sobol's account.

Sobol blasted the move as "the Kremlin's hysteria" ahead of the parliamentary election on Sept. 19 that is widely seen as an important part of Putin's efforts to cement his rule before the 2024 presidential election.

The 68-year-old Russian leader, who has been in power for more than two decades, pushed through constitutional changes last year that would potentially allow him to hold onto power until 2036.

As the vote looms, opposition supporters, independent journalists and human rights activists in Rus-

sia face increased government pressure. Russian authorities have declared several independent media outlets and reporters “foreign agents” — a label that implies additional government scrutiny and carries strong pejorative connotations that could discredit the recipients — and targeted prominent investigative journalists with raids.

## At least 3 wounded in Sweden shooting amid rise in violence

HELSINKI (AP) — At least three people have been wounded in a shooting in the southern Swedish city of Kristianstad, police said. No suspects have been detained yet, Swedish media reported.

Swedish police received an alert Tuesday afternoon that several loud bangs were heard in one of the districts of the city. Police soon arrived at the scene with several patrols.

According to preliminary information, at least three people were taken to hospital with suspected gunshot wounds, Swedish police say. A man in his 20s, a man in his 30s and a woman in her 60s have serious injuries, according to police, who added there’s a possibility the number of wounded will still rise.

The police investigation is focused on finding where precisely the shooting took place, as there were reports of shots being fired around the city and its surrounding areas.

The Swedish newspaper Expressen reported that one or more perpetrators left the main scene of the shooting by motorcycle. Police wouldn’t confirm that information.

There was no immediate information on the cause of the shooting, but it comes amid a rise in gun violence in the Scandinavian nation.

A report by the Swedish national council for crime prevention said earlier this year that Sweden is the only European country where fatal shootings have risen significantly since 2000, primarily because of the violent activities of organized criminal gangs.

“We are currently working to get an overview of how many are injured. An ambulance has been called to the scene,” police spokesman Richard Lundqvist was quoted as telling local newspaper Sydsvenskan.

On Monday evening, there were also reports of shootings in the same area in Kristianstad, the Swedish news agency TT reported.

## Hit with #MeToo revolt, Blizzard Entertainment chief is out

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writer

The president of Activision’s Blizzard Entertainment is stepping down weeks after the maker of video games like “World of Warcraft” and “Call of Duty,” was hit with a discrimination and sexual harassment lawsuit in California as well as backlash from employees over their work environment.

The state sued Activision Blizzard Inc. last month citing a “frat boy” culture that has become “a breeding ground for harassment and discrimination against women.”

The lawsuit alleges that female employees face constant sexual harassment, that few women are named to leadership roles and when they are, they earn less salary, incentive pay and total compensation than male peers.

Activision Blizzard CEO Bobby Kotick sent a letter to employees after the lawsuit was filed, stating that the company was “taking swift action to be the compassionate, caring company you came to work for and to ensure a safe environment.”

“There is no place anywhere at our Company for discrimination, harassment, or unequal treatment of any kind,” he wrote.

On Tuesday it was announced that J. Allen Brack was leaving the company in a letter from Activision Blizzard President and COO Daniel Alegre to employees. Brack joined Blizzard in January 2006 and held multiple leadership roles before being named president in October 2018, according to the company’s website.

The complaint alleges that as far back as 2019, Brack had been told that employees were leaving the Santa Monica, California, company because of rampant sexual harassment and sexism. It also alleged employees had approached the company’s human resources department with complaints of unfair pay

and assignments.

The complaint says that despite the numerous complaints to human resources personnel and executives including Brack, no effective remedial measures were taken.

The lawsuit also claims that Brack only gave verbal counseling, deemed a "slap on the wrist," to Alex Afrasiabi, former senior creative director for "World of Warcraft." Afrasiabi is accused in the complaint of engaging in blatant sexual harassment and the state alleged that the company refused to deal with it because of his position.

Jen Oneal and Mike Ybarra were named co-leaders of Blizzard, sharing responsibility for development and operational accountability for the company, it said Tuesday.

Oneal served as executive vice president of development at Blizzard, while Ybarra served as executive vice president & general manager of platform and technology.

"With their many years of industry experience and deep commitment to integrity and inclusivity, I am certain Jen and Mike will lead Blizzard with care, compassion and a dedication to excellence," Alegre wrote.

## Free climber scales London skyscraper in climate stunt

By TRISTAN WERKMEISTER Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A 21-year-old free climber who was imprisoned two years ago for climbing the U.K.'s tallest skyscraper has scaled another building in London, this time to draw attention to climate change.

George King-Thompson climbed up the 36-story Stratosphere Tower, a residential block in east London's Stratford neighborhood, unaided Tuesday morning and reached the top in less than half an hour.

The former personal trainer said he picked the skyscraper because he was shocked by the flash floods that recently hit the area. Pudding Mill Lane, a subway station in Stratford, was one of eight stations that closed due to flooding on July 25, when almost a month's worth of rain fell on central London.

"I wanted to raise awareness to the seriousness of climate change at the moment, because only a week before that, there was a heat wave throughout London," King-Thompson said. "I hope to raise awareness by climbing this building to urge political leaders to take action immediately."

The young climber said he spent a week preparing for the feat, studying every aspect and surface of the 147-meter (482-foot) building and trying to climb a few floors overnight in secret.

But there was one thing he wasn't prepared for.

"First eight floors, the windows were sticky. They had grip. But eight floors and above, they didn't. So, it's very slippery, which I underestimated," he said.

King-Thompson admits climbing buildings is dangerous but said he planned the climb so he would not be a danger to the public or cause disruptions.

Police dispatched a helicopter to search the area Tuesday after they received a call that a man "was spotted at height" in Stratford. They said officers attended but did not locate the climber.

King-Thompson was arrested in 2019 after scaling the Shard in London — the U.K.'s tallest skyscraper at 310 meters (1,017 feet) tall — after the owners of the building pressed charges against him for trespassing. He was sentenced to six months in prison in October 2019 and served three.

## What should I know about the delta variant?

By The Associated Press undefined

What should I know about the delta variant?

It's the most contagious coronavirus mutant so far in the pandemic, but COVID-19 vaccines still provide strong protection against it. Nearly all hospitalizations and deaths are among the unvaccinated.

Still, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cited the delta's surge for its updated advice that fully vaccinated people return to wearing masks indoors in areas with high transmission. The change is based on recent research suggesting that vaccinated people who get infected with the delta variant can spread it to others, even if the vaccinated don't get seriously ill.



The new guidance helps protect the unvaccinated, including children who aren't yet eligible for the shots, and others who are at high-risk for serious illness if infected.

Some breakthrough cases with mild or no symptoms were always expected, since the vaccines were designed to prevent serious illness. The CDC no longer publicly counts those milder breakthrough cases, but a Kaiser Family Foundation analysis of data from states that keep a tally found they make up a tiny share of all COVID-19 infections.

It's not yet clear if the delta variant makes people sicker. But experts say it spreads more easily because of mutations that make it better at latching onto cells in our bodies.

The delta, first detected in India, has quickly become dominant wherever it has landed, including the U.S. Viruses constantly mutate, and most changes aren't concerning. But the worry is that unchecked spread could fuel mutations and produce a variant that's even more contagious, causes more severe illness or evades the protection that vaccines provide.

It's why experts say making vaccines accessible globally is so critical. And they note the importance of being fully vaccinated; getting just one dose of the two-dose vaccines isn't as protective against the delta.

## Olympics Latest: Women's semifinals set in beach volleyball

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 women's semifinals are set in beach volleyball after a pair of upsets.

Latvia and Australia advanced to the final four at the Shiokaze Park venue after they both beat favored teams from Canada. The United States and Switzerland won in the morning session and will meet in the first match on Thursday.

Mariafe Artacho and Taliqua Clancy of Australia beat top-seeded Sarah Pavan and Melissa Humana-Paredes 21-15, 19-21, 15-12. Tina Graudina and Anastasija Kravcenoka of Latvia eliminated Heather Bansley and Brandie Wilkerson 21-13, 18-21, 15-11.

It would be the first-ever women's beach volleyball medal for either Switzerland or Latvia and just the second for any European country. Germany won gold in Rio de Janeiro.

Mickael Mawem of France is the top men's qualifier in sport climbing's Olympic debut and will be joined by his brother Bassa in the finals at the Tokyo Games.

Mawem won bouldering by reaching the top on three of four "problems," was third in speed and 11th in lead to finish with 33 points. Points are based on a climber's position and multiplied together.

Gold medal favorite Adam Ondra also will be in Thursday's finals after qualifying fifth.

Tomoa Narasaki of Japan qualified second after finishing second in two of the three disciplines.

Colin Duffy of the United States qualified third. He is the youngest climber in the field at 17 and will join in the finals by eighth-place teammate Nathaniel Coleman.

Bassa Mawem qualified seventh.

### MEDAL ALERT

Armand Duplantis of Sweden won the Olympic gold medal in the pole vault.

The 21-year-old Duplantis clinched victory at the Tokyo Games with a height of 6.02 meters and then raised the bar to 6.19 meters in a bid to break his own world record.

Duplantis missed all three times when he tried to improve on the world record mark of 6.18 meters he set in Glasgow last year.

Christopher Nilsen of the United States took silver with a personal best of 5.97 meters. Thiago Braz of Brazil won bronze at 5.87 meters.

### MEDAL ALERT

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 66 of 75

Elaine Thompson-Herah of Jamaica completed her second straight Olympic sprint sweep, finishing the 200 meters in 21.53 seconds, the second-fastest time in history.

Thompson-Herah topped surprise second-place finisher Christine Mboma of Namibia by .48, while American Gabby Thomas took bronze.

This was a star-studded final, defined as much by who didn't finish on the podium as who did.

Thompson's Jamaican teammate, Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, finished fourth and Shaune Miller-Uibo, who focused on the 200 instead of defending her title in the 400, came in last. Miller-Uibo is still in the mix for the 400, after finishing first in a preliminary heat earlier Tuesday.

Thompson-Herah joins another Jamaican, Veronica Campbell-Brown, and Barbel Wookel of the former East Germany as the third back-to-back champion in the 200.

Thompson-Herah's time is topped only by Florence Griffith Joyner's run of 21.34 at the Seoul Olympics in 1988.

## MEDAL ALERT

Tamyra Mensah-Stock of the United States defeated Blessing Oborududu of Nigeria 4-1 in the women's 68-kilogram freestyle wrestling final to claim the second Olympic gold medal ever for an American female wrestler.

Mensah-Stock defeated 2016 Olympic gold medalist Sara Dosho 10-0 in the first round and beat Feng Zhao of China 10-0 by technical superiority in the quarterfinals. She defeated former world champion Alla Cherkasova of Ukraine 10-4 in the semifinals.

Mensah-Stock joins Helen Maroulis as American women to win gold. Maroulis won the 53kg class in 2016.

Cherkasova defeated Dosho in a bronze medal match. The other bronze went to Meerim Zhumanazarova of Kyrgyzstan.

## MEDAL ALERT

Akbar Djuraev of Uzbekistan won gold in the men's 109-kilogram weightlifting class after world-record holder Simon Martirosyan failed two lifts for the gold medal.

Djuraev failed a clean and jerk at 234 kilograms but returned to lift 237kg and overtake Martirosyan for the gold medal spot with a total of 430kg.

Martirosyan had two attempts for the gold but didn't lock his arms out on the first lift.

Arturs Plesnieks of Latvia took the bronze with a total of 410kg.

## MEDAL ALERT

Anita Wlodarczyk of Poland won the gold medal in women's hammer throw at a third consecutive Olympics.

The 35-year-old Wlodarczyk added the Tokyo title to her victories at Rio de Janeiro and London with a mark of 78.48 meters.

Wang Zheng of China took the silver medal at 77.03 and Malwina Kopron ensured Poland had two people on the podium by winning the bronze medal at 75.49.

## MEDAL ALERT

Athing Mu has won the 800-meter gold medal for the United States in her first Olympics after leading almost from start to finish.

Mu was never seriously challenged down the home straight as she strode away to win in 1 minute, 55.21 seconds.

Britain's Keely Hodgkinson won the silver medal in 1:55.88 and Raevyn Rogers came from nowhere to clinch the bronze on the finish line and give the Americans a double celebration at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo.

The result confirms the 19-year-old Mu as the new star of the women's 800.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 67 of 75

## MEDAL ALERT

Russian wrestler Musa Evloev defeated Artur Aleksanyan of Armenia 5-1 in the Greco-Roman 97-kilogram final.

Tadeusz Michalik of Poland and Mohammadhadi Saravi of Iran took bronze.

## MEDAL ALERT

Daiki Hashimoto of Japan picked up a third medal in men's gymnastics.

The Olympic all-around champion added gold on high bar by posting a score of 15.066.

Tin Srbic of Croatia was second and Russian gymnast Nikita Nagornyy took bronze. The medal was the third for Nagornyy in Tokyo.

## MEDAL ALERT

Tamas Lorincz of Hungary defeated Akzhol Makhmudov of Kyrgyzstan 2-1 in the Greco-Roman 77-kilogram men's wrestling final.

Lorincz was a silver medalist in the 66kg event at the 2012 London Olympics. Makhmudov was competing in his first Olympics.

Shohei Yabiku of Japan and Rafiq Huseynov of Azerbaijan won bronze.

The Australian Olympic team says some of its athletes were responsible for "unacceptable behavior" on a Japan Airlines flight to Sydney last Friday.

Australian Olympic Committee chief executive Matt Carroll says rugby and soccer officials "have told me that such behavior is certainly not acceptable within their sports."

Australian teams in men's soccer and men's and women's rugby all failed to win medals. The women's soccer team is still in Japan and will play the United States for bronze.

## MEDAL ALERT

Roniel Iglesias of Cuba won his second Olympic boxing gold medal by soundly beating Pat McCormack of Britain in the welterweight final.

Iglesias added Tokyo gold to his two previous light welterweight medals. He won gold in London and bronze from Beijing. He also fought at welterweight in Rio de Janeiro but lost in the quarterfinals.

Iglesias largely controlled the final bout with superior footwork and technique against McCormack. McCormack was gracious in defeat as Iglesias celebrated Cuba's first official boxing medal in Tokyo. Several more are already clinched.

Aidan Walsh of Ireland and Andrei Zamkovoy of Russia claimed bronze medals. Walsh was unable to fight McCormack in the semifinals after he injured his ankle while leaping to celebrate his quarterfinal victory.

## MEDAL ALERT

Chinese gymnasts Guan Chenchen and Tang Xijing have swept the gold and silver in balance beam.

American Simone Biles won bronze in the event, her first medal of the Tokyo Olympics.

Guan took the gold with a score of 14.633, ahead of Tang (14.233).

Biles (14.000) earned her seventh career Olympic medal — tied with Shannon Miller for the most by an American in gymnastics — by drilling a slightly watered-down version of her usual routine in front of a crowd that included IOC President Thomas Bach.

The Greek Olympic team says the outbreak of COVID-19 cases among its artistic swimmers has ruled them out of competing at the Tokyo Games.

Three new cases were reported Tuesday and the entire artistic swimming squad was asked to leave the Olympic Village. Only one case had been previously confirmed.

The Greek team says they are all staying at a quarantine hotel.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 68 of 75

Greece was due to compete in the duet and team events.

Simone Biles has won a bronze medal in balance beam, her first of the Tokyo Olympics.

The American gymnastics star finished behind gold medalist Guan Chenchen and silver medalist Tang Xijing both of China.

A week after taking herself out of several competitions to focus on her mental health, Biles drilled a slightly altered routine on Tuesday.

Biles, using a routine that ended with a double-pike dismount — no twisting required — posted a score of 14.000.

## MEDAL ALERT

The Netherlands romped past Britain in Olympic-record time to win the men's team sprint at the Izu Velodrome.

The team of Jeffrey Hoogland, Roy van den Berg and Harrie Lavreysen stopped the clock in 41.369 seconds to easily beat the British, who had claimed the last three gold medals in the three-lap race.

The British team of Ryan Owens, Jack Carlin and Jason Kenny led by the slimmest margins after the first lap but was unable to keep up the pace. The Dutch pulled after the second lap and wound up easing up across the finish line.

The British finished in a time of 44.589 seconds.

France easily beat Australia in the matchup for the bronze medal.

## GOLD MEDAL, WORLD RECORD

Germany became the first women's pursuit team to beat Britain in an Olympic final, breaking its own world record with a time of 4:04.259 in track cycling at the Izu Velodrome.

The team of Franziska Brausse, Lisa Brennauer, Lisa Klein and Mieke Kroege led the British by nearly 2 seconds by the midway point of the 4,000-meter race and never looked back. The British wound up finishing in 4:10.607.

Britain had won the gold medal the previous three Summer Olympics.

The world champion Americans led the whole way in beating Canada for the bronze medal.

## MEDAL ALERT

Zou Jingyuan of China has captured gold on parallel bars. Zou's winning score of 16.233 was the highest on any event by any gymnast during the nine days of competition at the Ariake Gymnastics Centre.

Zou topped qualifying with a score of 16.166 but went even higher in the finals, giving him a gold to go with the bronze he won in the team competition last week.

Lukas Dauser of Germany grabbed silver after posting a 15.700, just ahead of Ferhat Arican of Turkey, who took bronze.

American Sam Mikulak, competing in his third Olympics, finished sixth in the eight-man final. The 28-year-old Mikulak is retiring following a career in which he won six U.S. titles.

## WORLD RECORD

Italy topped another record in track cycling at the Tokyo Olympics with a new mark in men's team pursuit.

The team of Simone Consonni, Filippo Ganna, Francesco Lamon and Jonathan Milan stopped the clock in 3:42.307 for the 4,000 meters to break the mark of 3:44.672 that Denmark set at last year's world championships.

The Italians were pushed the entire way by New Zealand in the race for a spot in the gold medal race. The team of Aaron Gate, Campbell Stewart, Regan Gough and Jordan Kerby also bettered the previous record with a time of 3:42.397.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 69 of 75

## MEDAL ALERT

Xie Siyi and Wang Zongyuan have given China another 1-2 finish in Olympic diving, taking gold and silver in men's 3-meter springboard.

The Chinese divers held the top two spots after both the preliminaries and the semifinals, and it was more of the same in the finals.

Xie broke down in tears when marks for his final dive were posted, a string of 9.0s and 9.5s that clinched the gold with 558.75 points. Wang came over to give his teammate a hug.

The biggest drama was for the silver, but Wang nailed his final dive to hold off Britain's Jack Laugher with 534.90.

Laugher was only 2.05 points behind Wang going to the final round but over-rotated his entry a bit, leaving him with the bronze at 518.00.

Long the world's dominant diving nation, China has been near-perfect at the Tokyo Aquatic Center with five gold medals in six events.

---

British track cyclist Ed Clancy withdrew from the Tokyo Olympics and announced his retirement because of an ongoing back and sciatica injury, hours before his pursuit team was scheduled to compete in its first-round ride.

Charlie Tanfield will replace him alongside Ethan Hayter, Ethan Vernon and Ollie Wood in the four-man lineup.

Clancy has been part of the gold medal-winning pursuit squad during the last three Olympic cycles. He also has a bronze medal in the multidiscipline omnium while spending just over 20 years on the national team. Clancy said he was "absolutely gutted that my Olympic career has ended this way."

But he said he wants the rest of the team to have the best chance of winning a medal.

The medal rounds of the team pursuit take place Wednesday.

## MEDAL ALERT

Sena Irie of Japan has claimed the first-ever women's featherweight boxing gold medal with a unanimous decision over the Philippines' Nesthy Petecio.

Irie became the first female boxer to win a medal for Japan when she secured the first gold of the Tokyo boxing tournament by sweeping the third round on all five judges' cards at the Kokugikan Arena. Irie's crisper punches won over the judges in a bout with plenty of clinching.

Petecio settled for the Philippines' first boxing medal of any kind since 1996, but Manny Pacquiao's home nation is in contention for at least two more medals in Tokyo.

Featherweight was one of two women's weight classes added to the Olympics in Tokyo. The women's field also was expanded to 100 fighters from 36 in its first two Olympics.

Italy's Irma Testa and Britain's Karriss Artingstall won the division's inaugural bronze medals.

---

The IOC says it asked China's Olympic team to explain two gold medal winners wearing pins of communist leader Mao Zedong at their medal ceremony.

It risks being judged a breach of Olympic Charter Rule 50 prohibiting political statements on the podium.

After winning the women's sprint in track cycling Monday, Bao Shanju and Zhong Tianshi wore pin badges of Mao, the founding leader of communist China.

The Chinese incident followed one day after American shot put silver medalist Raven Saunders crossed the wrists of her raised arms on the podium, in a symbol of support for oppressed people. That happened seconds after the Chinese national anthem finished playing for gold medalist Gong Lijiao.

Adams says the IOC has asked the United States team for more details. The U.S. Olympic body said it was taking no action against Saunders.

---

A shot putter from the country of Georgia has tested positive for steroids and been pulled from his event Tuesday.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 70 of 75

The International Testing Agency says Benik Abramyan tested positive for two steroids and a banned hormone in a sample taken in Tokyo on Saturday. That was his 36th birthday.

Abramyan was due to take part in the shot put qualifying round later Tuesday.

The agency says the athlete can appeal against his provisional suspension at the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Abramyan competed at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics and did not reach the final.

Xie Siyi and Wang Zongyuan gave China a 1-2 finish in the semifinals of men's 3-meter springboard diving at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre.

Looking for China's fifth diving gold in six Olympic events, Xie and Wang led a group of 12 qualifiers to the afternoon final.

Xie totaled 543.45 points for six dives, with Wang right behind at 540.50. Britain's Jack Laugher was the only diver even close to China's powerhouse duo, taking the third spot with 514.75.

Another British diver, James Heatly, was fourth in 454.85 -- a whopping 88.60 behind the leader.

The lone U.S. diver, Andrew Capobianco, advanced to the final in 10th at 419.60. Teammate Tyler Downs was eliminated in Monday's preliminaries. Capobianco already won a silver medal with Michael Hixon in the 3-meter synchronized event, one of three diving medals for the Americans.

## MEDAL ALERT

Malaika Mihambo of Germany took the top spot in the women's long jump with a 7-meter leap on her final attempt and edged U.S. veteran Brittney Reese for the Olympic gold medal.

Mihambo won the world championship title in 2019 and finished just off the podium in fourth place at the 2016 Olympics.

The 34-year-old Reese now has back-to-back Olympic silver medals at the Tokyo Games and from Rio de Janeiro after winning the title at London in 2012.

The four-time world champion had the chance to win with the final jump of the competition but couldn't improve on her best mark of 6.97 meters.

Ese Brume of Nigeria, who led after the first round and was in top spot again after the fourth, also finished on 6.97-meters and took bronze on a countback.

## MEDAL ALERT

Cuba won a surprise gold medal in the men's canoe double 1,000 meters, ahead of China and Germany.

Germany had won the event at five of the last seven Olympic games and Sebastian Brendel had been in the German boat for gold medals in 2012 and 2016.

But the race developed into a battle between Cuba and China over the final 500 meters. Cuba's Serguey Torres Madrigal and Fernando Dayan Jorge Enriquez edged across the line to win by 0.2 seconds.

The Cuban duo had won silver at the world championships in 2019, but Cuba hadn't medaled in this event at the Olympics since 2000.

Germany won bronze to earn a medal in the events for the seventh consecutive Olympics.

## MEDAL ALERT

New Zealand's Lisa Carrington blew away the field in winning her third consecutive women's kayak sprint 200 at the Sea Forest Waterway.

The gold medal could be the first of a potential four medals for Carrington in Tokyo. She's also in the women's kayak double 500 later Tuesday and the 500 single and fours later in the week.

Carrington bolted out of the start and had a lead of half a boat length barely 50 meters into the race. She beat Spain's Teresa Portela of Spain by 0.76 seconds.

Emma Aastrand Jorgensen of Denmark won the bronze medal.

Allyson Felix won her first-round heat of the 400 meters as she began her Tokyo quest for a 10th Olym-

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 71 of 75

pic medal.

The 35-year-old Felix, who's competing at her fifth Olympics, has six gold medals and three silvers on her resume. She's tied with Jamaican great Merlene Ottey for the most women's track medals in Olympic history. Felix has a chance to medal in the 400 and may have another shot in the women's 4x400 this weekend.

Before her race, she was introduced as a legend.

Felix ran in spikes designed by her new company, Saysh. It made the moment more special. The only thing missing was her young daughter, Camryn, who's back home.

"It's changed everything," Felix said of motherhood. "It's given me a different drive. ... I think it's even more meaningful to be on this stage as a mom."

The Court of Arbitration for Sport says Belarus sprinter Krystsina Tsimanouskaya failed in a legal action to be allowed to run in the 200 meters heats.

The court revealed early Tuesday the legal steps Tsimanouskaya took while she was also seeking a humanitarian visa to avoid returning to Belarus, where she believes her life would be in danger.

CAS says it denied Tsimanouskaya's request for an interim ruling to overturn Belarus Olympic officials' refusal to let her race in the 200.

The heats were held Monday morning and semifinals in the evening session at the Olympic Stadium.

April Ross is the last medalist standing in the Olympic beach volleyball women's bracket.

The American 2016 bronze medalist and her partner ousted defending champion Laura Ludwig of Germany on Tuesday and advanced to the semifinals at the Shiokaze Park venue. Ross, who also has a silver medal from London, is the last woman remaining who has reached the podium at a previous Summer Games.

This time, Ross is playing with Olympic first-timer Alix Klineman. They beat Ludwig and her new partner Maggie Kozuch 21-19, 21-19.

Ross and Klineman are the U.S.'s last hopes for a beach volleyball medal in Tokyo. The sport's birthplace has never been shut out in the Olympics.

## Bipartisan bill leaves out key climate, clean energy steps

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure package unveiled by the Senate includes more than \$150 billion to boost clean energy and promote "climate resilience" by making schools, ports and other structures better able to withstand extreme weather events such as storms and wildfires.

But the bill, headed for a Senate vote this week, falls far short of President Joe Biden's pledge to transform the nation's heavily fossil-fuel powered economy into a clean-burning one and stop climate-damaging emissions from U.S. power plants by 2035.

Notably, the deal omits mention of a Clean Electricity Standard, a key element of Biden's climate plan that would require the electric grid to replace fossil fuels with renewable sources such as solar, wind and hydropower.

Nor does it include a Civilian Climate Corps, a Biden favorite and a nod to the Great Depression-era New Deal that would put millions of Americans to work on conservation projects, renewable energy and helping communities recover from climate disasters.

The White House says the bipartisan deal is just the first step, with a proposed \$3.5 trillion, Democratic-only package following close behind. The larger bill, still being developed in Congress, will meet Biden's promise to move the country toward carbon-free electricity, make America a global leader in electric vehicles and create millions of jobs in solar, wind and other clean-energy industries, supporters say.

While the bipartisan plan is "a good start," lawmakers will "deal with the climate crisis in the magnitude, scope and scale that's required" in the Democratic-only bill, said Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass.

For now, the focus is on the bipartisan deal, which includes \$550 billion in new spending for public works

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 72 of 75

projects, \$73 billion of that to update the electric grid and more than \$50 billion to bolster infrastructure against cyberattacks and climate change. There's also \$7.5 billion for electric charging stations.

Citing the deadly Texas power outages earlier this year, the White House touted spending to upgrade the nation's power grid and boost renewable energy. An Energy Department study found that power outages cost the U.S. economy up to \$70 billion a year. The bill also invests in demonstration projects for advanced nuclear reactors, carbon capture and storage and so-called clean hydrogen that can be burned with few emissions.

Still, the measure falls far short of meeting Biden's promise to address the climate crisis, even as triple-digit temperatures across the West caused hundreds of deaths this summer and a busy Atlantic hurricane season causes extensive damage.

"It is clear that the deal does not meet the moment on climate or justice," said Tiernan Sittenfeld, a senior vice president of the League of Conservation Voters.

"This looks like the Exxon Infrastructure Bill," said Janet Redman of Greenpeace USA. "An infrastructure bill that doesn't prevent a full-blown climate catastrophe by funding a swift transition to renewable energy would kill millions of Americans."

The bill offers "glimmers of hope" such as a multibillion-dollar commitment to clean up and remediate old oil wells and mines, Redman said, calling on Democrats to demonstrate "the courage to be visionary and go bigger" in the partisan bill expected later this year.

One of the lead negotiators, Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, acknowledged that no one got everything they wanted in the bipartisan bill. "But we came up with a good compromise that's going to help the American people," he said.

"This is about infrastructure," Portman said at the White House. "This is roads and bridges, but also lots of other kinds of infrastructure, including broadband, our water system and our rail system — all of which is good for the economy. This will lead to more efficiency and higher productivity, more economic growth."

The plan includes \$21 billion to clean up brownfields and other polluted sites, reclaim abandoned mine land and cap orphaned oil and gas wells. The plan will help communities near contaminated industrial sites and rural areas where abandoned oil wells pose a continuing a hazard, the White House said.

The Senate voted, 66-28, Friday to advance the bill, 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 advance the bill but a simple majority to pass it.

The measure also faces turbulence in the closely divided House, where progressives are pushing for increased spending on climate change and other issues and centrist lawmakers are wary of adding to the federal debt.

Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, called the Senate bill inadequate and pledged to push for changes in the House, which passed a separate, \$715 billion transportation and water bill in early July. Transportation is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S.

DeFazio, the House bill's lead sponsor, said his bill "charts our path forward," adding that he is "fighting to make sure we enact a transformative bill that supports our recovery and combats the existential threat of climate change."

## After Beirut blast, winning justice becomes a life's mission

By SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — After the massive explosion at Beirut's port a year ago, only a small part of Ibrahim Hoteit's younger brother was identified: his scalp. Hoteit buried his brother — a large man, a firefighter, a martial arts champion — in a container the size of a shoebox.

Since then, Hoteit has sold his business, a perfume and accessories shop. He sleeps only a few hours a night. Black circles ring his eyes.

One thing drives him now: winning justice for the victims of the Aug. 4, 2020, explosion that killed more



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 73 of 75

than 214 people and punishing Lebanon's political elite, blamed for causing the disaster through their corruption and mismanagement.

"I don't see a minister or president or parliament speaker. I am seeing the person who killed my brother and others with him," said Hoteit, who says he gets anonymous threats. "This is what gives me strength. I see that I have nothing to lose."

Hoteit and his wife, Hanan, have built an association of more than 100 families of those killed. They are waging a campaign of protests and rallies trying to shame, pressure and force politicians to allow the truth to come out.

A year later, critics say the political leadership has succeeded in stonewalling the judicial investigation into the explosion.

President Michel Aoun has said no one will have political cover if they are found negligent or guilty, but has not addressed accusations that officials are obstructing the investigation.

Hoteit and other families say they are up against not just a government but the political system that has ruled Lebanon for more than 30 years. It's a system that protects itself so intensely it seems invulnerable, even as many Lebanese say it has led the country into ruin — pointing to both the explosion and a financial meltdown that is one of the world's worst in the past 150 years.

Even the current caretaker premier, Hassan Diab, has acknowledged this, saying weeks after the explosion that corruption in Lebanon "is bigger than the state."

---

Black and white portraits of each of the blast's victims, commissioned by Hoteit's group, hang from the walls of a central square near the port. Painted on a wall opposite the still mangled port, a large slogan declares, "My government did this."

The blast was preceded by a fire that broke out at the port, and hundreds of tons of ammonium nitrate stored in a hangar along with other highly combustible materials exploded.

It was one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history. Along with the dead, thousands were injured. Some 300,000 homes were damaged or destroyed.

It soon emerged in documents that the ammonium nitrate had been stored improperly at the port since 2014 and that multiple high-level officials over the years knew of its presence and did nothing.

But a year after the government launched a judicial investigation, nearly everything else remains unknown — from who ordered the shipment to why officials ignored repeated internal warnings of the danger. Multiple government agencies have a role at the port, but all of them have said the ammonium nitrate was not their responsibility.

Hoteit's brother Tharwat was among the group of firefighters who rushed to battle the initial blaze. All were killed.

Hoteit and his wife spent the next 12 days searching through hospitals for his brother. It was harrowing. They turned over bodies to see their faces. Doctors notified them when they identified Tharwat's remains.

Along the way, they met other families on the same grisly search. Hoteit and Hanan saw one man carrying his dead son's hand in a plastic sack. The families continued to communicate, first through a WhatsApp group, trading stories of their loved ones.

Then they organized to fight.

---

With his black T-shirt, jeans and hair slicked back, Hoteit has become synonymous with calls for justice. The 51-year-old father of three is unforgiving, determined — and a clear-eyed strategist.

He coordinates with local groups to document and archive every piece of information on the blast. He has met with several of the politicians he has led protests against, as well as repeatedly with investigators.

At first, the group held vigils outside the port on the 4th of every month. But as the investigation stalled, the group changed tactics, targeting specific officials with protests.

At a protest last month, hundreds carried empty coffins outside the acting interior minister's home.

At first, Hoteit tried to keep the group orderly, while Hanan and others shouted angrily at the minister

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 74 of 75

inside. The protest got tense as numbers swelled and the minister never came out to talk to them. Protesters tried to make their way through the gates.

Police fired tear gas and pushed them back.

The biggest challenge has been trying to ensure the investigation moves forward.

The first lead investigator was Fadi Sawwan, a former military judge. When the families felt he was dragging his feet, citing coronavirus restrictions, they protested outside his home.

When he did act, they couldn't protect him.

Sawwan named three former government ministers and Diab, the caretaker prime minister, to be charged with negligence leading to death. Diab has dismissed the allegations as "diabolical." The political class united and won Sawwan's removal by court order in February.

That's when the families staged their first angry rally, burning tires, blocking roads and warning they may storm the Justice Ministry. A replacement for Sawwan was swiftly named: Tarek Bitar, a younger judge with no clear political affiliations.

Bitar cast a wider net, pursuing even senior military, intelligence and security officers. In February, he asked the government and parliament to lift immunity from the heads of two main security agencies and two lawmakers so he could question them.

The families were elated.

But the political elite again closed ranks. Lawmakers and government officials refused to lift immunity. The interior minister said his legal department advised against it, reportedly because the security agency in question was not responsible for the shipment.

So the families took aim at parliament members and officials they accuse of burying the truth. In TV ads and social media posts, they branded those who opposed lifting immunity as "the ammonium nitrate lawmakers."

The same group of politicians have run Lebanon since its long civil war ended in 1990.

They head the same sectarian-rooted factions that fought the conflict. They have divvied government offices up among themselves, and their patronage system has fomented widespread corruption.

Dozens of political assassinations have never been properly investigated. Corruption has gone unpunished despite widespread documentation.

Impunity is entrenched in the system. Though rivals, the factions close ranks to prevent accountability.

That impunity translated into stunning callousness by politicians in the wake of the explosion.

No one deployed security around a city thrown into chaos. No authority took charge of the crime scene or search and rescue. No politician visited damaged areas. No state agency offered aid or shelter to those left homeless, and none cleaned up the rubble — all was left to volunteers.

The state never offered an apology or condolences to families. Even declaring Aug. 4 a National Day of Mourning took months of pressure.

"The state didn't care for anything at all. If we didn't follow up on everything big and small, nothing would happen," Hoteit said, speaking at his home in the mainly Shiite southern Beirut suburb of Dahiyeh.

Like many Lebanese, Hoteit had long been resigned to the system. It was dictated by fate and geopolitics, he felt.

He can abide it no more.

"If the judiciary doesn't give us our right, I will take vengeance for my brother with my own hands."

The families' lives have been consumed by the fight for accountability.

Salam Iskander, a mother of four whose younger brother Hamzeh was killed, comes from her home in northern Lebanon to Beirut to participate in every activity organized by the group. Her father was furious, saying she was endangering her family by taking on the politicians.

The memory of her brother drives her. Hamzeh, a soldier, supported her and her children, since her

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 04, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 028 ~ 75 of 75

husband has a disability that prevents him from working. Her mother died a few months after Hamzeh — killed by grief, Iskander believes.

"Hamzeh is not coming back. Nothing will cool my heart," she said. "But I want to be able to say I did something for him. .... Maybe I can do something as simple as punish those who did it."

Tracy and Paul Naggear lost their only child, 3-year-old daughter Alexandra. Lexou, as they call her, was one of the youngest killed in the blast.

They can't bring themselves to return to live in their home near the port. Tracy has grown thin with stress. After Lexou's funeral, they thought about leaving Lebanon — Tracy has Canadian citizenship — but then they started working with others campaigning for justice. Now they regularly participate in Hoteit's protests.

"This government killed my daughter, and it's my right and my duty to seek justice, and I will," Tracy said. "They can try and block the truth as much as they want ... They will get exhausted before we do."

The Naggears are also part of another network of families asking the U.N. Human Rights Council to establish a fact-finding mission into the blast. Proponents hope that could circumvent politicians' obstructions.

A third group, made up of families of killed firefighters, has focused on lobbying Lebanese security agencies.

Families have had to fight over and over for even the smallest help for the victims.

Parliament stalled when they asked that the victims be considered military martyrs, which would secure them and their families a pension and assistance. So Hoteit called a strike outside the home of Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri.

Eventually they won the declaration. But Hoteit said the speaker's allies in the government social insurance agency, feeling slighted by the protest against Berri, retaliated by slowing delaying payments to the injured. So Hoteit held a news conference naming and shaming those responsible. The payments resumed.

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Aug. 4, the 216th day of 2021. There are 149 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History

On August 4, 1987, the Federal Communications Commission voted 4-0 to abolish the Fairness Doctrine, which required radio and television stations to present balanced coverage of controversial issues.

On this date:

In 1735, a jury found John Peter Zenger of the New York Weekly Journal not guilty of committing seditious libel against the colonial governor of New York, William Cosby.

In 1790, the U.S. Coast Guard had its beginnings as President George Washington signed a measure authorizing a group of revenue cutters to enforce tariff and trade laws and prevent smuggling.

In 1892, businessman Andrew Borden and his wife, Abby, were axed to death in their home in Fall River, Massachusetts. Lizzie Borden, Andrew's daughter from a previous marriage, was accused of the killings, but acquitted at trial.

In 1914, Britain declared war on Germany for invading Belgium; the United States proclaimed its neutrality in the mushrooming world conflict.

In 1916, the United States reached agreement with Denmark to purchase the Danish Virgin Islands for \$25 million.

In 1936, Jesse Owens of the United States won the second of his four gold medals at the Berlin Olympics as he prevailed in the long jump over German Luz Long, who was the first to congratulate him.

In 1944, 15-year-old diarist Anne Frank was arrested with her sister, parents and four others by the Gestapo after hiding for two years inside a building in Amsterdam. (Anne and her sister, Margot, died at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.)

In 1964, the bodies of missing civil rights workers Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman and James