

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 1 of 56

- [2- Superintendent's report to the BOE](#)
- [2- Attention shifting from COVID to Education](#)
- [3- Elementary Principal's report to the BOE](#)
- [4- MS/HS Principal's Report to the BOE](#)
- [6- The Life of Anna Rix](#)
- [7- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [8- Weather Pages](#)
- [11- Daily Devotional](#)
- [12- 2021 Community Events](#)
- [13- News from the Associated Press](#)



2021 Sturgis Rally Vehicle Count - Through Day Three

STURGIS, S.D. – Vehicle traffic counts from the South Dakota Department of Transportation for vehicles entering Sturgis for the 81st Annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally Aug. 6-15, 2021, are available and will be updated daily.

Traffic counts at nine locations entering Sturgis for the 2021 Rally are as follows:

Friday, Aug. 6: 55,326 entering. Up 11.0% from Friday last year. Down 13.2% from the 75th Rally

Saturday, Aug. 7: 67,482 entering. Up 23.1% from Saturday last year. Down 18% from the 75th Rally

Sunday, Aug. 8: 65,771 entering. Up 17.1 % from Sunday Last year. Down 27.2% from the 75th Rally

3 Day Total:

2021: 188,579 Vehicles

2020: 160,806 Vehicles

2015 (75th Rally): 236,283 Vehicles



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 2 of 56

Superintendent's Report to the Groton Area School District 06-6 Board of Education

August 9, 2021

Teacher Compensation Review Board. On July 16, 2021, the Teacher Compensation Review Board met to discuss progress toward statewide goals of increasing recruitment and retention of teachers through increased teacher salaries funding through the \$0.005 sales tax and new funding formula passed as a result of work done through the Blue Ribbon Task Force. The board reviewed historical teacher compensation data, current teacher compensation information and is charged with providing a report to the Governor and Legislature ahead of the 2022 legislative session. One topic that generated a fair amount of discussion is the issue of the interplay between the inflationary increase provided in statute (CPI or 3% whichever is less) and the likelihood that CPI will be greater than 3% potentially exacerbating some of the figures provided to the board.

On a related side note, one of the objectives of the state-level ARP ESSER plan relates to teacher workforce development and the recruitment/retention of teachers.

State Superintendent Conference. I attended the State Superintendent Conference on July 20 and 21 in Chamberlain. The primary presenters were John and Antoinette Griffin from Griff Development. Their sessions were about a variety of leadership topics. On Wednesday, we heard from Dr. Kristi Wilson, who was the 2020-21 AASA President and DOE Secretary Tiffany Sanderson. Secretary Sanderson addressed the group on medical cannabis (policy recommendation was released later) and alternative instruction.

Fall Athletics. The fall athletics seasons have begun. Boys and Girls Soccer began practice on August 2 and Football began on August 5. Boys Golf began today and Volleyball will begin on Thursday.

Attention shifting from COVID to Education

Superintendent Joe Schwann said, "The attention is shifting from COVID to education. Everything is shifting together away from COVID." He presented the district response to COVID-19. He said the most important thing to note is that, "if you're sick, stay home. It doesn't matter if it's COVID, influenza, strep throat or what ever. It's just common sense." He also said there will be no quarantine of close contact situations and no contact tracing. "I feel comfortable making that recommendation." If someone tests positive for COVID, then they do need to be quarantined for 10 days. There are tests now available for families that want to test themselves for COVID.

The list of qualifying conditions requiring medical cannabis is broad and short. Schwan recommended that the staff not administer the cannabis treatment and that the district not store the cannabis on the school grounds.

Board Member Marty Weismantel questioned the process of selecting volunteer assistant coaches. The head coaches hand pick their volunteers. Weismantel said there is no vetting processing and would like to see on-staff personnel given priority over off-staff personnel. He said that going forward, he would like to see a different procedure. The board did approve the volunteer assistant coach list with Weismantel voting no. They are Carleen Johnson and Kaylin Kucker for girls soccer, Garrett Wiedrick for boys soccer, Carla Tracy for volleyball and Dalton Locke for football.

Brett Schwan

Elementary Principal Report

8/9/2021

1. **Updated PE/Music Schedule.** Students will now be taking music and PE on Fridays on an alternating schedule. This is something we decided to do this year to increase the PE and music exposure to our students.
2. **Supervision Schedule.** Para professionals will be assigned duties for both the morning arrivals and lunch time hours. This will include hallway, recess, and lunch supervision.
3. **Teacher Observation/Grouping Schedule.** This year we have no continuing contract teachers at the elementary. I will be doing 1 formal and 2 informal observations for group A and 2 informal observations for group B. Group A will also have to do a SLO.
4. **Write to learn roster.** Online writing program that was once used as part of our state assessment to measure student achievement in writing.
5. **Renaissance/AR student rosters.** This program is used for students in 1st – 12th.
6. **IXL rosters.** This program focuses on individual standards and student achievement.
7. **Reading/Social Studies rosters.** Science fusion and Into Reading.
8. **D2L updates and rosters.** This will all depend on how our rollover goes. I do plan to merge classes if necessary for teacher convenience.
9. **Deliver books**
 - a. Reading
 - b. Science
 - c. Math
10. **Student/Family Handbooks.** No major updates to the handbooks this year. I only needed to change dates.
11. **Peanut Allergy Sheet**
12. **Update clocks.** I am installing atomic clocks around the building. This process started last year.
13. **Install bases on baseball field.** Elementary PAC bought bases for the baseball field.
14. **Update SBAC testing results.** Some students' scores were not uploaded so we were asked to wait for individual results.
15. **Prepare Frontline for 2021-2022 school year.** This is our teacher observation/evaluations platform.
16. **Update leave and behavior forms.** I use google docs so teachers and staff can easily submit these forms. It also puts a time stamp on them which makes documenting much easier for me.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 4 of 56

Principal's Report

Mrs. Sombke

MS/HS Building

August 9, 2021

1) MS/HS Information Packets

- a) **MS/HS Student Handbook 2021-2022 School year**
 - Dual Credit new changes on p. 13, numbers 5, 6, and 7
 - Senior Privileges new changes on p. 33, numbers 1-7

b) 2021-2022 School Calendar

c) 2021-2022 Class Schedule

d) MS/HS 2021-2022 PAC Request Form

-PAC is again providing all of our 6th grade students with their subject/color coordinated book covers. PAC Members will handout book covers on August 23rd

-PAC Members have been hard at work putting together some fantastic surprises for our MS/HS Teachers and Staff

-We are so grateful for the support, dedication, and commitment of our PAC members in continuing to support the mission of our school

e) 2021-2022 ICU Parent Letter

-We will again offer ICU sessions as needed this year to support consistent and successful completion of assignments, projects, tests, and quizzes as needed to ensure that all students are successful. ICU sessions will run after school from 3:30-5:00pm or in the morning from 7:15-8:00am.

f) 2021-2022 Homework Summary Form

-Students may have homework from their textbooks and homework on Brightspace again this year

-We will continue to use the Brightspace On-line Learning Platform in addition to our traditional in-person classroom lectures and learning projects using textbooks and other paper copy materials to support continued digital growth and competency

g) 2021-2022 Caught you Being Good Form

-We will continue to look for those doing good so we can recognize them

-I encourage board members to use your "Caught you Being Good" to recognize a staff or student you notice working hard to help others, share resources, or model good citizenship. Simply complete the form and drop off at the school office or place in the drop box in the MS/HS Business Office. The student will receive a "treat" with the note from you attached. Catch someone making a difference!

h) Dual Credit and E-Learning

2) 6th Grade Welcome Walk

-August 23rd from 3:30-5:00pm

-Map Guided Student and Parent or Guardian Tour

-Students collect schedules, locker numbers, see classrooms, and meet your teachers

-Students and families will be greeted by Groton Area Royalty!

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 5 of 56

Dates to Know!

August 17th— 10am-noon: Computer check out & Logins for students
taking E-Learning, Spanish, or Dual Credit

August 18th- E-Learning & Spanish Classes Start

August 19th- Schedule Changes 9am-3pm

August 23rd— Dual Credit Classes Start

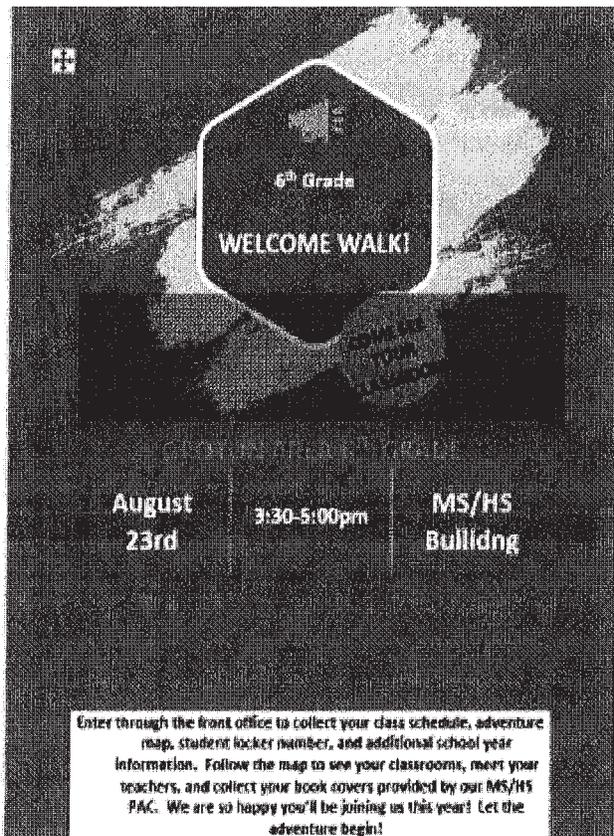
August 25th- First day of School 8:30am

September 1st— Last day to change class schedules

Don't Forget

- ⇒ Bring your Technology agreement form
(Found on the Groton Homepage)
- ⇒ Bring payment if you plan on purchasing
insurance on your computer

No Papers
means
No Computer



6th Grade
WELCOME WALK!

August 23rd 3:30-5:00pm MS/HS Building

Enter through the front office to collect your class schedule, adventure map, student locker number, and additional school year information. Follow the map to see your classrooms, meet your teachers, and collect your book covers provided by our MS/HS PAC. We are so happy you'll be joining us this year! Let the adventure begin!

The Life of Anna Rix



Funeral services for Anna Rix, 92, of Groton will be 10:30 a.m., Thursday, August 12th at the United Methodist Church, Groton. Pastor Brandon Dunham will officiate. Burial will follow in Groton Union Cemetery, under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held at the funeral chapel on Wednesday from 5-7 p.m. with a prayer service at 7:00 p.m.

Ann passed away August 7, 2021 at her home.

Anna Mae was born on December 9, 1928 in Frederick, SD to Walter and Sedia (Kattilasaari) Sammuli. She was their eighth child of ten but the first to be born in the U.S., since they immigrated from Sweden. Ann attended school at Frederick, SD and Northern State Teachers College, later becoming a country school teacher. She was later employed at Employment Security in Aberdeen. On September 14, 1952 she was united in marriage with Gerald Rix at Savo Lutheran Church, rural Frederick. Together they were blessed with three children and made their home in rural Groton.

Anna was an active member of several groups including PEO, Eastern Star and United Methodist Women. She enjoyed reading, playing bridge and spending time with her grandchildren. In earlier years, she and Jerry spent many nights at children's activities and always enjoyed hosting after event get-togethers.

Celebrating her life are her children, Roger (Pamela) Rix of Groton, Elaine (Fred) Wolken of Piedmont, Teresa (Larry) Enze of Sioux Falls; her grandchildren, Grant (Tracy) Rix, Jarrett (Amy) Rix, Mary Ann Rix and fiancé Eric Benton, Jessica (Mike) Hauck, Adam (Carmen) Grams, Alana (David) White, Amber (Bryce) Sombke, Sheila (Jim) Otteson, Wendy (Jamie) Howard, Christa (Mike) Sports, Logan Enze and Erin Enze. Anna is also survived by her great-grandchildren: Gideon, Conrad & Roscoe Rix, Leo Rix, Nicholas Love, John White, Justin & Casey Taul, Neva & Theresa Howard, Nicholas Lane, Rowan Shepherd, her siblings, Allan Sammuli of Port St. Lucie, FL, Elsie Bailey of Dallas, TX and special friends Anita and John Lowary.

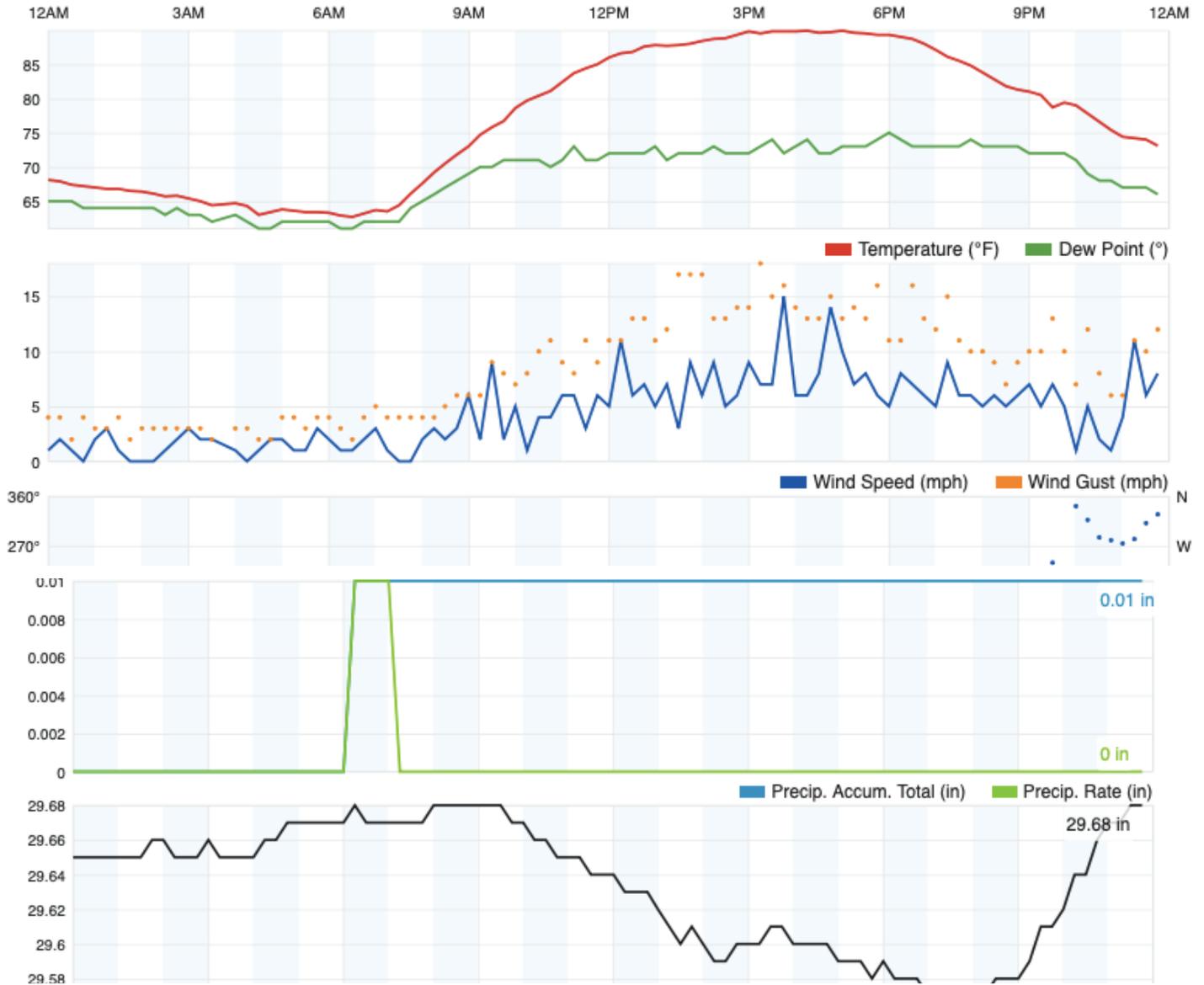
Preceding her in death were her parents, her husband in 2017, four sisters, three brothers and daughter-in-law, Marian Rix.

Casketbearers will be Grant Rix, Jarrett Rix, Logan Enze, David White, Bryce Sombke, Adam Grams and Mike Hauck.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 7 of 56

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 8 of 56

Today



Sunny

High: 87 °F

Tonight



Increasing
Clouds

Low: 62 °F

Wednesday



Sunny

High: 85 °F

Wednesday
Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 61 °F

Thursday



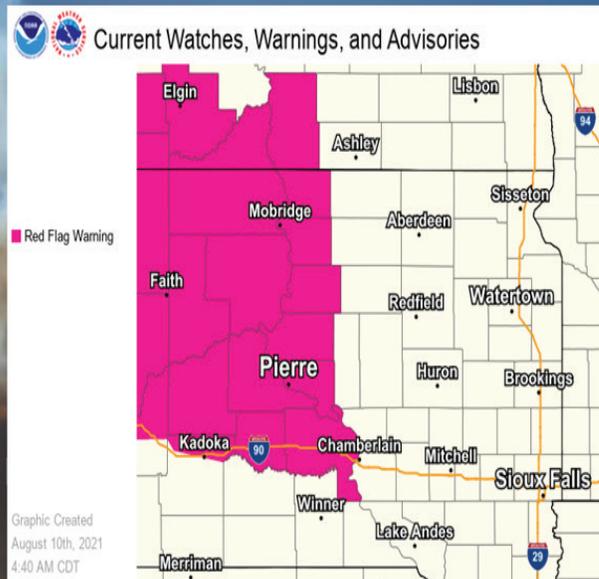
Sunny

High: 80 °F

Red Flag Warning Today

Relative humidity values of 17 to 25 percent.

Breezy southwest winds with gusts as high as 35 mph.



If you live within the pink area
DO NOT BURN TODAY!!



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD
Updated: 8/10/2021 4:52 AM Central

Low relative humidity values and breezy southwest winds will combine to create elevated fire danger across portions of central and north central South Dakota this afternoon and evening.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 9 of 56

Today in Weather History

August 10, 1886: An estimated F3 tornado moved southeast from 10 miles northwest of Aberdeen. This massive tornado destroyed four homes and a dozen barns. This is the earliest significant tornado on record for Brown County.

August 10, 2007: Several supercell thunderstorms developed along a frontal boundary during the evening bringing large hail, damaging winds, along with a couple of tornadoes. An EF0 tornado touched down north of Timber Lake with no damage reported. Another EF0 tornado touched down briefly north of Trail City with no damage occurring. Wakpala, in Corson County, and Mobridge saw golf ball sized hail. The hail broke some windows and damaged the siding on several houses in the Mobridge area.

1884: An earthquake, centered near New York City and registering a magnitude 5.5, hit the region a little after 2 PM. The tremor made houses shake, chimneys fall, and residents wonder what the heck was going on, according to a New York Times article two days later.

1856: A hurricane destroyed Isle Dernieres or Last Island, a pleasure resort south-southwest of New Orleans on this day. The highest points of the island were under five feet of water. The resort hotel was destroyed, along with the island's gambling establishments. Over 200 people perished, and the island lost all its vegetation and split in half. Only one cow remained on the island after the catastrophe. The Last Island is now just a haven for pelicans and other seabirds. The steamer Nautilus foundered during the storm. The lone survivor clung to a bale of cotton and washed ashore sometime later.

1882 - Sandusky OH noted a four minute snow squall during the morning, frost was reported in the suburbs of Chicago, and a killing frost was reported at Cresco IA. (The Weather Channel)

1898 - The temperature at Pendleton OR climbed all the way to 119 degrees at set a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1924 - Colorado's deadliest tornado killed a woman and nine children in one house along its twenty-mile path east southeast of Thurman. Mennonite men had left the farm to provide possible aid, as the 200-yard wide storm was first seen while far away.(The Weather Channel)

1936 - The temperature soared to 114 degrees at Plain Dealing, LA, and reached 120 degrees at Ozark AR, to establish record highs for those two states. (The Weather Channel)

1980 - Hurricane Allen came ashore above Brownsville, TX, dropping fifteen inches of rain near San Antonio, and up to 20 inches in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Tidal flooding occurred along the South Texas coast. Hurricane Allen packed winds to 150 mph, and also spawned twenty-nine tornadoes. Total damage from the storm was estimated at 750 million dollars. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Unseasonably hot weather continued in the southeastern U.S. Ten cities in Florida, Georgia and South Carolina reported record high temperatures for the date. Macon GA hit 101 degrees. A tropical depression deluged southeastern Texas and southwestern Louisiana with torrential rains. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Citizens of Bluefield, WV, where the Chamber of Commerce provides free lemonade on days when the temperature warms into the 90s, were able to celebrate their record high of 90 degrees. Eight other cities also reported record high temperatures for the date,including Bismarck ND with a reading of 102 degrees.(The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thirty-eight cities in the south central and southeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Asheville NC with a reading of 48 degrees, and Victoria TX with a low of 63 degrees. Oklahoma City OK reported a record cool afternoon high of 71 degrees, and the daily high of 64 degrees at Raleigh NC established a record for August. In Arizona, a record sixty-four day streak of 100 degree days at Phoenix came to an end.(The National Weather Summary)

Groton Daily Independent

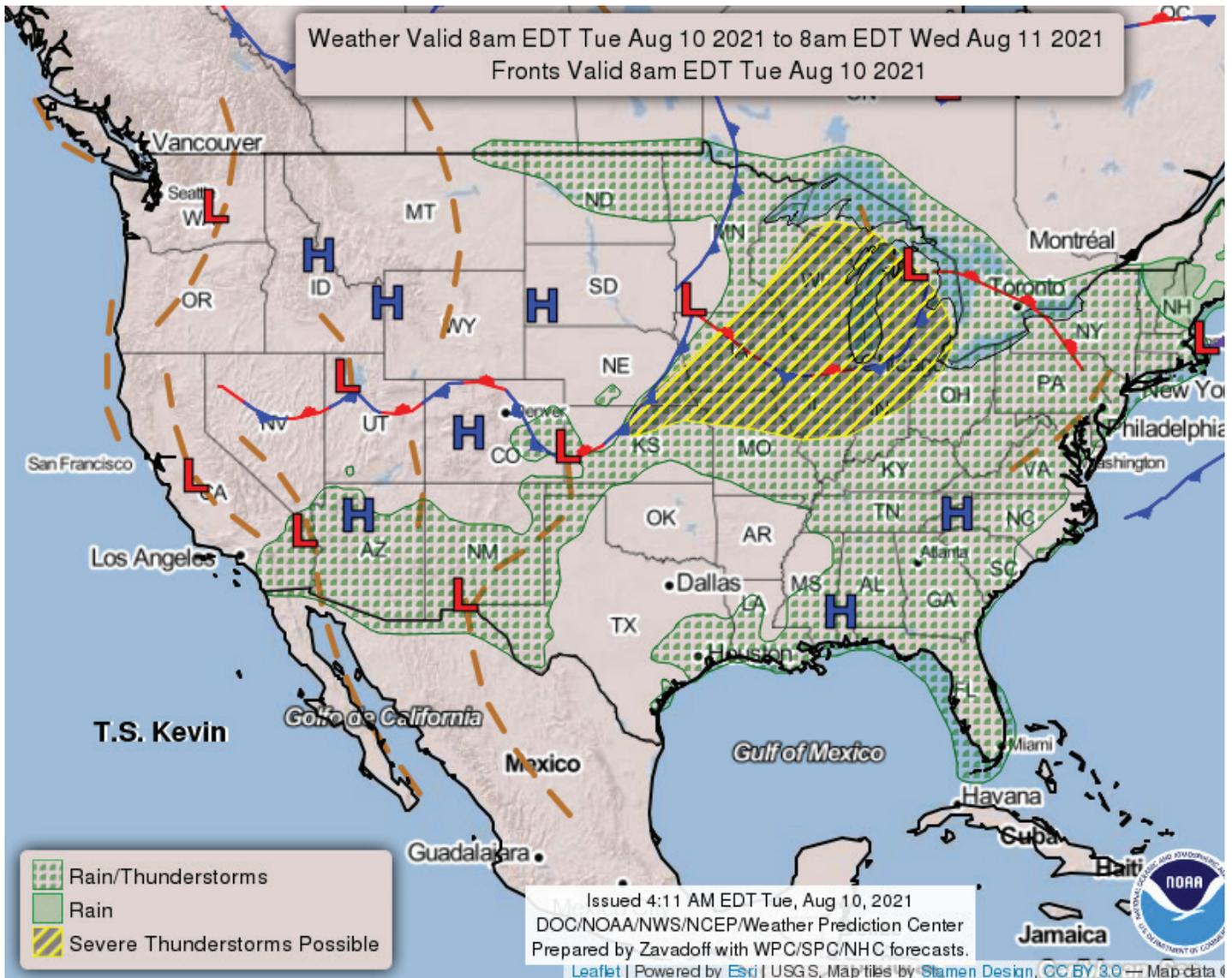
Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 10 of 56

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 89.9°F at 4:15 PM
Low Temp: 62.7 °F at 6:30 AM
Wind: 18 mph at 3:15 PM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 106° in 1947
Record Low: 42° in 1903, 1985
Average High: 84°F
Average Low: 58°F
Average Precip in Aug.: 0.66
Precip to date in Aug.: 1.12
Average Precip to date: 14.76
Precip Year to Date: 8.39
Sunset Tonight: 8:48 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:30 a.m.



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 11 of 56



CEASELESS PRAYER

Our Bible says much about prayer. It informs us about how we are to address God and that we are to pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. We are also directed to pray with and through the guidance of and in the power of the Holy Spirit. In Psalm 88, however, we read that the writer tells us what he does when he prays: "I call to You, O Lord, every day; I spread out my hands to You." Not a day went by in his life that he literally did not cry out His Lord.

The author reminds us that he is in constant contact with his Lord – Yahweh, He identified Him not as a god who was removed from his life, who lived in a distant location, who may or may not be available when he faced difficult times or wanted to worship Him. Indeed not. His God was a personal, present and powerful God who was always by his side. And, his God was a God who he could speak to as though he was speaking to a friend and companion who was beside him waiting to be involved in a conversation.

What an impressive picture for us to place deeply in our minds and hearts. Wherever we are, whatever we are doing, whatever we are going through, and whatever time it may be – day or night – Yahweh is by our side and we can call upon Him as our friend.

Notice, however, his body language when he prayed: "I spread out my hands to You." Open hands that were "spread out" because when he prayed he expected God to respond by filling them immediately to meet his need just as any friend would do to a friend in need.

And the psalmist did this every day. Jesus once said, "Give us bread for this day" to remind us of our need to call on Him every day for the needs we have that day!

Prayer: Father, Give us a "daily faith" – a faith that has "hands spread out," that we activate constantly, and a faith that believes You hear and answer. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Psalm 88:9b I call to you, Lord, every day; I spread out my hands to you.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 12 of 56

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
08/29/2021 Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day at GHS Parking Lot (4-5 p.m.)
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
10/29/2021 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween) 5:30-7:00
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

South Dakota board sets hearings on social studies standards

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Board of Educational Standards will hold four public hearings on the state's proposed new social studies standards.

The board will hold the first hearing Sept. 20 in Aberdeen. The other three will be later in the school year in Sioux Falls, Pierre, and Rapid City. The board will take final action at the last of these meetings next spring. The board is also taking written comments.

Educators would teach to the new standards in the 2023-24 school year.

The Sioux Falls Argus Leader reports the work is part of a regular review by the state Department of Education. It's separate from Gov. Kristi Noem's \$900,000 push to create a new, state-specific civics and history curriculum resource. The state's fine arts and career and technical education standards are going through a similar review.

"Content standards provide a road map for what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade," Secretary of Education Tiffany Sanderson said. "They set broad expectations for student learning, and we look forward to South Dakotans weighing in on this important conversation."

Friday's release of the new standards followed last month's announcement that a pair of conservatives quit a work group tasked with revising the social studies standards. They did not publicly say why they resigned.

US vows to isolate Taliban if they take power by force

By KATHY GANNON and TAMEEM AKHGAR Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — A U.S. peace envoy brought a warning to the Taliban on Tuesday that any government that comes to power through force in Afghanistan won't be recognized internationally after a series of cities fell to the insurgent group in stunningly quick succession.

Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. envoy, traveled to Doha, Qatar, where the Taliban maintain a political office, to tell the group that there was no point in pursuing victory on the battlefield because a military takeover of Kabul would guarantee they will be global pariahs. He and others hope to persuade Taliban leaders to return to peace talks with the Afghan government as American and NATO forces finish their pullout from the country.

The insurgents have captured five out of 34 provincial capitals in the country in less than a week. They are now battling the Western-backed government for control of several others, including Lashkar Gah in Helmand, and Kandahar and Farah in provinces of the same names.

After a 20-year Western military mission and billions of dollars spent training and shoring up Afghan forces, many are at odds to explain why the regular forces have collapsed, fleeing the battle sometimes by the hundreds. The fighting has fallen largely to small groups of elite forces and the Afghan air force.

The success of the Taliban blitz has added urgency to the need to restart the long-stalled talks that could end the fighting and move Afghanistan toward an inclusive interim administration.

The new pressure from Khalilzad follows condemnations from the international community and a similar warning from the United Nations that a Taliban government that takes power by force would not be recognized. The insurgents have so far refused to return to the negotiating table.

Khalilzad's mission in Qatar is to "help formulate a joint international response to the rapidly deteriorating situation in Afghanistan," according to the U.S. State Department.

He plans to "press the Taliban to stop their military offensive and to negotiate a political settlement, which is the only path to stability and development in Afghanistan," the State Department said.

Meanwhile, the Taliban military chief released an audio message to his fighters on Tuesday, ordering them not to harm Afghan forces and government officials in territories they conquer. The recording was shared on Twitter by the Taliban spokesman in Doha, Mohammad Naim.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 14 of 56

In the nearly five-minute audio, Mohammad Yaqoob, the son of late Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar, also told the insurgents to stay out of abandoned homes of government and security officials who have fled, leave marketplaces open and protect places of business, including banks.

It was not immediately clear if Taliban fighters on the ground would heed Yaqoob's instructions. There have been reports by civilians who have fled Taliban advances of heavy-handed treatment by the insurgents — schools being burned down and repressive restrictions on women.

There have also been reports of revenge killings in areas where the Taliban have gained control, and the insurgents have claimed responsibility for killing a comedian in southern Kandahar, assassinating the government's media chief Kabul and a bombing that targeted acting Defense Minister Bismillah Khan Mohammadi, killing eight and wounding more. The minister was not harmed in the attack.

The intensifying war has also increased the number of civilian casualties.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said that its staff has treated more than 4,000 Afghans this month in their 15 facilities across the country, including in Helmand and Kandahar, where Afghan and U.S. airstrikes are trying to rein in the Taliban onslaught.

"We are seeing homes destroyed, medical staff and patients put at tremendous risk, and hospitals, electricity and water infrastructure damaged," Eloi Fillion, ICRC's head of delegation in Afghanistan, said in a statement.

"The use of explosive weaponry in cities is having an indiscriminate impact on the population," Fillion added. "Many families have no option but to flee in search of a safer place. This must stop."

The surge in Taliban attacks began in April, when the U.S. and NATO announced they would end their military presence and bring the last of their troops home. The final date of the withdrawal is Aug. 31, but the U.S. Central Command has said the pullout is already 95% complete.

On Monday, the U.S. emphasized that the Biden administration now sees the fight as one for Afghan political and military leaders to win or lose — and showed no sign of stepping up airstrikes despite the accelerating Taliban gains.

"When we look back, it's going to come down to leadership and what leadership was demonstrated, or not" by Afghans, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said at a Pentagon news conference. "It's their country to defend now. It's their struggle."

Khalilzad, the architect of the peace deal the Trump administration brokered with the Taliban, was expected to hold talks with key regional players, as well as unspecified multilateral organizations to see how to restart talks and halt the Taliban onslaught.

The U.S. envoy will also likely seek a commitment from Afghanistan's neighbors and the region not to recognize a Taliban government that comes to power by force. When the Taliban last ruled Afghanistan, three countries recognized their rule: Pakistan, Saudi Arabi and the United Arab Emirates.

Senior Afghan officials have also travelled to Doha, including Abdullah Abdullah, who heads the government's reconciliation council. Pakistan's national security adviser, Moeed Yusuf, on Monday called for "re-invigorated" efforts to get all sides in the conflict back to talks, describing a protracted war in Afghanistan as a "nightmare scenario" for Pakistan.

Yusuf, speaking to foreign journalists in Islamabad, refused to definitively say whether Pakistan, which holds considerable sway over the Taliban, would recognize a Taliban government installed by force, saying instead that Pakistan wants to see an "inclusive" government in Kabul.

Bipartisan infrastructure bill set for final Senate passage

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — After weeks of fits, starts and delays, the Senate is on track to give final approval to the \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure plan, with a growing coalition of Democrats and Republicans prepared to lift the first phase of President Joe Biden's rebuilding agenda to passage.

Final Senate votes are expected around 11 a.m. EDT Tuesday, and the bill would then go to the House.

All told, some 70 senators appear poised to carry the bipartisan package to passage, a potentially robust

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 15 of 56

tally of lawmakers eager to tap the billions in new spending for their states and to show voters back home they can deliver.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said it's "the first time the Senate has come together around such a package in decades."

After that, the Senate will immediately launch votes on Biden's next package — the \$3.5 trillion plan that is a more strictly Democratic undertaking — beginning a debate that will extend into fall.

For now, on the often elusive political center is holding steady on the bipartisan plan, a rare partnership with Biden's White House.

On the left, the Democrats have withstood the complaints of liberals who say the proposal falls short of what's needed to provide a down payment on one of the president's top priorities.

From the right, the Republicans are largely ignoring the criticism from their most conservative and far-flung voices, including a barrage of name-calling from former President Donald Trump as he tries to derail the package.

Together, a sizable number of business, farm and labor groups back the package, which proposes nearly \$550 billion in new spending on what are typically mainstays of federal spending — roads, bridges, broadband internet, water pipes and other public works systems that cities and states often cannot afford on their own.

"This has been a different sort of process," said Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio, the lead Republican negotiator of the group of 10 senators who drafted the package.

Portman, a White House budget director for George W. Bush, said the investments being made have been talked about for years, yet never seem to get done.

He said, "We'll be getting it right for the American people."

The top Democratic negotiator, Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, said she was trying to follow the example of fellow Arizonan John McCain to "reach bipartisan agreements that try to bring the country together."

Still, not all senators are on board, Despite the momentum, action ground to a halt over the weekend when Sen. Bill Hagerty, a Tennessee Republican allied with Trump, refused to speed up the process.

Other Republican senators objected to the size, scope and financing of the package, particularly concerned after the Congressional Budget Office said it would add \$256 billion to deficits over the decade.

Two Republicans, Sens. Jerry Moran of Kansas and Todd Young of Indiana, had been part of initial negotiations shaping the package but ultimately announced they could not support it.

Rather than pressure lawmakers, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky has stayed behind the scenes for much of the bipartisan work. He has cast his own votes repeatedly to allow the bill to progress, calling the bill a compromise.

Trump called Hagerty, who had been his ambassador to Japan, on Sunday and the senator argued for taking more time for debate and amendments, in part because he wants to slow the march toward Biden's second phase, the \$3.5 trillion bill that Republicans fully oppose.

The outline for the bigger \$3.5 trillion package is on deck next in the Senate — a more liberal undertaking of child care, elder care and other programs that expected to draw only Democratic support. Senators are expected Tuesday to launch a lengthy session to consider amendments to the blueprint, the start of a months-long debate on the package.

Unlike Biden's bigger \$3.5 trillion package, which would be paid for by higher tax rates for corporations and the wealthy, the bipartisan package is to be funded by repurposing other money, and with other spending cuts and revenue streams. The bill's backers argue that the budget office's analysis was unable to take into account certain revenue streams — including from future economic growth.

Senators have spent the past week processing nearly two dozen amendments to the 2,700-page package, but so far none has substantially changed its framework.

One remaining issue, over tax compliance for cryptocurrency brokers, appeared close to being resolved after senators announced they had worked with the Treasury Department to clarify the intent.

But an effort to quickly adopt the cryptocurrency compromise was derailed by senators who wanted

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 16 of 56

their own amendments, including one to add \$50 billion for shipbuilding and other defense infrastructure. It's unclear if any further amendments will be adopted.

The House is expected to consider both Biden infrastructure packages when it returns from recess in September.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has said the two bills will be considered together, but on Monday a bipartisan group of centrist lawmakers urged her to bring their smaller plan forward quickly, raising concerns about the bigger bill, in a sign of the complicated politics ahead.

"This once-in-a-century investment deserves its own consideration," wrote Reps. Josh Gottheimer, D-N.J., Jared Golden, D-Maine, and others in a letter obtained by The Associated Press. "We cannot afford unnecessary delays."

AP Source: Messi agrees deal to join Paris Saint-Germain

By ROB HARRIS AP Global Soccer Writer

Lionel Messi is traveling to France after agreeing to join Paris Saint-Germain, a person with knowledge of the negotiations has told The Associated Press, paving the way for one of the game's greats to play for a new club after spending his entire career at Barcelona.

The 34-year-old Argentina star is set to agree a two-year contract with the option for a further season, said the person, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the contract ahead of it being signed and the official announcement.

Messi is set to earn around 35 million euros (\$41 million) net annually, the person said.

Messi became the most desired free agent in soccer history after his Barcelona contract expired. The Catalan club had hoped to keep Messi, who agreed to a pay cut, but it still wouldn't have complied with the Spanish league's financial regulations.

PSG coach Mauricio Pochettino was in contact with his fellow Argentine as Barcelona announced last Thursday that Messi would be leaving the club he joined as a 13-year-old before winning every major trophy and a series of world player of the year titles.

Funded for a decade by Qatari sovereign wealth, PSG is one of the few clubs in the world that could finance the signing of Messi.

Despite calm, Israeli town copes with scars of rocket fire

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

SDEROT, Israel (AP) — Just three months after the latest war between Israel and Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip, the border town of Sderot appears to be on the road to recovery.

The streets are bustling, and the town is filled with well-kept parks and playgrounds. The local real-estate market is booming.

But underneath the veneer of normalcy, the scars of years of rocket fire run deep.

Metal rocket fragments are on display outside the main police station, as a museum of sorts. Next to every park and bus stop is a small concrete bomb shelter — often decked out with colorful murals and street art. An Iron Dome rocket defense battery sits on the eastern edge of town, a few hundred meters (yards) from a new apartment complex.

Some Sderot residents say they jump at the smallest noise. Parents report children still wetting their beds or being too scared to sleep alone.

Noam Biton says she has enjoyed a normal childhood in Sderot. But the 16-year-old high school student says it hasn't always been easy. One of her strongest memories was an air-raid siren that sounded while she was attending a bar mitzvah celebration on what had been a quiet day.

"We lay on the ground, three of us," she said. "The only thing protecting us was a car." The rocket landed nearby, spraying shrapnel in the area.

Outgoing and active in her local scout troop, Biton says she is always careful to sit next to the door when she rides the bus — just in case there is an air-raid siren and she needs to evacuate quickly.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 17 of 56

Her mother Dvora, a lifelong resident, says uncertainty is a constant companion. "It saddens you that at any moment someone controls your life," she said. "We can't escape."

Israel and Hamas, an Islamic militant group that opposes Israel's existence, have fought four wars and numerous skirmishes since Hamas seized control of Gaza in 2007, a year after winning a Palestinian election.

It is impossible to compare conditions in Gaza and in southern Israel. Israeli strikes have killed some 4,000 Palestinians, including hundreds of civilians, in the four wars and inflicted heavy damage on Gaza's infrastructure. Tens of thousands of people, unable to flee the impoverished and blockaded territory, suffer from deep psychological wounds.

Israelis are now protected by a rocket-defense system, have the option of temporarily escaping rocket range and have access to psychological counseling and government support. Still, over 100 people have died on the Israeli side in the four wars, while heavy rocket fire has brought life to a standstill for millions of people during times of fighting. Even during times of quiet, rocket fire can erupt at any moment without warning.

No place in Israel has been hit harder by Palestinian rocket fire than Sderot, a working-class community just about 1.5 kilometers (1 mile) from the Gaza border. Yet two decades after the first rudimentary rockets landed in town, experts are still struggling to figure out their long-term effects on a generation of parents and children who have come of age in this traumatic environment.

"People who are living in the south of Israel live with the understanding that it's just a question of time until the next time," said Talia Levanon, director of the Israel Trauma Coalition.

"You are literally trying to heal from the last time while preparing for the next time, which makes our job very, very tough," she said.

Levanon's nonprofit operates a series of "resilience centers" throughout southern Israel that provide a variety of services, including counseling and workshops for families and communities.

In an indication of how widely people have been affected, she said that during a brief round of violence in 2019, nearly two-thirds of the area's 60,000 residents received services from a resilience center.

The 11-day war between Israel and Hamas in May was the latest reminder of Sderot's precarious position. Nearly 300 rockets were fired at Sderot, according to the municipality. Despite the protection of the Iron Dome, 10 rockets scored direct hits on buildings — including a strike that killed a 5-year-old boy.

Sderot residents often use the word "resilience" when describing the community. And in many ways, Sderot appears to be thriving.

Once known as a dusty backwater in Israel's Negev desert, it has evolved into a bustling town of some 27,000 people, with new apartment complexes and expensive villas seeming to pop up in any piece of open space. It has a heavily fortified train station linking it to major cities. There are shopping centers, bars and restaurants popular with students from a college in town.

Researchers say that people who grow up here tend to remain in the area as adults, out of pride and a strong connection to its tight-knit community.

Yaron Sasson, spokesman for the local government, said veteran residents and newcomers are drawn by special tax breaks, generous services made possible by government support and overseas donors as well as the small-town feel. At a time when much of the country is now within rocket range, he said Sderot is even seen as relatively safe, thanks to its many bomb shelters and reinforced schools and kindergartens.

Yet according to the trauma coalition, residents suffer from a wide range of symptoms. Teens suffer from higher rates of diabetes, aggression and hypertension than their counterparts in other communities.

Anxiety, depression, sleeping difficulties and general exhaustion are common symptoms among adults, and researchers only now are beginning to study the effects of growing up in Sderot on young parents' child-rearing skills. Another question is how Sderot's youths — who are frequently spooked by loud noises — can perform in the military, a compulsory rite of passage for most Jewish Israelis.

Dvora Biton said that whenever she goes out in the car, she plans a route that will take her past any of the dozens of bomb shelters scattered throughout town. The car window is always open, the volume on the radio is kept low and the pantry is filled with canned goods. Any loud sound, even a popping balloon,

makes her jump.

"It's something that you think about 24 hours a day," she said. "You can't escape it, even when you are sleeping."

Fifteen years ago, before there was the Iron Dome, a rocket landed outside the family's home, leaving a metal fragment embedded in her front door. Biton left the fragment in the door for years, only recently finding the strength to remove it during a home renovation.

"I wanted to leave it there as a reminder that we live in an unhealthy reality," she said. "But on the other hand, there is a feeling you want to be released from these things."

The Latest: Israel reports more than 6,000 new virus cases

By The Associated Press undefined

JERUSALEM — Israel has reported more than 6,000 new coronavirus infections, the highest daily increase since February.

Israel rolled out one of the world's most successful vaccination campaigns starting late last year, but in recent weeks has been battling a surge in new cases driven by the highly contagious delta variant.

Authorities have ramped up travel restrictions and restored mask mandates for indoor settings.

More than 85% of Israel's adult population has been fully vaccinated, and authorities are now calling on those over 60 to get a third dose. The Health Ministry says 577,899 people have received a booster shot.

The ministry recorded 6,275 new confirmed cases on Monday, with 4.84% testing positive out of more than 130,000 tests. Data released by the Israeli government shows the unvaccinated, especially those over 60, are far more likely to become seriously ill.

MORE ON THE PANDEMIC:

- Bangladesh vaccinating Rohingya refugees amid virus surge
- COVID-19 vaccines to be required for military under new US plan
- Governor of Texas appeals for out-of-state help against COVID-19
- Find more AP coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic> and <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-vaccine>

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

BANGKOK — Thailand's government backed down Tuesday from widely-criticized regulations to broaden its ability to restrict media reports and social media posts about the coronavirus pandemic.

Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha had long sought to crack down on what he deems fake news. But the new regulations, enacted at the end of last month, included the ability to prosecute people for distributing "news that may cause public fear."

They also gave Thai regulators the ability to force internet service providers to turn over the IP address of the person or entity distributing such news, and to "suspend the internet service to that IP address immediately."

Thailand is struggling with its worst wave yet of the coronavirus pandemic, and Prayuth said the new regulations were necessary to combat the spread of inaccurate rumors that could impede government efforts to vaccinate the population and implement measures to slow the pandemic.

But Thai media organizations said the restrictions were overly broad and an attack on freedom of expression, giving authorities license to crack down on the public or news organizations for publishing factual reports that the government didn't like.

LAHORE, Pakistan— A provincial education minister in Pakistan on Tuesday asked teachers working at private and public schools in the eastern Punjab province to get vaccinated against the coronavirus by August 22 to prevent school closures.

Punjab Education Minister Murad Rass said if any teachers are found unvaccinated after that date, au-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 19 of 56

thorities will shut the school where they teach.

The warning comes amid a steady surge in the confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths in Pakistan.

Pakistan on Tuesday reported 3,884 new daily cases and 86 deaths. The country has reported 1,075,504 confirmed cases and 24,004 deaths since the start of the pandemic last year.

BERLIN — German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the country's 16 state governors are set to meet to decide on how to handle pandemic measures amid a discussion about whether people who have been fully vaccinated or have recovered from COVID-19 should have greater freedoms than those who aren't vaccinated.

While Germany has relatively low numbers of virus cases compared with other European countries, cases are rising again and authorities fear that especially young people who are not vaccinated yet may contract and spread the virus in the coming weeks and months.

On Monday, the country's disease control agency registered 2,480 new cases, about 700 more than a week ago. Some 45.6 million people or almost 55 % of the population are fully vaccinated.

In response to a drop in vaccinations, officials have begun pushing for more vaccine clinics at megastores and in city centers, or offering other incentives to get people to show up for shots.

Merkel and the state governors are also expected to decide Tuesday whether free antigen tests that are available everywhere and can be used to access restaurants or cultural venues should be paid for again.

FRANKFORT, Ky. — Kentucky's Supreme Court has issued an order encouraging anyone entering a judicial facility to wear a mask in response to rising COVID-19 cases caused by the highly contagious delta variant.

The order issued Monday applies to judicial centers, courthouses or other judicial facilities. It's in line with the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control, court officials said.

The order says the use of masks or other facial coverings is strongly encouraged for anyone entering a judicial facility.

The order also states that a chief circuit judge can mandate masks for a judicial facility.

The Administrative Office of the Courts — the operations arm of the state court system — supports the activities of nearly 3,300 court system employees and more than 400 elected justices, judges and circuit court clerks.

The delta variant has caused a surge in coronavirus cases across Kentucky, leading to increased hospitalizations and concerns that the death toll will spike.

SYDNEY — Australia's most populous state is reporting a new daily high of 356 coronavirus infections.

The New South Wales government also reported four more COVID-19 deaths Tuesday. The death toll since the latest outbreak was detected in Sydney in mid-June is now 32. One of the latest deaths is a man in his 80s who was infected overseas, while the rest caught the virus locally.

More than 80% of the state's 8.2 million people are in lockdown, including the greater Sydney region. The Sydney lockdown began June 26, and hopes are fading that restrictions will be eased as planned on Aug. 28.

Only 22% of Australian adults had been fully vaccinated by Monday. Officials hope that by getting the number above 70% will enable restrictions to be eased even if the virus is continuing to spread.

DALLAS — Texas is looking for out-of-state health workers to help fight its third wave of coronavirus infections.

Gov. Greg Abbott's move Monday came as a county-owned hospital in Houston raised tents to accommodate its COVID-19 overflow.

Abbott directed the Department of State Health Services to use staffing agencies to find additional medical staff from outside Texas. He also is urging the Texas Hospital Association to request that hospitals postpone all elective medical procedures.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 20 of 56

The governor also ordered an expansion of coronavirus vaccine availability in underserved communities. Abbott is not lifting his emergency order banning local governments from requiring mask use and social distancing. He says people are able to make their own decisions on protecting their health.

ATLANTA — Georgia hospitals are raising alarms about being overwhelmed by COVID-19 patients as coronavirus infections rise rapidly across the state.

Clinical leaders from four coastal Georgia hospitals said at a news conference Monday that their institutions are rapidly running out of beds and pleaded that more people get vaccinated and wear masks.

Donna Cochrane is the chief nursing officer at Liberty Regional Medical Center in Hinesville and says her 25-bed hospital has 33 patients as of Monday morning, holding eight additional patients in the emergency room. Many are ill with COVID-19.

Georgia's seven-day average for new coronavirus cases rose to nearly 5,700 on Monday, the highest level since Feb. 1. The number of COVID-19 patients in hospitals statewide rose to nearly 3,500, eight times the lowest level earlier this summer.

SEATTLE — Most state workers in Washington, as well as private health care and long-term care employees, will be required to show proof of vaccination for the coronavirus by Oct. 18 or will lose their jobs.

Gov. Jay Inslee said Monday that weekly testing for the virus rather than vaccination will not be an option. The only opt-out of the requirement is either a medical or religious exemption.

The order applies to about 60,000 employees of the 24 state agencies that are part of the governor's executive Cabinet. Those include the departments of corrections, social and health services and transportation, as well as the Washington State Patrol.

Employees in the private sector who are covered under the order include those who work in health care and long-term care and other congregate settings, including nursing homes, assisted living and treatment facilities.

JACKSON, Miss. -- Mississippi's top public health official says that as COVID-19 cases continue to surge with the highly contagious delta variant, no intensive care beds are available in 35 of the state's top-level hospitals.

Dr. Thomas Dobbs also said Monday that more than 200 people are waiting in hospital emergency rooms to be admitted. The wait times affect not only people with COVID-19 but also those with other health conditions.

The state Health Department said Monday that more than 6,900 new cases of COVID-19 were confirmed in Mississippi from Friday through Sunday.

Dobbs said the intensive care units were full in Level 1, 2 and 3 hospitals in the state's acute care systems. Those include the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson; North Mississippi Medical Center in Tupelo; Forrest General Hospital in Hattiesburg; Memorial Hospital in Gulfport and Singing River Health System in Pascagoula.

MEXICO CITY — Mexico will ask the United States to send at least 3.5 million more doses of COVID-19 vaccine as the country faces a third wave of infections.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said Monday that he planned to discuss a transfer of vaccine with U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris during a call scheduled for later in the day.

López Obrador said the U.S. government had initially offered the Moderna vaccine, but Mexican health authorities could not get the necessary approvals in time so now they are considering Pfizer or another approved vaccine.

Mexico has vaccinated more than 50 million people with at least one dose, representing about 56% of the adult population. It has received 91.1 million doses of five different vaccines.

Survivors of Guatemalan mudslide face death or emigration

By ALBERTO ARCE and RODRIGO ABD Associated Press

NUEVO QUEJA, Guatemala (AP) — The day before he left for the United States was a busy one for Victor Cal. He went from relative to relative, collecting money to buy food during the journey north.

His mother was disconsolate. "I begged him not to go, that we could live here," she said, again and again, "but the decision had already been made".

He and his parents shared a small lunch -- a couple of chiles with sesame seeds -- in silence. His mother's gloom weighed upon him; he announced he had to find somewhere to charge his phone. "to receive calls so the coyote can tell me where and when we will finally meet."

He set off on a bumpy, dirt road, looking to hitch a ride to any place with electricity. A motorbike pulled over and drove him to the nearest outlet, miles away.

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

At age 26, Cal felt he had no choice but to leave. The makeshift town where he lived, born of disaster, offered only hunger and death. It seemed the U.S. was the only way out.

Eleven men from his town have gone north in 2021. American authorities say they have stopped more than 150,000 Guatemalans at the border this year, four times the number in 2020.

Many were like Victor Cal, famished and impoverished. He had served in the army, mustering out as a corporal. An indigenous Mayan who speaks Pocomchí, he failed to find work in Guatemala City. When the pandemic hit, he joined thousands who fled the capital to return to their agricultural hometowns in the mountains.

His father's land in Quejá, with its coffee, cardamon, corn and beans, sounded like a safe place. At least there will be food, he thought.

He was wrong.

In his worst nightmare, he could not imagine that a hurricane's rains could bring a mountain down and destroy it all -- house, land, town. He and his parents were left destitute by a fierce hurricane Eta, displaced and dependent on relief from international organizations in a desperately shabby settlement called Nuevo Quejá.

Now, he was hours away from leaving it behind. His phone charged, he returned home after sunset. A group of friends awaited him, but he was in no mood for goodbyes.

He packed quickly. Not too many things fit in a small yellow backpack: a shirt, a sweater, jeans and a pair of extra shoes. He lost pretty much everything else when the landslide buried his house.

It had been raining for 25 days. The people of Quejá had been cooped up in their homes for 10 days; access roads had been cut off by flooding.

Without electricity, all the telephones were dead. Nobody told the villagers that the rain that fell over the previous 24 hours had been five times the average monthly amount; no one told them they were at risk, and they should leave.

It was lunchtime last Nov. 5 when the first trees fell and the hillside began to melt. The townspeople left their food on the fire and ran.

"Those of us who had time to flee could only carry our children on our backs" says one of the survivors, Esma Cal, 28, an energetic, articulate woman who would assume a role as a community leader in the aftermath. (Many of the people of Quejá share the same last name, Cal, though it is not always clear how they might be related.)

Fifty-eight people disappeared in seconds. Most of the bodies will never be recovered. Forty homes were buried under tons of mud and dozens of others were left inaccessible.

Crossing torrents of water on ropes, the survivors walked to the nearest town. Residents shared with

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 22 of 56

them their remaining food and put them up in schools and at the market. Due to the isolation, no trucks could arrive with supplies. When helicopters finally arrived, "some of us had been without food for almost two days," said Esmá Cal.

Quejá was never an affluent place. But there had been hard-earned progress over the decades, and it was wiped out in minutes.

Erwin Cal, 39, explained that Quejá was founded a hundred years ago, when a group of families got access to a coffee plantation. "My grandfather was a slave. They had to harvest without pay before they were allowed to build their shacks and use some plots of land for their own fields."

There were corn and beans to eat. Then, coffee and cardamom for the market.

In time, they started earning some extra money so they could afford to buy the land.

In the '80s, some men started venturing out of their region and joined the Guatemalan army. At the turn of the century, riding the wave of violence that has plagued the country, they hired on as private guards.

Shacks turned into colorful cement houses with tiles, big windows, refrigerators. "I had a laptop, a sound system and cable TV," said Erwin Cal. All gone.

By January, Esmá Cal, Erwin Cal, childhood friend Gregorio Ti and others organized a local development council. By February, they had founded a temporary settlement on a third of their agricultural land, close to their buried homes. Perhaps it was not safe from another landslide, but it was accessible.

Thus was born Nuevo Quejá, home to about 1,000 survivors.

"We know how to work," said Ti, 36. He lost his pregnant wife, his 2- and 6-year-old sons and his mother in the mudslide; his surviving daughters, 11 and 14 years old, cling to his side.

The toil is constant, and back breaking. There are no animals to share the burden -- all day long, men, women and children cut and transport wood and clear land with their machetes.

The shacks are constructed with zinc sheets donated by a priest and wooden planks made from pine trees the villagers cut down. Some have big stones on the floor. Holes in the roofs allow rainwater to pour inside; holes between the wall planks are patched with rags, including U.S. flags that turn up among donations of second-hand clothing.

Esmá Cal's 37-year-old uncle, Germán Cal -- who returned to Quejá after 20 years in Guatemala City to breed chickens, only to lose all his savings in the mudslide -- is trying to bring electricity to Nuevo Quejá.

It's an almost impossible task -- because officially, the town does not exist.

The government of Guatemala has never been much help to these people. And after the mudslide, it declared the new settlement uninhabitable. If officially, Nuevo Quejá does not exist, it is not eligible for electric poles or road repairs or improved water supply.

"Apart from declaring the place uninhabitable," said Esmá Cal, "the government of Guatemala has been absent. Period."

The townspeople have received some help from non-governmental organizations that drew funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development -- some of it useful, some of it less so.

One gave them wheelbarrows, picks and shovels and brought two psychologists to play with the kids, reminding them how to clean their teeth. A second visited to ensure that donations of water and sanitation kits were used correctly. A third spent two days in mid-July on a family needs assessment.

Mirrors donated by USAID hang inside every ramshackle house. The purpose: to elevate self-esteem.

UNICEF donated a new school to the community, but it has been closed for five months because no one could find the key to open it. It turns out that UNICEF gave the key to a teacher who resigned and left with it. A second copy was given to a community member who denied having it.

So instead, school was held in the shack next door, in chairs donated by the European Union. But like every other shack, it leaks, and the floor is often flooded and muddy. The furniture rots.

The school serves 250 children. Of the 12 teachers who worked there before the storms, four remain to teach despite a lack of a permit from the education ministry. Their materials are in Spanish; the students speak only Pomachi, said a teacher who spoke on condition of anonymity, for fear of consequences.

"None of them will go to high school. They already lost years. School failure is total," the teacher said.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 23 of 56

César Chiquin, 39, is the head nurse in charge of the area. At least once a month, he visits Nuevo Quejá; mothers bring their children and wait on a patio as the nurse lays out his scale and tape measure.

Children cried in fear when they were placed on the scales. The mothers were silent, looking at Chiquin as if he was doing magic.

The results are bad. "Malnutrition has doubled. One in three are stunted," he said.

He does not have many options. "The only thing I can do is to give them some vitamins and advice they are not ready to follow. Even if they want, most of them cannot do it because they lack the resources."

Before the hurricane, the children were healthier. "Today, it is rare for a child to have the correct weight and height. Virtually all are at risk. Their families are not in a suitable place to harvest. They have lost sustainability."

This is the central plight of the people of Nuevo Quejá. Struggle as they might, they can't raise enough food to sustain themselves. Part of the problem is timing. Having lost last year's crops to the hurricanes, "We arrived in Nuevo Quejá too late for planting properly," Esmá Cal says.

They also have just a third as much land as they did before the storms. And a lot of the soil has been degraded -- torrential rains wash away the topsoil, black and fertile, and leave behind orange clay.

"We harvested two times a year, now we have only one much smaller harvest, a very small portion of our needs. We are starting again below zero." Esmá Cal says.

There are so many obstacles: Seeds and fertilizer are twice as expensive as before, roads are dangerous and easily collapse when it rains. But the lack of good land trumps them all.

The local council has done the calculations. They need about 75 acres more. But they have no money to buy them.

The government has a land trust. Someday they could be awarded the land they need but, according to Guatemalan law, it does not have to be in the same region -- and they cannot even contemplate such a move. Most do not speak Spanish, and a move would obliterate their culture.

"Our community is under collapse and we need a permanent solution. This place is not fit to live in and for the moment we have no way out," said a frustrated Esmá Cal. "Our real problem is that we have no land and we are dependent.

"We, as a farming community, need land."

The people of Nuevo Quejá are well acquainted with death. They escaped a disaster in which 58 of their neighbors and loved ones died almost instantaneously, and they know it could happen again.

Still, they need wood for their stoves, so they are again deforesting the mountainside, setting the stage for more mudslides as the autumn and winter rainy season approaches.

"But for the moment we have no choice," Gregorio Ti said.

They have designated Julio Cal, 46, to monitor rain and the mountain. There is an evacuation plan: On a pine tree forest over a small hill, they have built a bigger shack where hundreds of people could stay. But few believe this is Nuevo Quejá's salvation.

"We know we can't be here," Julio Cal said. "At any moment that mountain could come crashing down and we all die. We know that. The government has to relocate us on permanent land."

In the meantime, people are dying in the squalor of this settlement, one by one.

In July, 17-year-old Flor Maribel Cal lay in bed with a tumor on her right leg the size of a soccer ball. She was in intense pain, vomiting, malnourished. Months earlier, when the community raised money to send her to the hospital, doctors said amputation was her only hope.

Her mother refused. Her husband and two other children had died in the mudslide, and she is silent and in despair. She does not have the strength to take care of a daughter who will not be able to fend for herself, so she declined treatment. The girl died, on July 22.

Death is one of only two ways out of Nuevo Quejá. The other is emigration to the United States.

Ask any man, and he would say he wants to go. Stay, and you might earn \$4 for a full day's work of

clearing land, harvesting coffee or cutting wood, Victor Cal said -- hardly enough to support a family. He had heard that you could earn \$80 a day in the U.S.

And moving to Guatemala City wasn't an option. There were no jobs in the pandemic, and the deck is stacked against Mayans like Victor Cal who lack Spanish skills.

Most of them say the only thing that prevents them from emigrating is that they cannot afford it.

Victor Cal contacted a distant cousin who has been in Miami for years. He agreed to advance the \$13,000 to buy a coyote package that offers two attempts to enter the U.S.

Optimistic, Cal was convinced he will be able to earn enough to repay his cousin.

It was four in the morning when Victor Cal took a scrap of paper and wrote his number and the number of the coyote who would take him to the Arizona desert.

He left it on the table, one of the few pieces of furniture in the dirt-floored shack. "My objective," he repeated, as if to convince himself, "is to be able to send money so my parents have a real house again and some land."

He added: "If I had a choice, I wouldn't go. I will be back as soon as possible"

He said goodbye without looking back at Nuevo Quejá.

'Code red': UN scientists warn of worsening global warming

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Earth is getting so hot that temperatures in about a decade will probably blow past a level of warming that world leaders have sought to prevent, according to a report released Monday that the United Nations called a "code red for humanity."

"It's just guaranteed that it's going to get worse," said report co-author Linda Mearns, a senior climate scientist at the U.S. National Center for Atmospheric Research. "Nowhere to run, nowhere to hide."

But scientists also eased back a bit on the likelihood of the absolute worst climate catastrophes.

The authoritative Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, which calls climate change clearly human-caused and "unequivocal" and "an established fact," makes more precise and warmer forecasts for the 21st century than it did last time it was issued in 2013.

Each of five scenarios for the future, based on how much carbon emissions are cut, passes the more stringent of two thresholds set in the 2015 Paris climate agreement. World leaders agreed then to try to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above levels in the late 19th century because problems mount quickly after that. The world has already warmed nearly 1.1 degrees Celsius (2 degrees Fahrenheit) since then.

Under each scenario, the report said, the world will cross the 1.5-degree-Celsius warming mark in the 2030s, earlier than some past predictions. Warming has ramped up in recent years, data shows.

"Our report shows that we need to be prepared for going into that level of warming in the coming decades. But we can avoid further levels of warming by acting on greenhouse gas emissions," said report co-chair Valerie Masson-Delmotte, a climate scientist at France's Laboratory of Climate and Environment Sciences at the University of Paris-Saclay.

In three scenarios, the world will also likely exceed 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-industrial times — the less stringent Paris goal — with far worse heat waves, droughts and flood-inducing downpours unless there are deep emissions cuts, the report said.

"This report tells us that recent changes in the climate are widespread, rapid and intensifying, unprecedented in thousands of years," said IPCC Vice Chair Ko Barrett, senior climate adviser for the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

With crucial international climate negotiations coming up in Scotland in November, world leaders said the report is causing them to try harder to cut carbon pollution. U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken called it "a stark reminder."

The 3,000-plus-page report from 234 scientists said warming is already accelerating sea level rise and worsening extremes such as heat waves, droughts, floods and storms. Tropical cyclones are getting stron-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 25 of 56

ger and wetter, while Arctic sea ice is dwindling in the summer and permafrost is thawing. All of these trends will get worse, the report said.

For example, the kind of heat wave that used to happen only once every 50 years now happens once a decade, and if the world warms another degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit), it will happen twice every seven years, the report said.

As the planet warms, places will get hit more not just by extreme weather but by multiple climate disasters at once, the report said. That's like what's now happening in the Western U.S., where heat waves, drought and wildfires compound the damage, Mearns said. Extreme heat is also driving massive fires in Greece and Turkey.

Some harm from climate change — dwindling ice sheets, rising sea levels and changes in the oceans as they lose oxygen and become more acidic — is “irreversible for centuries to millennia,” the report said.

The world is “locked in” to 15 to 30 centimeters (6 to 12 inches) of sea level rise by mid-century, said report co-author Bob Kopp of Rutgers University.

Scientists have issued this message for more than three decades, but the world hasn't listened, said United Nations Environment Program Executive Director Inger Andersen.

For the first time, the report offers an interactive atlas for people to see what has happened and may happen to where they live.

Nearly all of the warming that has happened on Earth can be blamed on emissions of heat-trapping gases such as carbon dioxide and methane. At most, natural forces or simple randomness can explain one- or two-tenths of a degree of warming, the report said.

The report described five different future scenarios based on how much the world reduces carbon emissions. They are: a future with incredibly large and quick pollution cuts; another with intense pollution cuts but not quite as massive; a scenario with moderate emission cuts; a fourth scenario where current plans to make small pollution reductions continue; and a fifth possible future involving continued increases in carbon pollution.

In five previous reports, the world was on that final hottest path, often nicknamed “business as usual.” But this time, the world is somewhere between the moderate path and the small pollution reductions scenario because of progress to curb climate change, said report co-author Claudia Tebaldi, a scientist at the U.S. Pacific Northwest National Lab.

While calling the report “a code red for humanity,” U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres kept a sliver of hope that world leaders could still somehow prevent 1.5 degrees of warming, which he said is “perilously close.”

Alok Sharma, the president of the upcoming climate negotiations in Scotland, urged leaders to do more so they can “credibly say that we have kept 1.5 degrees alive.”

“Anything we can do to limit, to slow down, is going to pay off,” Tebaldi said. “And if we cannot get to 1.5, it's probably going to be painful, but it's better not to give up.”

In the report's worst-case scenario, the world could be around 3.3 degrees Celsius (5.9 degrees Fahrenheit) hotter than now by the end of the century. But that scenario looks increasingly unlikely, said report co-author and climate scientist Zeke Hausfather, climate change director of the Breakthrough Institute.

“We are a lot less likely to get lucky and end up with less warming than we thought,” Hausfather said. “At the same time, the odds of ending up in a much worse place than we expected if we do reduce our emissions are notably lower.”

The report also said ultra-catastrophic disasters — commonly called “tipping points,” like ice sheet collapses and the abrupt slowdown of ocean currents — are “low likelihood” but cannot be ruled out. The much talked-about shutdown of Atlantic ocean currents, which would trigger massive weather shifts, is something that's unlikely to happen in this century, Kopp said.

A “major advance” in the understanding of how fast the world warms with each ton of carbon dioxide emitted allowed scientists to be far more precise in the scenarios in this report, Mason-Delmotte said.

In a new move, scientists emphasized how cutting airborne levels of methane — a powerful but short-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 26 of 56

lived gas that has soared to record levels — could help curb short-term warming. Lots of methane the atmosphere comes from leaks of natural gas, a major power source. Livestock also produces large amounts of the gas, a good chunk of it in cattle burps.

More than 100 countries have made informal pledges to achieve “net zero” human-caused carbon dioxide emissions sometime around mid-century, which will be a key part of the negotiations in Scotland. The report said those commitments are essential.

“It is still possible to forestall many of the most dire impacts,” Barrett said.

In Dubai, Filipina pulls no punches in jokes on Mideast life

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Peering out into the darkened audience of a Dubai bar, comedian Imah Dumagay leaned into the microphone and addressed the mistaken perception that many people have across the Middle East when they see a Filipina at a nightclub.

“I am from the Philippines but I am not taking any orders tonight,” she said, drawing chuckles as her countrymen served beers and bar food at this rooftop bar in sight of Dubai’s sail-shaped Burj Al-Arab luxury hotel. “Where is that guy asking for water earlier? Sir, we are not all waitresses.”

She waited a beat and added: “But if you’re looking for a maid, I’m available on Saturdays. I’m very good at cleaning; I clean from the ceiling down to your jewelry box.”

Tucked within her slightly risqué set, Dumagay’s rapid-fire punchlines offer an unfiltered glimpse into the life, sly triumphs and slights faced by her 2.2 million compatriots. They care for children, wait tables and otherwise power economies across the wider Middle East. Those Filipinos provide billions of dollars in remittances back to their families still living in the Philippines, but face abuse and isolation in countries that often treat them as a disposable, low-paid workforce.

“I want to kind of be a voice for them,” Dumagay told The Associated Press before her recent set. “When you use your platform, you send a message to people. Comedy is a great method to send your message across.”

Dumagay, 38, of Mindanao, Philippines, worked in Dubai for years before deciding to leave her job to pursue comedy full time. That’s not an easy task in this skyscraper-studded tourist destination where most bars and nightclubs focus more on drinks and music than variety shows.

The city-state also focuses more on importing A-list American, British and Indian comedy acts given the city’s vast foreign workforce. Some topics remain taboo in this hereditarily ruled country of seven sheikhdoms, where speech is strictly governed.

But there is a burgeoning local scene here, as seen on Sunday at the Hi Five Restaurant & Lounge. A United Nations of amateur comedians took the stage to varying degrees of success in sets touching on the scatological to the societal. An Emirati with dyed blonde hair even had 10 minutes, referring to his tight ripped jeans and tattoos instead of the traditional robes and ghutra headdress as the rebellious “Emirati starter kit.”

Then there’s Dumagay, who took the stage in a giggling whirlwind and drew laughter when she described being first married to a Syrian, then her current husband, an Egyptian, before shouting: “Hello Lebanese!”

“I like to tease, like sexual innuendos, but it’s not really direct. ... I won’t say that’s crossing the line because it’s funny. I can make people laugh without offending anyone,” Dumagay said. “And I’m aware of what I can talk about. Like, we don’t talk about religion, we cannot do politics or the UAE government or any discrimination towards any group of people. So we’re very aware of that.”

Dumagay’s comedy springs from her experiences working across Dubai, from advertising to banking to being an executive secretary. That earlier crack about not being a waitress? It’s a real experience she had before taking the stage at one of her 200-odd appearances.

Sunday’s open-mic appearance comes as Dubai slowly revives its live entertainment scene amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. When venues largely shut down over the virus, Dumagay turned to social media, offering performances such as a never-flustered Filipina answering emergency services calls, tell-

ing someone reporting a murder that they only "need four cleaners" for the mess.

But there's a darker side to the Filipino experience in the Gulf Arab states. Many maids face physical, sexual and psychological abuse from their employers, who in some cases seize their passports and force them to work nonstop. In Kuwait in 2018, authorities discovered the corpse of a Filipina maid killed and left in a refrigerator for over a year.

Stories like those have Dumagay wanting to incorporate more serious topics into her new sets.

"My fellow Filipinos sacrifice their time to be spent with their family back home," she said. "They are here struggling to just provide for them."

But Dumagay, like others working overseas, displays that one Filipino trait even she notes she can't mock: relentless optimism and hope for the future despite the many challenges they face.

"Just keep going and just trust yourself and experiment and then do something outside your comfort zone. Don't be scared," she said. "I mean, what's the worst thing could happen? You fail and then you try again."

Bangladesh vaccinating Rohingya refugees amid virus surge

By JULHAS ALAM Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Bangladesh's government and aid agencies started vaccinating Rohingya refugees Tuesday as a virus surge raises health risks in the sprawling, cramped camps where more than 1 million people who fled Myanmar are sheltering.

The highly transmissible delta variant is driving an infection surge across Bangladesh, with around 20,000 infections and 200 deaths recorded so far in Cox's Bazar district, the southern region bordering Myanmar where the refugee camps are located.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said a national positivity rate of around 30% indicates the spread of COVID-19 is much higher, especially with cramped conditions and the risks faced by many people living in the refugee camps.

The government's Civil Surgeon's office in Cox's Bazar and aid agencies began the vaccination campaign across 34 camps alongside Bangladesh's national vaccination effort.

About 500 Bangladesh Red Crescent staff and volunteers joined the health workers for the campaign in collaboration with the U.N. refugee agency, according to a statement from the international body.

Rohingya community leaders, front-line health care volunteers in the camps, and Rohingya older than 55 are in the first group to be vaccinated. Over 65,000 of the nearly 900,000 refugees will be vaccinated in the first cohort, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees said in an email to The Associated Press.

"COVID-19 has spread all over the world. We came here to get vaccinated for our protection so that it does not harm us," Nurul Islam, 65, said in a camp at Ukhiya in Cox's Bazar, as he waited for shots alongside hundreds of other refugees.

Bangladesh has reported more than 1.3 million infections, including 22,897 deaths from COVID-19 since the pandemic began.

Experts say the full toll may be underreported, as many people don't go to hospitals and many others died before getting tested. Across the country's vast border regions with India, infections from the delta variant have spread amid concern that a lack of awareness about masks and maintaining other health guidelines could lead to a deteriorating COVID-19 situation in the densely populated nation.

Less than 5% population of the country's 160 million people are fully vaccinated. The initial campaign was interrupted in April when India stopped exporting AstraZeneca vaccines to Bangladesh, which had made a purchase agreement for 30 million doses.

The government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina bolstered its effort to get vaccines from other sources, particularly China, and began a new round of vaccinations nationwide starting last weekend.

The country now a good stock of vaccines, mostly China's Sinopharm. Officials say over 3 million people received a shot in the first two days of the new campaign.

More than 700,000 Rohingya fled Buddhist-majority Myanmar in 2017 as a harsh military crackdown was

waged against the ethnic group following an attack by insurgents. Other Rohingya have lived in refugee camps in Bangladesh following earlier waves of persecution.

The 2017 crackdown included rapes, killings and the torching of thousands of homes, and was termed ethnic cleansing by global rights groups and the United Nations. While Bangladesh and Myanmar have sought to arrange repatriations, the Rohingya are too fearful to return home.

Epstein accuser sues Prince Andrew, citing sex assault at 17

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — One of Jeffrey Epstein's longtime accusers sued Prince Andrew on Monday, taking accusations that she has repeatedly publicly lodged against him, including that he sexually assaulted her when she was 17, to a formal venue.

Lawyers for Virginia Giuffre filed the lawsuit in Manhattan federal court, where Epstein was charged criminally with sex trafficking a month before he killed himself at age 66 in August 2019 in an adjacent federal jail where he was ordered to await trial.

Giuffre has repeatedly made her allegations against Epstein, his onetime girlfriend Ghislaine Maxwell, and Andrew, but the lawsuit was the first time she has directly confronted Andrew in such a formal setting. It steps up public relations pressure on the prince, even if he remains beyond the reach of the courts.

In a statement, Giuffre said she was "holding Prince Andrew accountable for what he did to me."

"The powerful and rich are not exempt from being held responsible for their actions. I hope that other victims will see that it is possible not to live in silence and fear, but to reclaim one's life by speaking out and demanding justice," Giuffre said.

"I did not come to this decision lightly," she added. "As a mother and a wife, my family comes first — and I know that this action will subject me to further attacks by Prince Andrew and his surrogates — but I knew if I did not pursue this action, I would be letting them and victims everywhere down."

In late 2019, Prince Andrew told BBC Newsnight that he never had sex with Giuffre, saying, "It didn't happen."

He said he has "no recollection" of ever meeting her and told an interviewer there are "a number of things that are wrong" about Giuffre's account, which alleges the encounter occurred in 2001.

"I can absolutely categorically tell you it never happened," Andrew said.

The interview was widely panned by critics who said Andrew seemed insensitive to Epstein's victims. Afterward, the prince quit royal duties.

Giuffre has long said Maxwell recruited her at age 17 to be sexually abused by Epstein and Maxwell from 1999 to 2002.

According to the lawsuit, which sought unspecified compensatory and punitive damages, the prince abused Giuffre on multiple occasions when she was under the age of 18.

During each of the alleged acts, Giuffre was given "express or implied threats" by Epstein, Maxwell, and/or Andrew to engage in sexual acts with the prince, the lawsuit said.

It said that she "feared death or physical injury to herself or another and other repercussions for disobeying" the trio because of their "powerful connections, wealth, and authority."

It said that on one occasion, the prince sexually abused her in Maxwell's London home when Epstein, Maxwell and Prince Andrew forced her to have sexual intercourse with the prince against her will.

On another occasion, the prince sexually abused Giuffre in Epstein's New York mansion when Maxwell forced Giuffre and another victim to sit on Andrew's lap as he touched her, the lawsuit said.

The lawsuit also alleged that Andrew sexually abused Giuffre on Epstein's private island in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Andrew knew her age at the time based on communications with Epstein and Maxwell, the lawsuit added. It said he went ahead anyway "for the purpose of gratifying his sexual desires."

The lawsuit was brought under the Child Victims Act, a 2019 New York state law that allows victims to temporarily make legal claims of abuse that occurred when they were children regardless of when or how

long ago the alleged abuse occurred.

Maxwell, 59, has pleaded not guilty to sex trafficking charges in Manhattan federal court, where she faces trial in November. She is held without bail. Her lawyers did not respond to requests for comment.

As part of a continuing probe into Epstein and his encounters with women and teenage girls, Manhattan federal prosecutors last year formally requested to speak with Andrew.

The request, similar to issuing a subpoena, was made under the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty, an agreement between the two countries to share evidence and information in criminal cases. U.S. prosecutors reportedly made a formal request through the British government to interview Andrew.

Brad Edwards, a lawyer who represents dozens of Epstein victims, has said that the prince has failed to answer questions for civil lawsuits before.

"I've always been given the impression that, whether he has immunity or not, he certainly behaves like he does," Edwards said.

COVID vaccines to be required for military under new US plan

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Members of the U.S. military will be required to get the COVID-19 vaccine beginning next month under a plan laid out by the Pentagon and endorsed by President Joe Biden. In memos distributed to all troops, top Pentagon leaders said the vaccine is a necessary step to maintain military readiness.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said the mid-September deadline could be accelerated if the vaccine receives final FDA approval or infection rates continue to rise.

"I will seek the president's approval to make the vaccines mandatory no later than mid-September, or immediately upon" licensure by the Food and Drug Administration "whichever comes first," Austin said in his memo sent Monday, warning them to prepare for the requirement.

The Pentagon plan provides time for the FDA to give final approval to the Pfizer vaccine, which is expected early next month. Without that formal approval, Austin needs a waiver from Biden to make the shots mandatory, and Biden has already made clear he supports it.

Austin's decision reflects similar moves by governments and companies around the world, as nations struggle with the highly contagious delta variant that has sent new U.S. cases, hospitalizations and deaths surging to heights not seen since last winter. The concerns are especially acute in the military, where service members live and work closely together in barracks and on ships, increasing the risks of rapid spreading. Any large virus outbreak in the military could affect America's ability to defend itself in any security crisis.

Austin warned that if infection rates rise and potentially affect military readiness, "I will not hesitate to act sooner or recommend a different course to the President if I feel the need to do so. To defend this Nation, we need a healthy and ready force."

In a statement Monday, Biden said he strongly supports Austin's message to the force and the plan to add the COVID vaccine "to the list of required vaccinations for our service members not later than mid-September."

Biden said the country is still on a wartime footing and "being vaccinated will enable our service members to stay healthy, to better protect their families, and to ensure that our force is ready to operate anywhere in the world."

Austin's memo, which went out Monday, was followed quickly by one from Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"The Secretary of Defense intends to mandate vaccinations for all Service members in the coming weeks," said Milley, adding that the military's medical professionals recommended the move. At the bottom of his message, Milley scrawled a handwritten note: "Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is a key force protection and readiness issue."

The decision comes a bit more than a week after Biden told defense officials to develop a plan requiring troops to get shots as part of a broader campaign to increase vaccinations in the federal workforce.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 30 of 56

More broadly, the COVID-19 crisis has worsened around the country, with hospitals experiencing deeper strain in unvaccinated areas of the South. Mississippi reported that 35 medical centers are completely out of intensive care unit beds, Arkansas topped its pandemic record for COVID admissions, and the average number of people hospitalized nationwide has returned to levels not seen since February. More patients are being parked in emergency rooms while they wait for beds to open up and the average number of daily deaths is now above 500.

The country is averaging about 108,000 new infections and 700,000 vaccines administered a day.

Austin said the military services will have the next few weeks to prepare, determine how many vaccines they need, and how this mandate will be implemented. The additional time, however, also is a nod to the bitter political divide over the vaccine and the knowledge that making it mandatory will likely trigger opposition from vaccine opponents across state and federal governments, Congress and the American population.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Monday that he believes the military has enough vaccines to meet the requirements. He added, "You can consider this memo not just a warning order to the services but to the troops themselves."

Democratic and Republican leaders of the House Armed Services Committee said vaccines have proven effective.

"Some may try and criticize the Secretary's decision, using anti-vax arguments that are not supported by facts or science to politicize the conversation. These desperate attention seekers must be ignored," said Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Ala., said the vaccine will help protect troops who live in cramped conditions and don't have the option to telework.

Rep. Mark Green, R-Tenn., however, said Austin should not mandate a vaccine that doesn't have full FDA approval. "Wearing our country's uniform does not mean our service members sign away the right to make personal medical decisions," he said.

The decision will add the COVID-19 vaccine to a list of other inoculations that service members are already required to get. Depending on their location, service members can get as many as 17 different vaccines.

Austin's memo also said that in the meantime, the Pentagon will comply with Biden's order for additional restrictions on unvaccinated federal personnel, including masks, social distancing and travel limits.

According to the Pentagon, more than 1 million troops are fully vaccinated and another 237,000 have received one shot. But the military services vary widely in their vaccination rates.

The Navy said that more than 74% of all active duty and reserve sailors have been vaccinated with at least one shot. The Air Force, meanwhile, said that more than 65% of its active duty and 60% reserve forces are at least partially vaccinated, and the number for the Army appears closer to 50%.

Military officials have said the pace of vaccines has been growing across the force, with some units — such as sailors deploying on a warship — seeing nearly 100% of their members get shots. But the totals drop off dramatically, including among the National Guard and Reserve, who are much more difficult to track.

Some unvaccinated troops have said they'd get the shot once it's required, but others are flatly opposed. Once the vaccine is mandated, a refusal could constitute failure to obey an order and may be punishable under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Army guidance, for example, includes counseling soldiers to ensure they understand the purpose of the vaccine and the threat the disease poses. The Army also notes that if a soldier "fails to comply with a lawful order to receive a mandatory vaccine, and does not have an approved exemption, a commander may take appropriate disciplinary action."

Military service officials says the don't have data on the number of troops who have refused other mandated vaccines, such as anthrax, chicken pox or flu shots over the past decade or more. And they weren't able to provide details on the punishments service members received as a result of the refusal.

Officials said they believe few troops have refused other mandated vaccines, and the discipline can vary.

Also, service members can seek an exemption from any vaccine — either temporary or permanent — for a variety of reasons including health issues or religious beliefs. Regulations say, for example, that anyone

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 31 of 56

who had a severe adverse reaction to the vaccine can be exempt, and those who are pregnant or have other conditions can postpone a shot.

Navy officials said last week that there has been only one case of COVID-19 hospitalization among fully vaccinated sailors and Marines. But, the Navy said there have been more than 123 hospitalizations in a similar group of unvaccinated sailors and Marines." It said fewer than 3% of its immunized troops have tested positive for COVID-19.

The other military services did not provide similar data.

Senate Dems unveil \$3.5T budget for social, climate efforts

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Democrats unwrapped a budget resolution envisioning a massive \$3.5 trillion, 10-year cascade of federal resources, aiming historic sums at family support, health and education programs and an aggressive drive to heal the climate.

The measure is a pivotal first step in what will likely be a tumultuous, months-long Democratic legislative march toward a progressive reshaping of the federal government that also hews to President Joe Biden's top domestic policy ambitions.

The blueprint released Monday reflects many Democrats' tilt leftward in the wake of Donald Trump's presidency and bears the imprint of Senate Budget Committee Chairman Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., a longtime progressive voice now at the hub of the Democratic Party's power structure in Congress.

Many of its proposals would be financed by raising taxes on the wealthy and large corporations while sparing people earning under \$400,000 annually, an oft-repeated Biden pledge and liberal goal. Though party leaders say the measure will be fully paid for, the budget resolution does not require that, instead giving Congress' tax-writing committees unspecified license to raise money that a summary calls "substantial."

The Senate was expected to approve the budget plan this week over solid Republican opposition. Meanwhile, senators were nearing approval of a separate \$1 trillion package financing road, water and other infrastructure projects, a bill with broad support.

The vote on that bipartisan plan was scheduled for Tuesday morning. After that, the Senate will immediately launch votes on the \$3.5 trillion plan.

Crucially, congressional approval of the budget outline would let Democrats pass a detailed follow-up bill this fall enacting the blueprint's proposed spending and tax changes without facing a GOP filibuster that would certainly kill it. It would take 60 votes to end those delaying tactics, an impossible hurdle on a sharply partisan issue in today's 50-50 Senate.

It is unclear when the House, now on summer recess, will vote on the budget. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., praised it as "a clear declaration of the value that congressional Democrats place on America's workers and families."

The budget outlines expanding Medicare coverage to dental, vision and hearing benefits and lowering the program's eligibility age below its current 65, though the age reduction would be costly and is considered a long shot to survive. The children's tax credit, expanded during the pandemic to provide millions of families with \$300 monthly checks, would be extended beyond its current 2022 expiration. Other tax breaks for some low-earning workers and for child care would also be renewed.

Unveiled the same day the United Nations warned of a "code red for humanity" because of rapid climate heating, the fiscal plan would unsheathe a vast effort to move the U.S. toward clean energy. That would include a new tax on imported fuels that spew carbon emissions, federal aid for clean energy developers and investments in low-polluting vehicles.

"The question is not complicated," Sanders said Monday of the budget plan. He asked if lawmakers have the courage to make special interests pay a "fair share of taxes so that we can create millions of good paying jobs for working families, so we can protect our children, protect the elderly, and address the threat of climate change."

In one illustration of hurdles ahead, around \$198 billion of the blueprint's climate proposals would have

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 32 of 56

to move through the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. That panel is chaired by West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, a centrist and staunch defender of his state's energy interests who has pointedly warned that he supports an energy policy that's "not elimination, it's innovation."

Following the budget outline, the \$3.5 trillion spending and revenue bill is certain to cause agita for Democratic leaders as they struggle to find a sweet spot between the demands of their party's competing progressive and moderate factions, with each having decisive leverage.

Besides the evenly split Senate, which only Vice President Kamala Harris' tie-breaking vote lets them control, Democrats can lose no more than three votes in the narrowly divided House.

Moderates back the \$1 trillion package financing road, water and other infrastructure projects that the Senate was on the cusp of approving. Progressives are strongly behind the huge social and environment plan, and each group is worried that disagreements will result in the other scuttling its favored measure.

"We're going to tell middle-class families, 'We're going to make it easier for you to stay there,'" said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. He added, "We're going to tell poorer families, 'We're going to make it easier for you to climb into the middle class.'"

Democrats revealed their budget as the Senate was on the cusp of approving the smaller compromise infrastructure measure. That bill, another Biden priority, was garnering significant support from Republicans eager to bring some public works spending to their home states.

But the GOP was united against Democrats' larger \$3.5 trillion plan, calling it laden with overspending and tax increases that would wound the economy and burden families.

With an eye to 2022 elections for congressional control, Republicans were readying amendments that would force Democrats to vote on politically delicate issues including immigration, crime and inflation. They were also amplifying their often-used theme of accusing Democrats of socialism.

"They've set out trying to tax and spend our country into oblivion," Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. "They've handed the keys to domestic policymaking to Chairman Sanders and some socialist House members."

Democrats' budget blueprint seeks extensions of federal subsidies for people buying health insurance through President Barack Obama's 2010 health care law, and money would be provided for states that haven't yet expanded Medicaid coverage. There would be a first-ever federally paid family leave program, and some pre-kindergarten and two years of community college would be tuition-free.

There would also be more money for home health care, housing, job training, child nutrition and Pell Grants to lower-income college students.

It would also open a path for millions of immigrants in the U.S. illegally to move toward citizenship, and allow language strengthening enforcement of labor laws. Such provisions will have to pass muster with the Senate parliamentarian, who can bar provisions that are not primarily related to the budget.

The budget plans additional savings by letting the government negotiate lower prices on the pharmaceuticals it buys for Medicare recipients. It also seeks to strengthen the IRS so it can collect more unpaid taxes, though analysts are wary of the savings lawmakers might claim because estimates of that proposal's impact vary widely.

The fiscal plan also suggests easing a ceiling on federal deductions people can take for their state and local taxes, a contentious proposal among Democrats. Relaxing those limits is a top priority for high-tax states, such as in the Northeast, but it would cost the government billions annually, making it harder for Democrats to finance other priorities.

The measure has no language extending the federal debt limit, the ceiling on government borrowing that has already expired. The Treasury Department is using accounting maneuvers to keep the government paying its bills, but Republicans have vowed to vote against extending the borrowing cap, and that battle will be joined on other legislation.

Dry California tourist town to guests: 'Please conserve'

By OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ and HAVEN DALEY Associated Press

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 33 of 56

MENDOCINO, Calif. (AP) — Tourists flock by the thousands to the coastal town of Mendocino for its Victorian homes and cliff trails, but visitors this summer are also finding public portable toilets and signs on picket fences pleading: “Severe Drought. Please conserve water.”

Hotels have closed their lobby bathrooms and residents have stopped watering their gardens in the foggy outpost about 150 miles (240 kilometers) north of San Francisco after two years of little rain sapped many of the wells Mendocino depends on for potable water.

Mendocino’s water woes were compounded in recent weeks when the city of Fort Bragg a few miles to the north — its main backup water supplier — informed officials that it, too, had a significant drop in its drinking water reserves after the Noyo River recorded its lowest flows in decades.

“This is a real emergency,” said Ryan Rhoades, superintendent of the Mendocino City Community Services District, which helps manage the water in the town’s aquifer.

Eric Hillesland and his wife normally wouldn’t need to buy water until late July or August to supply the Alegria Inn, their 10-room oceanfront bed and breakfast. But the property’s well started pumping little water early in the year, and by February they were ordering 3,500 gallons (13 kilolitres) a week.

Then the couple stopped watering the gardens and switched from glass to paper plates to serve welcome cookies. They plan to start using microfiber bed linens, which take less water to wash.

“We’re also asking our guests to be cognizant of the severity of our water shortage and to not take the extensive showers they might be used to at home,” Hillesland said.

Mendocino relies on groundwater accessed through a network of about 400 privately owned wells, many of them dug by hand when the former mill town was established in the 1850s. Residents and business owners keep their water in storage tanks, including some perched atop historic redwood water towers.

The town has about 1,000 residents, but its economy depends on about 2,000 people who visit each day during the height of the tourist season, from May to October, Rhoades said.

Businesses have traditionally had to haul in water in the fall. But after a second dry winter, many have had to order more, much earlier than before.

Because of the pandemic and stay-at-home orders, there were few visitors last year when town residents began noticing their wells were producing less. Now the weekend getaway destination for people in the Sacramento and San Francisco Bay areas is teeming with guests.

That has forced residents and business owners to find drinking water sources that are farther away, which has doubled the price of water. Some restaurants are cutting back their operating hours to reduce costs.

In February, Hillesland was paying \$300 for a 3,500-gallon delivery. Now it costs \$600.

If it gets worse and they have to start closing rooms, “then we are in a situation like at the beginning of the pandemic — no income but still plenty of mortgage and insurance,” he said.

Many longer-term solutions are being considered, including bringing water by barge, plane and train and adding community storage tanks that can hold up to 500,000 gallons (1,900 kiloliters), asking the U.S. National Guard or the Army Corps of Engineers to set up a mobile desalination treatment unit, and even capturing fog. But all of them are expensive, and the town would need the support of the state and federal governments, Rhoades said.

A company that developed new technology to capture moisture in fog proposed setting up a testing site in Mendocino at no cost and selling the water to the community. But Rhoades said the infrastructure would affect the town’s scenic views, and getting a permit would be a challenge. A desalination plant would face similar permitting and environmental hurdles.

“Transporting water that is treated, and is known from an inland source, might be a faster solution, even though it’s expensive,” he said.

Robert Pinoli, president of Mendocino Railway, which operates the historic Skunk Train, said he is ready to help. Since 1885, the train has been running from Willits through redwood forests and river canyons to Fort Bragg.

Pinoli said he could find tank cars quickly, attach them to the locomotive and deliver up to 200,000 gallons (760 kilolitres) each trip. He identified a source for tank cars in 2015 when Fort Bragg went through a water shortage and considered buying inland water to transport it to the coast. Officials scratched those

plans after it rained.

He said if Willits decides it wants to sell its water and Fort Bragg wants to buy it, "we become a logical vehicle for transporting water on a pretty large scale."

Willits officials recently decided against selling their water to the parched town.

For now, Mendocino residents are relying on people like Brian Clark, who has been selling water from his well outside town and trucking it in. Clark said he can't keep up with the demand.

"I'm really hiding from the phone, because I'm getting way more calls than I have water, and I'm hearing from people I've never met, never heard of, and I can't help them," he said.

Clark, a longtime resident, said Mendocino hasn't had such water storage issues since the 1970s when California faced the most severe drought on record.

County officials' short-term solutions include waiving permit requirements for storage tanks that can hold up to 5,000 gallons (19 kilolitres) and identifying wells with excess water near Mendocino. Officials are also asking the state to help finance the bigger private tanks, Rhoades said.

"I want residents to be able to store more water now, while their wells are still somewhat productive, to make it through the next four months. And if they have to purchase water, you get the most bang for your buck," he said.

US turns to social media influencers to boost vaccine rates

By JAMES ANDERSON Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — As a police sergeant in a rural town, Carlos Cornejo isn't the prototypical social media influencer. But his Spanish-language Facebook page with 650,000 followers was exactly what Colorado leaders were looking for as they recruited residents to try to persuade the most vaccine-hesitant.

Cornejo, 32, is one of dozens of influencers, ranging from busy moms and fashion bloggers to African refugee advocates and religious leaders, getting paid by the state to post vaccine information on a local level in hopes of stunting a troubling summer surge of COVID-19.

Colorado's #PowertheComeback target audience is especially tailored to Latino, Black, Native American, Asian and other communities of color that historically have been underserved when it comes to health care and are the focus of agencies trying to raise vaccination rates.

It's part of a growing U.S. state- and city-based movement using local social media influencers to reach the most vaccine-hesitant at a neighborhood level. Health authorities in Chicago, Oklahoma City, San Jose, California, New Jersey and elsewhere are running similar campaigns.

The effort comes after Colorado and other states have tried lotteries, college scholarships and other incentives to boost slumping vaccination rates as the highly contagious delta virus variant sweeps the nation.

Cornejo's Facebook page has become a widely trusted source of information about what the police do — and cannot do — for Latinos in the Colorado River Valley.

"It started last year when I saw misinformation that directly affected our department, rumors like police were arresting people without a mask," said Cornejo, a 10-year veteran with the Rifle Police Department. "Or that people get magnetized when they're vaccinated. Sometimes people are just plain scared. I give them fact-based information, nothing political about it, so they can make an informed decision."

Whether the social media push will move the needle with America's unvaccinated remains to be seen.

The country last week reached the milestone of having at least one dose in 70% of adults. It came a month after President Joe Biden's target date, even though most can easily get the shots in the U.S. unlike other countries where they're in short supply.

"I'm highly skeptical you can get enough appeal to the remaining 30% of adults who after all this time have not gotten the vaccine — it's a lot to ask of an influencer," said Jeff Niederdeppe, director of Cornell University's Health Communication Research Initiative and co-director of The Cornell Center for Health Equity.

More likely to tip the scales is an increase in private companies and organizations requiring vaccinations of employees and patrons, he said.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 35 of 56

In Colorado, the state pays citizen influencers up to \$1,000 a month for their work on Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Facebook and other platforms. The influencers post about their own vaccine experiences, dispel myths and misinformation, alert followers to pop-up vaccine clinics and direct them to information provided by state health authorities.

Abena Antwiwaa, a 29-year-old fashion blogger in Aurora, wrote about her nerve-racking decision to get vaccinated on Instagram. Born with sickle cell anemia, Antwiwaa needs monthly blood transfusions. She worried about her low immunity and potential side effects.

"I was so nervous about getting vaccinated, and I shared that experience," said Antwiwaa, who suffered nothing more than a temporarily sore arm. "It resonated with a lot of people."

Save one: a vaccine skeptic who engaged Antwiwaa on safety concerns. Eventually, after a bit of back-and-forth, he got the shot.

"That made all the difference to me," Antwiwaa said of agreeing to do the campaign.

This is what marketing firms like Denver-based The Idea Marketing, California-based Xomad and Chicago-based Res Publica Group want to see. They're hired by health agencies to identify local influencers and coordinate messaging.

Xomad has developed a platform where influencers, content creators and health officials can rapidly fine-tune or change messaging to respond to events such as last spring's pause in the use of Johnson & Johnson vaccines, new online misinformation or an expansion of age groups eligible for shots.

Rob Perry, Xomad's CEO and founder, notes that a July study by the Knight Foundation and the city of San Jose found a direct correlation between a flurry of local influencer posts on Instagram and higher daily vaccination rates.

"Even in Silicon Valley they needed help reaching the immigrant, Black, Latino and Vietnamese communities," Perry said. "No one's bashing anti-vaxxers over the head. The last thing these trusted messengers want to do is polarize their followers. It's their followers' choice."

Health officials say so-called "nano" and "micro" influencers, with fewer than 10,000 and 100,000 followers, respectively, are well-positioned to reach Generation Z and Millennials who get their news from social media.

The Oklahoma City County Health Department debuted the approach in late 2020, hiring Xomad to recruit local influencers to suggest ways their followers could celebrate stay-at-home holidays, agency spokeswoman Molly Fleming said. The campaign changed with the rollout of vaccines, and could change again with the advent of booster shots, as well as with non-COVID-19 issues such as a recent uptick in syphilis cases, she said.

One Oklahoma influencer is Pandora Marie, a 40-year-old street dancer and artist of Chicana, Chickasaw and Choctaw descent who has built a 30,000-strong Instagram following. She infuses her messaging with references to Native American culture and dance.

"When I started to share the COVID posts, I had people asking questions, which is always a good sign," Marie said.

Fleming acknowledged it's hard to measure how many vaccinations among 18- to 29-year-olds and minorities the strategy delivers.

But officials can see residents' interactions with posts, "and when you're spending public health dollars, that's important," she said. "If we pay for a billboard, we don't know if you've seen it or if it changed your life at all."

In Chicago, Cook County Health has worked with influencers such as McKinley Nelson, a young activist who uses basketball and entertainment to protect inner city youth from street violence. Its #MyShot campaign encourages 18- to 34-year-olds in Black and Hispanic communities to seek out vaccine information.

Soon to be called Life is Better Vaxxed, the campaign is one element in a multilayered communications strategy that includes vaccine information ads at gas stations and barber shops, and on coasters in bars, said Cook County Health spokeswoman Caryn Stancik.

"The mission, as it always has been for us, is equity," Stancik said. "Our digital strategy targets individual

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 36 of 56

neighborhoods and zip codes, and in these communities we layer in as many strategies as we can to help get people vaccinated and address misinformation.”

It appears to be helping, she said.

“I don’t want to say this alone will work,” Stancik said. “But people are coming to hundreds of pop-up local clinics based on digital word of mouth, so the information is resonating.”

Back in Rifle, Sgt. Cornejo built his Facebook following — way above the town’s roughly 9,700 residents — with videos largely centering on police work. He’ll strum his guitar and sing the occasional ballad, all of it endearing him to what he considers an extended family.

“I got COVID last year and shared that experience,” the 32-year-old said. “Is the vaccine going to protect you 100% of the time? No. But I compare it to wearing a seat belt — it doesn’t ensure nothing bad will happen, but your chances of saving your life are a lot higher.”

Senate Dems unveil \$3.5T budget for social, climate efforts

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Democrats unwrapped a budget resolution Monday envisioning a massive \$3.5 trillion, 10-year cascade of federal resources, aiming historic sums at family support, health and education programs and an aggressive drive to heal the climate.

The measure is a pivotal first step in what will likely be a tumultuous, months-long Democratic legislative march toward a progressive reshaping of the federal government that also hews to President Joe Biden’s top domestic policy ambitions.

The blueprint reflects many Democrats’ tilt leftward in the wake of Donald Trump’s presidency and bears the imprint of Senate Budget Committee Chairman Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., a longtime progressive voice now at the hub of the Democratic Party’s power structure in Congress.

Many of its proposals would be financed by raising taxes on the wealthy and large corporations while sparing people earning under \$400,000 annually, an oft-repeated Biden pledge and liberal goal. Though party leaders say the measure will be fully paid for, the budget resolution does not require that, instead giving Congress’ tax-writing committees unspecified license to raise money that a summary calls “substantial.”

The Senate was expected to approve the budget plan this week over solid Republican opposition. Meanwhile, senators were nearing approval of a separate \$1 trillion package financing road, water and other infrastructure projects, a bill with broad support.

The vote on that bipartisan plan was scheduled for Tuesday morning. After that, the Senate will immediately launch votes on the \$3.5 trillion plan.

Crucially, congressional approval of the budget outline would let Democrats pass a detailed follow-up bill this fall enacting the blueprint’s proposed spending and tax changes without facing a GOP filibuster that would certainly kill it. It would take 60 votes to end those delaying tactics, an impossible hurdle on a sharply partisan issue in today’s 50-50 Senate.

It is unclear when the House, now on summer recess, will vote on the budget. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., praised it as “a clear declaration of the value that congressional Democrats place on America’s workers and families.”

The budget outlines expanding Medicare coverage to dental, vision and hearing benefits and lowering the program’s eligibility age below its current 65, though the age reduction would be costly and is considered a long shot to survive. The children’s tax credit, expanded during the pandemic to provide millions of families with \$300 monthly checks, would be extended beyond its current 2022 expiration. Other tax breaks for some low-earning workers and for child care would also be renewed.

Unveiled the same day the United Nations warned of a “code red for humanity” because of rapid climate heating, the fiscal plan would unsheathe a vast effort to move the U.S. toward clean energy. That would include a new tax on imported fuels that spew carbon emissions, federal aid for clean energy developers and investments in low-polluting vehicles.

“The question is not complicated,” Sanders said Monday of the budget plan. He asked if lawmakers have the courage to make special interests pay a “fair share of taxes so that we can create millions of

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 37 of 56

good paying jobs for working families, so we can protect our children, protect the elderly, and address the threat of climate change.”

In one illustration of hurdles ahead, around \$198 billion of the blueprint’s climate proposals would have to move through the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. That panel is chaired by West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, a centrist and staunch defender of his state’s energy interests who has pointedly warned that he supports an energy policy that’s “not elimination, it’s innovation.”

Following the budget outline, the \$3.5 trillion spending and revenue bill is certain to cause agita for Democratic leaders as they struggle to find a sweet spot between the demands of their party’s competing progressive and moderate factions, with each having decisive leverage.

Besides the evenly split Senate, which only Vice President Kamala Harris’ tie-breaking vote lets them control, Democrats can lose no more than three votes in the narrowly divided House.

Moderates back the \$1 trillion package financing road, water and other infrastructure projects that the Senate was on the cusp of approving. Progressives are strongly behind the huge social and environment plan, and each group is worried that disagreements will result in the other scuttling its favored measure.

“We’re going to tell middle-class families, ‘We’re going to make it easier for you to stay there,’” said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. He added, “We’re going to tell poorer families, ‘We’re going to make it easier for you to climb into the middle class.’”

Democrats revealed their budget as the Senate was on the cusp of approving the smaller compromise infrastructure measure. That bill, another Biden priority, was garnering significant support from Republicans eager to bring some public works spending to their home states.

But the GOP was united against Democrats’ larger \$3.5 trillion plan, calling it laden with overspending and tax increases that would wound the economy and burden families.

With an eye to 2022 elections for congressional control, Republicans were readying amendments that would force Democrats to vote on politically delicate issues including immigration, crime and inflation. They were also amplifying their often-used theme of accusing Democrats of socialism.

“They’ve set out trying to tax and spend our country into oblivion,” Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. “They’ve handed the keys to domestic policymaking to Chairman Sanders and some socialist House members.”

Democrats’ budget blueprint seeks extensions of federal subsidies for people buying health insurance through former President Barack Obama’s 2010 health care law, and money would be provided for states that haven’t yet expanded Medicaid coverage. There would be a first-ever federally paid family leave program, and some pre-kindergarten and two years of community college would be tuition-free.

There would also be more money for home health care, housing, job training, child nutrition and Pell Grants to lower-income college students.

It would also open a path for millions of immigrants in the U.S. illegally to move toward citizenship, and allow language strengthening enforcement of labor laws. Such provisions will have to pass muster with the Senate parliamentarian, who can bar provisions that are not primarily related to the budget.

The budget plans additional savings by letting the government negotiate lower prices on the pharmaceuticals it buys for Medicare recipients. It also seeks to strengthen the IRS so it can collect more unpaid taxes, though analysts are wary of the savings lawmakers might claim because estimates of that proposal’s impact vary widely.

The fiscal plan also suggests easing a ceiling on federal deductions people can take for their state and local taxes, a contentious proposal among Democrats. Relaxing those limits is a top priority for high-tax states, such as in the Northeast, but it would cost the government billions annually, making it harder for Democrats to finance other priorities.

The measure has no language extending the federal debt limit, the ceiling on government borrowing that has already expired. The Treasury Department is using accounting maneuvers to keep the government paying its bills, but Republicans have vowed to vote against extending the borrowing cap, and that battle will be joined on other legislation.

Robert Durst takes stand at his trial, denies killing friend

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Robert Durst took the stand at his California murder trial Monday and immediately denied killing his best friend, who prosecutors say was about to reveal to investigators his involvement in the 1982 disappearance of his wife.

"Bob, did you kill Susan Berman?" Durst's attorney Dick DeGuerin said to open the testimony of the 78-year-old New York real estate heir.

"No," Durst answered.

"Do you know who did?" DeGuerin asked.

"No, I do not," answered Durst, who struggled to hear, strained to speak and appeared extremely frail as he sat in a wheelchair instead of a witness chair.

Berman was shot in the back of the head and killed in 2000 in her Los Angeles home. She had been Durst's best friend for decades and acted as his de facto spokesman after the disappearance of his wife, Kathie, who was later declared dead, though no body was found.

Durst was arrested on a warrant in Berman's killing in New Orleans in 2015 on the eve of the airing of the final episode of "The Jinx," the HBO documentary series about him in which Durst made several seemingly damning statements.

As he said he would when the trial began in Los Angeles Superior Court more than a year ago — before the coronavirus forced a long delay — DeGuerin went through with the risky move of calling a murder defendant to testify. He did the same at Durst's 2003 Texas trial, when the wealthy heir was acquitted.

After asking him bluntly whether he had killed Berman, DeGuerin backtracked to the beginning of Durst's life.

Durst's mother died when he was 7 years old, either jumping or falling from the top of their home.

Durst testified that his grandfather woke him in the middle of the night to look at "mommy on the roof" just before her death.

Durst said his father, real estate magnate Seymour Durst, was determined to remain in the family home, no matter the trauma it caused him.

"I kept begging my father to move," Durst said, "but he never sold the house where his wife died."

Durst said he did all he could to get away after that.

"I ran away from everywhere."

While he is charged with just one killing, prosecutors have been allowed to present evidence from the Texas case. There, Durst testified that his Galveston neighbor Morris Black was killed in a struggle after entering his home with a gun. From the stand, Durst described chopping up and disposing of the body, but the jury found him not guilty of murder.

Prosecutors have also been allowed to present evidence that Durst killed his wife. He has never been charged in her disappearance, and has denied having anything to do with it.

He spent much of Monday's testimony describing the happy early years of their marriage after meeting her when she worked at a dentist's office just out of high school.

"Kathie was ecstatic. I was ecstatic. We were both very much in love," Durst said of their wedding day, his 30th birthday, in 1973, calling a light-brown suit shown in a photo "my hippie uniform."

Eschewing the family business, he and Kathie instead opened a small general store in Vermont that sold health food and other supplies.

"You could have any kind of toothpaste you wanted, as long as it was Colgate," Durst said.

The store was called, he testified, "All Good Things." The name was used as the title of a film based on the couple's life, with Ryan Gosling playing Durst and Kirsten Dunst playing Kathie. Clips from the 2010 movie have been played during the trial.

Durst also described meeting Berman, a mobster's daughter who grew up in Las Vegas, when both were in graduate school at the University of California, Los Angeles in the 1960s. He said the two struck up a close, decades-long friendship.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 39 of 56

"We both had trust funds," Durst said.

The questioning had not yet addressed Kathie Durst's disappearance or the details of Berman's death when court ended for the day. Durst is set return to the stand Wednesday.

Durst, who has bladder cancer and several other ailments that he listed from the stand, wore the brown jail attire he's had on in court for the past few weeks of the trial. His attorneys said he's been unable to stand to put on a suit.

He struggled to hear both the clerk when he was sworn in and DeGuerin as he asked questions, using a tablet that showed a live transcription to help him understand.

Infrastructure on track as bipartisan Senate coalition grows

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — After weeks of fits, starts and delays, the Senate is on track to give final approval to the \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure plan, with a growing coalition of Democrats and Republicans prepared to lift the first phase of President Joe Biden's rebuilding agenda to passage.

Final Senate votes are expected around 11 a.m. EDT Tuesday, and the bill would then go to the House.

All told, some 70 senators appear poised to carry the bipartisan package to passage, a potentially robust tally of lawmakers eager to tap the billions in new spending for their states and to show voters back home they can deliver.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said it's "the first time the Senate has come together around such a package in decades."

After that, the Senate will immediately launch votes on Biden's next package — the \$3.5 trillion plan that is a more strictly Democratic undertaking — beginning a debate that will extend into fall.

For now, on the the often elusive political center is holding steady on the bipartisan plan, a rare partnership with Biden's White House.

On the left, the Democrats have withstood the complaints of liberals who say the proposal falls short of what's needed to provide a down payment on one of the president's top priorities.

From the right, the Republicans are largely ignoring the criticism from their most conservative and far-flung voices, including a barrage of name-calling from former President Donald Trump as he tries to derail the package.

Together, a sizable number of business, farm and labor groups back the package, which proposes nearly \$550 billion in new spending on what are typically mainstays of federal spending — roads, bridges, broadband internet, water pipes and other public works systems that cities and states often cannot afford on their own.

"This has been a different sort of process," said Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio, the lead Republican negotiator of the group of 10 senators who drafted the package.

Portman, a former White House budget director for George W. Bush, said the investments being made have been talked about for years, yet never seem to get done.

He said, "We'll be getting it right for the American people."

The top Democratic negotiator, Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, said she was trying to follow the example of fellow Arizonan John McCain to "reach bipartisan agreements that try to bring the country together."

Still, not all senators are on board, Despite the momentum, action ground to a halt over the weekend when Sen. Bill Hagerty, a Tennessee Republican allied with Trump, refused to speed up the process.

Other Republican senators objected to the size, scope and financing of the package, particularly concerned after the Congressional Budget Office said it would add \$256 billion to deficits over the decade.

Two Republicans, Sens. Jerry Moran of Kansas and Todd Young of Indiana, had been part of initial negotiations shaping the package but ultimately announced they could not support it.

Rather than pressure lawmakers, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky has stayed behind the scenes for much of the bipartisan work. He has cast his own votes repeatedly to allow the bill to progress, calling the bill a compromise.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 40 of 56

Trump called Hagerty, who had been his ambassador to Japan, on Sunday and the senator argued for taking more time for debate and amendments, in part because he wants to slow the march toward Biden's second phase, the \$3.5 trillion bill that Republicans fully oppose.

The outline for the bigger \$3.5 trillion package is on deck next in the Senate — a more liberal undertaking of child care, elder care and other programs that expected to draw only Democratic support. Senators are expected Tuesday to launch a lengthy session to consider amendments to the blueprint, the start of a months-long debate on the package.

Unlike Biden's bigger \$3.5 trillion package, which would be paid for by higher tax rates for corporations and the wealthy, the bipartisan package is to be funded by repurposing other money, and with other spending cuts and revenue streams. The bill's backers argue that the budget office's analysis was unable to take into account certain revenue streams — including from future economic growth.

Senators have spent the past week processing nearly two dozen amendments to the 2,700-page package, but so far none has substantially changed its framework.

One remaining issue, over tax compliance for cryptocurrency brokers, appeared close to being resolved after senators announced they had worked with the Treasury Department to clarify the intent.

But an effort to quickly adopt the cryptocurrency compromise was derailed by senators who wanted their own amendments, including one to add \$50 billion for shipbuilding and other defense infrastructure. It's unclear if any further amendments will be adopted.

The House is expected to consider both Biden infrastructure packages when it returns from recess in September.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has said the two bills will be considered together, but on Monday a bipartisan group of centrist lawmakers urged her to bring their smaller plan forward quickly, raising concerns about the bigger bill, in a sign of the complicated politics ahead.

"This once-in-a-century investment deserves its own consideration," wrote Reps. Josh Gottheimer, D-N.J., Jared Golden, D-Maine, and others in a letter obtained by The Associated Press. "We cannot afford unnecessary delays."

Ex-Cuomo aide details groping as lawmakers meet in private

By MARINA VILLENEUVE and KAREN MATTHEWS Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Lawmakers took another early step toward Gov. Andrew Cuomo's possible impeachment Monday, hours after an aide who accused him of groping her said in her first televised interview that she initially remained anonymous for fear the governor's "enablers" would destroy her.

Brittany Commisso, an executive assistant on Cuomo's staff, detailed her interactions with the Democrat in a joint interview with CBS and The Times Union of Albany that was broadcast Monday as a key New York legislative committee met behind closed doors to discuss potential impeachment hearings.

Commisso has spoken out before, first in an anonymous interview with the Times Union last winter, and then as one of 11 women who said they were sexually harassed by Cuomo whose allegations were detailed in a report by the state attorney general's office last week, which did not name her. She was also the first woman to file a criminal complaint against Cuomo, giving a report to the county sheriff Thursday.

Until now, the public hasn't heard her tell her own story.

"I was afraid that if I had to come forward and revealed my name, that the governor and his enablers, I like to call them, would viciously attack me, would smear my name, as I had seen and heard them do before to people," said Commisso, now 32.

She said she also wanted to protect her daughter, but now feels speaking out shows her that "she has a voice."

"I never want her to be afraid to speak," Commisso said. "I never want her to be afraid of any person in power, a man or a woman."

The interview aired as Cuomo faced another day under fire.

The Assembly's judiciary committee met to discuss how to wrap up an ongoing probe of Cuomo's conduct

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 41 of 56

with women, and of other matters, including the use of staff to help with his \$5 million book deal and his administration's decision to withhold full statistics on COVID-19 deaths in nursing homes from the public.

Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie said he understands demands for his fellow Democrat's immediate ouster. But Heastie said the public shouldn't expect an impeachment vote in coming days, because he wants lawmakers to finish going through piles of evidence to consider whether there's enough to impeach Cuomo over a variety of issues.

"I think it's been very, very, very clear by this Assembly Majority that there's no confidence in the governor remaining in office," Heastie said.

The judiciary committee, which has given Cuomo until Friday to respond to the allegations, will continue to meet in private through at least Aug. 23 to discuss hundreds of thousands of pages of documents and other evidence. Lawmakers plan to have public hearings featuring testimony from experts on sexual harassment and on impeachment procedures, though it's unclear whether they would call any of the women or other witnesses to testify.

Any vote to start an impeachment trial would lead to Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul serving as acting governor and trigger a 30-day period for Cuomo to respond.

Committee Chair Chuck Lavine, a Democrat, said the committee wanted to make sure any articles of impeachment were "airtight."

"I anticipate the governor and his attorneys will challenge everything," he said.

Heastie, meanwhile, sought to tamp down speculation that a delay could give Cuomo an opportunity to negotiate a more graceful exit from office, perhaps by offering not to run for reelection.

"I am not negotiating any deals," he said.

Scores of Democrats, including President Joe Biden, have urged Cuomo to leave office. About two-thirds of state Assembly members have said they favor an impeachment trial if he refuses to resign, according to an Associated Press count. Only a simple majority vote is needed to begin an impeachment trial.

Cuomo will be going into the fight without his former top aide, Melissa DeRosa, who resigned late Sunday, saying the past two years had been "emotionally and mentally trying."

The report made public by state Attorney General Letitia James said DeRosa played a lead role in trying to protect Cuomo from harassment claims.

Among other things, it said she was involved in giving reporters personnel memos about Lindsey Boylan, the first woman to accuse him publicly of harassment. The records described Boylan's exit from the administration amid allegations that she'd mistreated her own staff.

In her interview on CBS, Commisso said Cuomo groped her for the first time on Dec. 31, 2019, when the governor suggested the two take a selfie together.

"He was to my left. I was on the right. With my right hand, I took the selfie. I then felt while taking the selfie, his hand go down my back onto my butt, and he started rubbing it. Not sliding it. Not, you know, quickly brushing over it — rubbing my butt."

Commisso, who began working in the governor's office in 2017, said this made her so nervous that her hands began to shake, making it difficult for her to even take the picture.

"I was embarrassed," she said.

Commisso said Cuomo groped her a second time at the governor's mansion in November 2020.

After shutting the door, "He came back to me and that's when he put his hand up my blouse and cupped my breast over my bra," she said. "I exactly remember looking down, seeing his hand, which is a large hand, thinking to myself, 'Oh, my God. This is happening.'"

Cuomo has repeatedly denied that the episode took place.

In an interview with the attorney general's investigators, he said, "I would have to lose my mind to do such a thing" to a woman he hardly knew, with multiple staff members around.

The Associated Press does not generally identify alleged victims of sexual misconduct unless they decide to speak out publicly, as Commisso has done.

Cuomo's lawyers have attacked the attorney general's investigation as biased in favor of his female

accto thusers.

"Everyone's pushing the governor to resign based on a report that has not been vetted and that people are taking to be 100% true," Cuomo attorney Rita Glavin said Monday evening on CNN, an interview in which she questioned Comisso's motives without evidence or specifics.

Advisers close to Cuomo don't expect him to give up, even as his circle of allies willing to speak up for him in public shrinks. But even once-loyal Democratic allies say they don't see him surviving.

"Just politically, this is the Titanic. It's just not going to float again," said state Democratic Party Chair Jay Jacobs.

At least five district attorneys have asked for materials from the attorney general's inquiry to see if any of the allegations could result in criminal charges. Albany County Sheriff Craig Apple said Saturday that Cuomo could face misdemeanor charges if investigators substantiate Comisso's complaint.

COVID vaccines to be required for military under new US plan

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Members of the U.S. military will be required to get the COVID-19 vaccine beginning next month under a plan laid out by the Pentagon Monday and endorsed by President Joe Biden. In memos distributed to all troops, top Pentagon leaders said the vaccine is a necessary step to maintain military readiness.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said the mid-September deadline could be accelerated if the vaccine receives final FDA approval or infection rates continue to rise.

"I will seek the president's approval to make the vaccines mandatory no later than mid-September, or immediately upon" licensure by the Food and Drug Administration "whichever comes first," Austin said in his memo, warning them to prepare for the requirement.

The Pentagon plan provides time for the FDA to give final approval to the Pfizer vaccine, which is expected early next month. Without that formal approval, Austin needs a waiver from Biden to make the shots mandatory, and Biden has already made clear he supports it.

Austin's decision reflects similar moves by governments and companies around the world, as nations struggle with the highly contagious delta variant that has sent new U.S. cases, hospitalizations and deaths surging to heights not seen since last winter. The concerns are especially acute in the military, where service members live and work closely together in barracks and on ships, increasing the risks of rapid spreading. Any large virus outbreak in the military could affect America's ability to defend itself in any security crisis.

Austin warned that if infection rates rise and potentially affect military readiness, "I will not hesitate to act sooner or recommend a different course to the President if I feel the need to do so. To defend this Nation, we need a healthy and ready force."

In a statement Monday, Biden said he strongly supports Austin's message to the force and the plan to add the COVID vaccine "to the list of required vaccinations for our service members not later than mid-September."

Biden said the country is still on a wartime footing and "being vaccinated will enable our service members to stay healthy, to better protect their families, and to ensure that our force is ready to operate anywhere in the world."

Austin's memo, which went out Monday, was followed quickly by one from Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"The Secretary of Defense intends to mandate vaccinations for all Service members in the coming weeks," said Milley, adding that the military's medical professionals recommended the move. At the bottom of his message, Milley scrawled a handwritten note: "Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is a key force protection and readiness issue."

The decision comes a bit more than a week after Biden told defense officials to develop a plan requiring troops to get shots as part of a broader campaign to increase vaccinations in the federal workforce.

More broadly, the COVID-19 crisis has worsened around the country, with hospitals experiencing deeper

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 43 of 56

strain in unvaccinated areas of the South. Mississippi reported that 35 medical centers are completely out of intensive care unit beds, Arkansas topped its pandemic record for COVID admissions, and the average number of people hospitalized nationwide has returned to levels not seen since February. More patients are being parked in emergency rooms while they wait for beds to open up and the average number of daily deaths is now above 500.

The country is averaging about 108,000 new infections and 700,000 vaccines administered a day.

Austin said the military services will have the next few weeks to prepare, determine how many vaccines they need, and how this mandate will be implemented. The additional time, however, also is a nod to the bitter political divide over the vaccine and the knowledge that making it mandatory will likely trigger opposition from vaccine opponents across state and federal governments, Congress and the American population.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Monday that he believes the military has enough vaccines to meet the requirements. He added, "You can consider this memo not just a warning order to the services but to the troops themselves."

Democratic and Republican leaders of the House Armed Services Committee said vaccines have proven effective.

"Some may try and criticize the Secretary's decision, using anti-vax arguments that are not supported by facts or science to politicize the conversation. These desperate attention seekers must be ignored," said Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Ala., said the vaccine will help protect troops who live in cramped conditions and don't have the option to telework.

Rep. Mark Green, R-Tenn., however, said Austin should not mandate a vaccine that doesn't have full FDA approval. "Wearing our country's uniform does not mean our service members sign away the right to make personal medical decisions," he said.

The decision will add the COVID-19 vaccine to a list of other inoculations that service members are already required to get. Depending on their location, service members can get as many as 17 different vaccines.

Austin's memo also said that in the meantime, the Pentagon will comply with Biden's order for additional restrictions on unvaccinated federal personnel, including masks, social distancing and travel limits.

According to the Pentagon, more than 1 million troops are fully vaccinated and another 237,000 have received one shot. But the military services vary widely in their vaccination rates.

The Navy said that more than 74% of all active duty and reserve sailors have been vaccinated with at least one shot. The Air Force, meanwhile, said that more than 65% of its active duty and 60% reserve forces are at least partially vaccinated, and the number for the Army appears closer to 50%.

Military officials have said the pace of vaccines has been growing across the force, with some units — such as sailors deploying on a warship — seeing nearly 100% of their members get shots. But the totals drop off dramatically, including among the National Guard and Reserve, who are much more difficult to track.

Some unvaccinated troops have said they'd get the shot once it's required, but others are flatly opposed. Once the vaccine is mandated, a refusal could constitute failure to obey an order and may be punishable under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Army guidance, for example, includes counseling soldiers to ensure they understand the purpose of the vaccine and the threat the disease poses. The Army also notes that if a soldier "fails to comply with a lawful order to receive a mandatory vaccine, and does not have an approved exemption, a commander may take appropriate disciplinary action."

Military service officials says the don't have data on the number of troops who have refused other mandated vaccines, such as anthrax, chicken pox or flu shots over the past decade or more. And they weren't able to provide details on the punishments service members received as a result of the refusal.

Officials said they believe few troops have refused other mandated vaccines, and the discipline can vary. Also, service members can seek an exemption from any vaccine — either temporary or permanent — for a variety of reasons including health issues or religious beliefs. Regulations say, for example, that anyone

who had a severe adverse reaction to the vaccine can be exempt, and those who are pregnant or have other conditions can postpone a shot.

Navy officials said last week that there has been only one case of COVID-19 hospitalization among fully vaccinated sailors and Marines. But, the Navy said there have been more than 123 hospitalizations in a similar group of unvaccinated sailors and Marines." It said fewer than 3% of its immunized troops have tested positive for COVID-19.

The other military services did not provide similar data.

EXPLAINER: How do border policies affect US infection rates?

By JUDE JOFFE-BLOCK Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — As the delta variant fuels an increase of COVID-19 cases in the U.S., some of President Joe Biden's critics blame the surge on his border policies, which allow some migrants to enter the country to apply for asylum.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis last week accused Biden of "helping to facilitate" the spread of the coronavirus. Fox News host Sean Hannity referred to migrants causing "the biggest super-spreader event" and incorrectly asserted that none was being tested.

But public health experts say arriving migrants are not driving the rising infections in the U.S. The main culprits are people who refuse to get vaccinated. Furthermore, migrants who are allowed to enter are generally tested for COVID-19 and given hotel rooms to quarantine if they test positive, though federal authorities have not made data available about such cases.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN MIGRANTS ARE STOPPED AT THE BORDER?

It varies, but most single adults are turned away, while unaccompanied children and some families are admitted to pursue asylum claims. This practice is in keeping with the Biden administration's continued use of Title 42, a public health rule adopted by the Trump administration at the start of the pandemic.

In June, the most recent month with available figures, Customs and Border Protection stopped single adults 117,602 times, resulting in 96,704 expulsions, or 82% of the total. Families were stopped 55,805 times at the border in June, with only 8,070 expulsions, or 15%. (Since some people attempt to cross more than once, these numbers refer to stops, not individual people).

Families who are allowed to enter the U.S. to apply for asylum are given dates to appear in immigration court or an appointment with immigration authorities. After they are dropped off in border communities, families typically travel to reunite with relatives, friends or supporters.

Children who arrive without parents are exempt from expulsion. They are typically held for less than a month at emergency shelters until they can be released to relatives or moved to licensed shelters.

ARE MIGRANTS WHO ARE NOT EXPELLED TESTED FOR COVID-19?

Generally, yes. CBP, the agency that first takes migrants into custody, says they are given masks and referred to local health care providers for testing and treatment if they have symptoms.

From there, testing protocols can vary depending on which federal agency is involved. Most single adults and some families are transferred to Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody, where they all take COVID-19 tests.

All new arrivals are separated from the general population for 14 days and isolated if they test positive. Unaccompanied children are also tested before they are transferred to Health and Human Services Department facilities for minors, and then are given ongoing tests.

Some migrant families are released to border communities directly from CBP facilities, and this is where the government's information is less clear. The government says it works with local partners and "appropriate agencies" to test this population and quarantine those who are infected, but it has not clarified if that happens across the board. Often, local governments or nonprofits arrange testing and send those who test positive to isolate in hotels.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 45 of 56

HOW MANY MIGRANTS TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19?

The federal government has not disclosed this data, but in Texas' Rio Grande Valley — the busiest stretch of the border for illegal crossing attempts — local officials recently publicized their own data.

On Aug. 4, local officials in McAllen, Texas, announced that out of nearly 88,000 migrants released by CBP in the city since mid-February, more than 7,000 had tested positive for COVID-19, which is a positivity rate of more than 8%. Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley arranged hotel rooms for those infected. Positive tests became more frequent in recent weeks, surpassing 16% — a rate that county officials said was similar to the local population.

WHAT DO PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS SAY IS FUELING THE INCREASE IN CASES IN THE U.S.?

The key factors behind the recent spike in COVID-19 cases are people in U.S. communities who are unvaccinated and are not following guidance from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention about the highly contagious delta variant, according to public health experts.

At a news conference last week, Dr. Ivan Melendez, who serves as the local health authority in Hidalgo County, Texas, acknowledged that arriving migrants were "part of the problem" but he also said they did not pose any more of a danger than he does. "I have been in seven COVID units today."

He said migrants are not responsible for introducing the virus nor do they have higher infection rates compared with the general population.

"Is it a pandemic of the migrants? No, it is a pandemic of the unvaccinated," Melendez said.

The number of arriving migrants is far too small to be driving the enormous increases in cases across the U.S., said Dr. Joseph McCormick, a physician and former CDC epidemiologist now based at the Brownsville campus of the University of Texas Health Science Center at the Houston School of Public Health.

"Given what we are seeing now across the country, it just doesn't work to try to attribute that to migrants," McCormick said. Furthermore, experts say, the delta variant, which was first identified in India, began circulating in the U.S. before it was in Mexico or other parts of Latin America, where most migrants arrive from.

"So the claim that migrants entering from the southern border brought delta to the U.S. is baseless rhetoric," said Max Hadler, senior policy director for Physicians for Human Rights, in a statement. "Rates are increasing everywhere, in every state in the country. It's not a border issue or a migrant issue, it's a national issue."

As for people who evade the Border Patrol and enter the United States undetected, there is no reason to suspect that they would have higher rates of COVID-19 infection, McCormick said.

HOW DO BORDER COMMUNITIES HANDLE MIGRANTS AS THE DELTA VARIANT SPREADS?

In many places along the border, local governments and nonprofits have a long history assisting migrants coming out of federal custody with food, clothing and travel arrangements. Local officials say the delta variant adds another challenge.

McAllen officials worked with Hidalgo County last week to erect a tent city to quarantine migrants who tested positive for COVID-19 and their family members. In other Texas cities, local leaders have expressed frustration with the governor's approach to the pandemic, which has included for blocking local governments from enacting mask mandates.

Brownsville, Texas, began a program to vaccinate arriving migrants about a month ago and has given shots to more than 860 migrants so far. Similar efforts are happening in other communities that receive migrants, including El Paso and Phoenix.

DOES THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PLAN TO OFFER VACCINES TO MIGRANTS?

DHS denied recent media reports that federal officials are gearing up to offer vaccines to migrants after they are apprehended at the border. However, ICE has begun vaccinating immigrants held in detention.

The government has also started inoculating unaccompanied children who are 12 and older with the Pfizer vaccine.

Time's Up leader resigns after criticism about Cuomo ties

By MARINA VILLENEUVE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The leader of Time's Up, the #MeToo-era organization founded by Hollywood women to fight sexual harassment, resigned under fire Monday for advising Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration behind the scenes in its effort to discredit one of Cuomo's accusers.

Time's Up said in a tweet that it agreed with Roberta Kaplan that stepping down as chair of the group's board of directors was "the right and appropriate thing to do."

A report issued last week by New York's attorney general concluded that Cuomo sexually harassed 11 women. The allegations have thrown the Democrat's career into extreme peril, threatening him with the possibility of both impeachment and criminal charges.

Kaplan, a women's rights advocate who has a law practice of her own, counseled the administration last winter when Cuomo was hit with the first of the harassment allegations, leveled by a former economic development adviser, Lindsey Boylan.

Both Kaplan and Alphonso David, leader of the Human Rights Campaign, were consulted over a letter the Cuomo administration had drafted attacking Boylan's credibility. Kaplan and David agreed to review the letter.

According to the attorney general's report, Kaplan told the administration that with some adjustments, the letter would be fine to send out. David, a former counsel to Cuomo, declined to sign the letter but agreed to contact other people to see if they would. Other advisers, though, said it was a bad idea, and the letter was never widely disseminated.

Kaplan's role in advising the Cuomo administration stunned sexual assault victims and others. Several past backers of Time's Up sent an open letter Monday demanding an investigation, charging that the organization's leaders "align themselves with abusers at the expense of survivors."

"TIME'S UP should be ashamed," the letter said.

Activist Alison Turkos, who organized the letter, said sexual assault victims feel they have been abandoned by purported advocates who were secretly working for the other side.

"How are you telling survivors, 'We're a safe space for you, come to us,' but behind closed doors you are handing abusers a playbook of how to cover up and retaliate against your victims?" asked Turkos, whose letter was signed by dozens of self-described victims, including Cuomo accuser Charlotte Bennett.

In her resignation letter, Kaplan said she had "reluctantly come to the conclusion that an active law practice is no longer compatible" with serving on the Time's Up board.

She added: "Unfortunately, recent events have made it clear that even our apparent allies in the fight to advance women can turn out to be abusers" — a reference to Cuomo's public support of the #MeToo movement, which included his signing of sweeping new protections in 2019 against sexual harassment.

In addition to advising the Cuomo administration, Kaplan had more recently done legal work representing Melissa DeRosa, a top aide to Cuomo who resigned Sunday after the attorney general's report portrayed her as playing a central role in the effort to retaliate against Boylan.

Meanwhile, the Human Rights Campaign said it is launching an investigation of the "appropriateness" of David's actions.

David, in a statement Monday, said he welcomed that review amid what he called "multiple inaccuracies (that) have been circulating." He said he only learned of the governor's alleged misconduct from the Attorney General's report, and said he neither signed nor circulated the letter. He did acknowledge turning over "an electric copy of a counseling memo regarding a state employee" after he left government, but said he was legally obligated to do so.

"I have called for his resignation and reiterate that call today," he said of Cuomo.

Kaplan in 2018 co-founded Time's Up Legal Defense Fund, which helps women who have been subjected

to sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

She successfully represented Edith Windsor before the U.S. Supreme Court in 2013, winning the case that struck down laws against gay marriage across the U.S. She later published a book about the case, "Then Comes Marriage."

Kaplan also represents writer E. Jean Carroll, who filed a defamation lawsuit against Donald Trump in 2019 related to her claim that the former president raped her in a department store dressing room in the 1990s. Trump has denied Carroll's allegations.

Carroll supported Kaplan in a tweet Monday.

"Robbie Kaplan is my attorney and will always be my attorney. She over-turned DOMA which ushered in Gay Rights. She's fighting the Nazi's in Charlottesville. She is leading the battle for gender equality in women's sports. She is the best lawyer in America!!" she wrote.

Will gyms go the way of arcades and movie rental stores?

By JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

TOLEDO, Ohio (AP) — Going to the gym was always part of Kari Hamra's routine until last year's government-ordered shutdowns forced her to replace the workouts with daily rides on her Peloton stationary bike.

That's when she discovered something surprising — she did not miss the gym. At least not the driving back and forth, filling water bottles, changing clothes and most of all, taking time away from her husband and two boys.

Now that her gym in Springfield, Missouri, is open again, she's slowly returning. But finding a more convenient exercise schedule at home and seeing a surge of COVID-19 cases in her hometown this summer have her questioning how much she needs the gym. She figures that if there never had been a coronavirus outbreak "I would still be a gym rat."

The pandemic has reshaped how Americans exercise and upended the fitness industry, accelerating the growth of a new era of high-tech home workout equipment and virtual classes.

Thousands of small fitness centers and studios that were forced to close a year ago now are gone for good. Others are struggling to stay afloat and have redesigned their spaces, turned toward more personal workouts and added online training.

The question is can they survive the onslaught from the apps and pricey bikes and treadmills or will they go the way of arcades, video rental shops and bookstores.

Interactive fitness equipment maker Peloton is betting the workout-from-home trend is here to stay. It's breaking ground Monday on its first U.S. factory just outside Toledo, Ohio, where it plans to begin production in 2023 and employ 2,000 workers.

Demand surged so much during the pandemic that some Peloton customers had to wait months for their bikes. While the company said the backlog has waned, it reported that sales have continued to soar, up 141% in the first three months of this year.

Company founder and CEO John Foley thinks it's inevitable that technology-driven home fitness will become dominant much like how streaming services have changed movie watching, calling the idea of going to a gym "a broken model of yesteryear."

Its next steps include bringing more of its equipment into gyms at hotels, apartment complexes, and college campuses and launching new workouts through its app. Late last year, it acquired Precor, a company with manufacturing and product development sites in the U.S.

"Fitness is one of the few remaining categories that is going to be massively disrupted by a digital experience," Foley told The Associated Press.

During the early months of the pandemic, most small and independent gyms and studios turned to Zoom and other video platforms for yoga and Pilates classes and training sessions because it was the only way they could connect with their members.

"Now there's an expectation for it," said Michael Stack, CEO of Applied Fitness Solutions, which has three fitness centers in southeast Michigan.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 48 of 56

Small gyms can't match the production quality and visual appeal of the high-tech companies, but they can counter with online offerings that feature personal attention and closer relationships between their members and staff, he said.

"I think that's the way we even the playing field," Stack said.

Not all gym operators are convinced virtual training will play a significant role in what they offer.

"We don't have the budget to do it at the same price and the same quality," said Jeff Sanders, CEO of Apex Athletic Health Club in Penfield, New York. "Digital is great, but we've seen surveys that show people want to stay active, but miss the interaction and being around others."

His company is planning to open a third, smaller location near Orlando, Florida, that offers a more intimate experience. Those type of boutique studios could be the wave of the future, he said.

The pandemic has changed how the fitness industry evaluates itself and right now "everyone's making decisions just to survive," Sanders said.

Roughly 9,000 health clubs — 22% of the total nationwide — have closed since the beginning of the virus outbreak and 1.5 million workers lost their jobs, according to the International Health Racquet & Sportsclub Association.

The industry group is lobbying Congress to approve a \$30 billion relief fund for the fitness industry because many clubs are struggling to recover from months of lost revenue and membership declines and still owe back rent.

While more closings are likely this year and could number in the thousands without government help, the emergence of the workout-from-home trend won't spell doom for the fitness centers, said Helen Durkin, the association's executive vice president of public policy.

Plenty of exercise fanatics, she said, will still do both — 40% of Peloton users have gym memberships, according to the company.

There's no doubt digital fitness is here to stay, said Michelle Segar, director of the University of Michigan's Sport, Health and Activity Research and Policy Center.

"People are integrating their lives with technology. This is where society is, and it's just going to get more integrated," she said.

The biggest positives with the virtual training sessions are that they offer more flexibility when it comes to staying with workout routines and can draw more people into fitness, including those who can't follow a rigid schedule.

"That's why people don't stick with it," she said.

Cindy Cicchinelli, who's become a dedicated Peloton user after going to her gym in Pittsburgh for years, said the convenience is what has sold her.

"I can roll out of bed and not worry about running to the gym," she said. "And I don't have to add an extra half-hour for my commute."

Fitness industry leaders say research has shown that health clubs pose no more risk of spreading the virus than other public spaces. But San Francisco gym owner Dave Karraker thinks it will be a long time before many people are comfortable going into a big, tightly packed fitness center.

"They are going to be thinking about ventilation and air purifiers and how long ago was this equipment sanitized," he said.

He reconfigured MX3 Fitness's two small studios and created personal workout spaces. It has become so popular he's looking for a third location.

He's not surprised that people are coming back even though safety remains a concern.

"They don't want to live this solitary existence anymore," he said. "There's all kinds of motivations. Let's face facts, gyms are great ways to meet new people, especially if you're single."

"Unprecedented': Massive forest fire ravages Greek island

By ILIANA MIER and ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

ARKITSA, Greece (AP) — Firefighters and residents battled into the night Monday for a seventh day

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 49 of 56

against a massive fire on Greece's second-largest island as the nation endured what the prime minister described as "a natural disaster of unprecedented proportions."

Smoke and ash from Evia, a rugged island of forests and coves close to the Greek mainland, blocked out the sun and turned the sky orange. The fire, which began Aug. 3, is the most severe of hundreds in the past week across Greece, gobbling up pristine pine forests as well as homes and businesses and forcing hundreds to quickly evacuate by sea to save their lives.

Greece has been baked by its worst heat wave in three decades, which sent temperatures up to 45 degrees Celsius (113 Fahrenheit) and turned its prized pine forests into bone-dry tinderboxes.

In a televised nationwide address, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said the destruction in Evia and elsewhere "blackens everyone's hearts" and pledged compensation for all affected, as well as a huge reforestation and regeneration effort. He also apologized for "any weaknesses" shown in addressing the emergency, a nod to criticism from some residents and officials who said Greece's firefighting efforts and equipment were woefully inadequate.

"These last few days have been among the hardest for our country in decades," Mitsotakis said. "We are dealing with a natural disaster of unprecedented dimensions."

With roads on the island cut off by the flames, residents and tourists fled to Evia's beaches and jetties to be ferried to safety by a flotilla of ferries and boats.

"We were completely forsaken. There were no fire brigades, there were no vehicles, nothing!" David Angelou, who had been in the seaside village of Pefki, said Sunday night after leaving by ferry to the mainland.

"You could feel the enormous heat, there was also a lot of smoke. You could see the sun, a red ball, and then, nothing else around," he said.

Mitsotakis said Monday he "fully understands" the pain of those who lost homes or property, and the anger of those seeking airborne assistance "without knowing whether the firefighting aircraft were operating elsewhere or whether conditions made it impossible for them to fly."

But he urged Greeks to reflect "not only on what was lost but also on what was saved in such an unprecedented natural disaster."

Other big wildfires were still burning Monday in Greece's southern Peloponnese region. Over the past week, hundreds of homes and businesses have been destroyed or damaged, and at least 40,000 hectares (nearly 100,000 acres) have been burned. Power cuts on Monday affected at least 17,000 households.

The causes of the blazes are as yet undetermined, though several people have been arrested for alleged arson. Greece's top prosecutor has ordered an investigation into whether the high number of fires could be linked to criminal activity.

More than 20 countries in Europe and the Mideast have responded to Greece's call for help, sending planes, helicopters, vehicles and manpower.

On Monday, Greece's Foreign Ministry tweeted that neighboring Turkey — Greece's historic regional rival — will be sending two firefighting planes because a top envoy said Turkey's wildfires "are now under control." The ministry also said Russia would be sending two firefighting planes and two helicopters.

Greek authorities, scarred by a deadly wildfire in 2018 near Athens that killed more than 100 people, have emphasized saving lives, issuing dozens of evacuation orders. The coast guard said 2,770 people had been evacuated by sea across the country between July 31 and Aug. 8.

Some residents ignored the orders to try to save their villages, spraying homes with garden hoses and digging mini firebreaks.

"The villagers themselves, with the firefighters, are doing what they can to save their own and neighboring villages," said Yiannis Katsikoyiannis, a volunteer from Crete who came to Evia to help his father save his horse farm near Avgaria.

"If they had evacuated their villages, as the civil protection told them to, everything would have been burnt down — perhaps even two days sooner," he said. "Of course, they never saw any water-dropping aircraft. And of course now the conditions are wrong for them to fly, due to the smoke."

On Monday, the flames raced across northern Evia, threatening yet more villages even as 600 firefighters struggled to tame the inferno, aided by emergency teams from Ukraine, Romania and Serbia, 5 helicopters

and 5 water-dropping planes.

One Greek volunteer firefighter died near Athens last week while four more were in the hospital Monday, two in critical condition with extensive burns.

Wildfires were also burning in southern Italy, North Macedonia and Montenegro, where a large fire in the Malo Brdo district of the capital Podgorica was coming close to houses on Monday.

In Italy, authorities urged the public to be careful with fire amid a heat wave forecast for this week, when many Italians take summer vacations. Firefighters for weeks have been battling blazes in Sardinia, Sicily and Calabria, and two have died.

"We have faced very difficult and dramatic days fighting fires, and the temperatures that are forecast require the utmost attention," said Fabrizio Curcio, head of Italy's Civil Protection agency. "We are asking the maximum collaboration and caution from citizens ... to avoid any behavior that can set off a fire and report immediately the smallest blaze."

In North Macedonia, dozens of wildfires followed the worst heat wave in decades. At least eight were still burning Monday, mostly in remote areas where only helicopters and planes could be deployed. Thousands of acres of forest have been destroyed and authorities have arrested five suspected arsonists.

France's virus pass now required in restaurants, trains

By SYLVIE CORBET undefined

PARIS (AP) — France took a big step Monday into a post-pandemic future by requiring people to show a QR code proving they have a special virus pass before they can enjoy restaurants and cafes or travel by plane, train or bus across the country.

The measure is part of a government plan to encourage more people to get a COVID-19 vaccine shot and slow down a surge in infections, as the highly contagious delta variant now accounts for most cases in France. Over 36 million people in France, or more than 54% of the population, are fully vaccinated.

The special pass is issued to people who are vaccinated against COVID-19, or have proof of a recent recovery from the virus or who have a recent negative test. The measure also applies to tourists visiting the country.

In the southern city of Marseille, several restaurant owners did not check clients for the pass, an Associated Press reporter saw Monday. Many in the entertainment business are annoyed that the government is foisting such a job on them.

The owner of the Backstage restaurant and bar in a theater district on Paris' Left Bank said the checks made him feel like a police officer but he still followed government orders.

"This involves putting on another cap," said Pierre Arnoux. "We have to ask the client if — yes or no — they are validated to have a drink at my restaurant. This is rather unusual. I must admit this isn't for me."

Arnoux said the crowd was light on Monday and clients were cooperative but the requirement was onerous.

One client, Myriam Karmasine, said she was prepared and it "posed no problem," and another, Sonia Hamiche, said she was not bothered, either.

"But I've observed that there are less people outside today compared to normal on the streets and on the terraces," Hamiche said. "I think this must have stopped certain people."

People without a pass where it is required risk a fine of 135 euros (\$158). The French government said for the first week of implementation, police controls will not lead to sanctions for non-compliance but instead will be an occasion to explain the law.

In hospitals, visitors and patients who have appointments are required to have the pass. Exceptions are made for people at the emergency ward.

The pass is now required on high-speed, intercity and night trains, which carry over 400,000 passengers per day in France, Transport Minister Jean-Baptiste Djebbari said Monday. It is also required on long-distance travels by plane or bus.

"We're going to enforce massive controls," Djebbari said.

Meanwhile, the Paris Saint-Germain soccer club will be allowed a capacity crowd for its first home game

of the season against Strasbourg in the French league on Saturday. PSG said the Paris prefecture has approved 49,700 fans at Parc des Princes stadium, with spectators expected to show their virus passes.

Polls show that most French support the health pass. Since President Emmanuel Macron announced the measure on July 12, at least 7 million people have received their first vaccine shot.

Yet the measure has prompted strong opposition from some people who say it compromises their freedoms by limiting movements outside the home. On Saturday, thousands of demonstrators marched in Paris and other French cities for a fourth consecutive week of protests against the measure.

The virus pass has already been in place for last month for cultural and recreational venues including cinemas, concert halls, sports arenas and theme parks.

The law also requires French health care workers to be vaccinated against the virus by Sept. 15.

Michigan police cuff Black real estate agent, client at home

WYOMING, Mich. (AP) —

Police in west Michigan handcuffed a real estate agent, his client and that man's 15-year-old son after a neighbor wrongly reported that the three Black people were breaking into a home.

The agent, Eric Brown, told WOOD-TV that the police response Aug. 1 in Wyoming, including two out of five officers who drew their guns, felt aggressive and "threw me back."

"I feel pretty anxious, or nervous or maybe even a little bit scared about what do I do to protect myself if I'm going to show a home and the authorities just get called on a whim like that," Brown said. "Am I just automatically the criminal? Because that's pretty much how we were treated in that situation."

The Wyoming Police Department defended the officers' actions and said they followed protocol for responding to a reported home invasion. The department said in a statement that Chief Kimberly Koster reached out to the three offering to meet with them and any other family members.

Roy Thorne, Brown's client, called the experience in the Grand Rapids suburb "traumatizing" for him and his son.

The department released body camera footage that shows officers handcuffing them. One officer had his weapon out and pointed it at Thorne as he left the home in response to police commands.

Thorne said that officer apologized, "but at the same time, the damage is done."

"My son was a little disturbed, he hasn't seen anything like that ... he's not going to forget this," he said.

The footage also shows police put Thorne in the backseat of a squad car with the door open after handcuffing him.

"Definitely not buying this place," Thorne says on the video, after explaining that he was visiting the home with his real estate agent.

Brown used his cellphone to show police that he scheduled an appointment online to take Thorne to the house and had an access code to get inside. Thorne's son was put in the backseat of another squad car briefly before the officer accompanying him was told to uncuff the teenager.

Another Black man with a similar car to the real estate agent's vehicle was arrested after he went into the house without permission July 24, police said. That person also told police that he was interested in purchasing the house but was not with a real estate agent and didn't have the homeowner's permission to go inside.

A neighbor saw Brown's car parked in front of the house on Aug. 1 and called police, wrongly reporting that the intruder had returned, the statement said. Brown's car is the same color as that first person's but a different make and model.

"Somebody dropped the ball somewhere," one of the officers can be heard saying to another after Brown and Thorne explained why they were at the house.

Belarus leader denies repression a year after disputed vote

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 52 of 56

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Belarus' authoritarian leader on Monday denied that his government unleashed massive repression of dissent after his re-election a year ago triggered a monthslong wave of mass protests, even as his law enforcement officials admitted receiving nearly 5,000 complaints about beatings and torture.

President Alexander Lukashenko's remarks came during an epic eight-hour press conference on the anniversary of the vote that handed him a sixth term but was denounced by the opposition and the West as rigged.

The event, during which Lukashenko lashed out at Western journalists while some Belarusian reporters and bloggers emotionally defended his government's actions, came as Belarus faces growing pressure from the West over its treatment of government critics.

Lukashenko asserted that the Aug. 9, 2020 presidential election was carried out in "total transparency" and that the opposition "who called for bashing the authorities (were preparing) for a coup."

Belarus was shaken by the protests, the largest of which drew up to 200,000 people. Authorities responded with a crackdown 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.

He has vaguely promised to step down after Belarus adopts a new constitution but kept quiet about when it might happen. On Monday, Lukashenko said it would happen "very soon."

The authorities have ramped up their crackdown in recent months, targeting independent journalists and democracy activists with raids and arrests and even diverting a plane to the capital of Minsk and arresting a dissident aboard.

A total of 29 journalists are behind bars, awaiting trials or serving their sentences. More than 100 non-governmental organizations are facing closure.

On Monday evening, Belarus' Supreme Court ruled to formally dissolve the Belarusian PEN Center, an association of writers led by Svetlana Alexievich, the winner of the 2015 Nobel Prize in literature and member of the opposition's Coordination Council.

Lukashenko on Monday denied that there was any repression in Belarus, adding: "To unleash repressions in Belarus is (the same as) to shoot myself. I know it well and I will never cross that line."

Several hours later, however, pressed by foreign journalists about numerous reports of beatings and torture used against peaceful demonstrators, the president acknowledged that some may have "gotten it" from law enforcement but said that was only because they "came to the barricades with knives and blades."

The head of Belarus' Investigative Committee, Dmitry Gora, told the press conference that law enforcement received nearly 5,000 complaints about beatings and torture, but Lukashenko dismissed them as not based on facts.

The pressure on dissent in Belarus has elicited international outrage, and the U.S. and European Union have slapped Belarus with sanctions that target top government officials and key sectors of the country's economy.

In response, Lukashenko has said his country will not try to stem a flow of illegal migrants to neighboring EU nations. Lithuania has faced a surge of mostly Iraqi migrants it has blamed on Lukashenko's government.

On Monday, the president also threatened to stop cooperating with the U.S. in the fight against the smuggling of radioactive materials if the sanctions continue.

"Who needs some dirty explosives going to the European Union?" Lukashenko said. "We're not blackmailing, we're not threatening, we're forced to react."

Last week, Belarus once again drew international attention. At the Tokyo Games, a Belarusian Olympic sprinter accused the country's officials of trying to force her onto a plane back to Belarus after she publicly criticized the management of her team. Krystsina Tsimanouskaya refused to board the plane and has sought refuge in Poland.

In his first comment on her case, Lukashenko accused the sprinter of being a foreign stooge, saying "she wouldn't have done it herself if she hadn't been manipulated."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 53 of 56

Around the same time, a Belarusian activist who ran a group in Ukraine helping Belarusians fleeing persecution was found hanged in Kyiv. His allies allege that Belarus' authorities were behind his death.

Lukashenko brushed off the accusations and demanded that Ukraine investigate Vitaly Shishov's death. "It needs to be figured out. But if you've accused us, (put) facts on the table. Facts on the table!" he said.

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Lukashenko's top challenger in last year's election, left Belarus under government pressure and is now in exile in Lithuania. She said Monday that "the regime" in Minsk had turned into a "terrorist one" and urged Western nations to impose more sanctions on Lukashenko's government.

Speaking during a joint briefing with Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis, Tsikhanouskaya said her team is working on "bringing closer an international tribunal over the regime's crimes."

Landsbergis said the international community should not recognize any international agreements signed by the "illegal president" Lukashenko.

The U.K. on Monday announced tightened economic sanctions against Belarus. New sanctions were also announced by U.S. President Joe Biden and the government of Canada.

Other Western officials marked the anniversary of the election with messages of support for the people of Belarus.

European Council President Charles Michel tweeted that the EU "stands firmly" with Belarus and "will continue to do so." U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Twitter that Washington holds "Lukashenko's regime to account with new tools and the most robust sanctions package to date."

Valery Karbalevich, an independent Belarusian political analyst, told The Associated Press that Lukashenko has managed to stay in power despite the unrest at a steep price, as "Western sanctions lead to impoverishment of Belarusians and undermine the tacit social contract between the authorities and the society."

Karbalevich believes the media show Monday may not convince ordinary Belarusians, whose living conditions are worsening.

"This poorly directed eight-hour show may have the opposite effect — the louder (pro-government reporters) declare their love and loyalty to Lukashenko, the more questions Belarusians have," Karbalevich said.

Taliban press on, take 2 more Afghan provincial capitals

By RAHIM FAIEZ Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The Taliban took control of two more provincial capitals in Afghanistan on Monday, officials said. Their fall marked the latest development in a weeklong, relentless Taliban offensive as American and NATO forces finalize their pullout from the war-torn country.

The militants have ramped up their push across much of Afghanistan, turning their guns on provincial capitals after taking large swaths of land in the mostly rural countryside. On Monday they controlled five of the country's 34 provincial capitals. At the same time, they have been waging an assassination campaign targeting senior government officials in the capital, Kabul.

The sweep comes despite condemnations by the international community and warnings from the United Nations that a military victory and takeover by the Taliban would not be recognized. The Taliban have also not heeded appeals to return to the negotiating table and continue long-stalled peace talks with the Afghan government.

Two lawmakers from northern Samangan province — Hayatullah Samangani and Mahboba Rahmat — said the provincial capital of Aybak fell to the Taliban on Monday afternoon without resistance. They said government officials fled to another district.

Provincial council member Mohammad Hashim Sarwari said Taliban fighters earlier had captured three districts of the province before overrunning the capital.

Another provincial lawmaker from Samangan, Ziauddin Zia, said some government installations were still under government control as security forces resisted Taliban fighters.

According to Mohammad Noor Rahmani, the council chief of northern Sar-e Pul province, the Taliban overran the provincial capital after over a week of resistance by the Afghan security forces, after which the city of Sar-e Pul collapsed. The government forces have now completely withdrawn from the province, he said.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 54 of 56

Several pro-government local militia commanders also surrendered to the Taliban without a fight, allowing the insurgents to gain control of the entire province, Rahmani added.

The cities of Aybak and Sar-e Pul join three other provincial capitals now fully under Taliban control: Zaranj, the capital of western Nimroz province, the city of Sheberghan, the capital of northern Zawzjan province, and Taleqan, the capital of another northern province with the same name.

The Taliban are also fighting on for control of the city of Kunduz, the capital of northern Kunduz province. On Sunday, they planted their flag in the city's main square, where it was seen flying atop a traffic police booth, a video obtained by The Associated Press showed.

Kunduz's capture would be a significant gain for the Taliban and a test of their ability to take and retain territory in their campaign against the Western-backed government. It is one of the country's larger cities with a population of more than 340,000, and was a key area defended against Taliban takeovers by Western troops over the years.

After billions of dollars spent in aiding, training and shoring up Afghan forces, many are at odds how to explain the surprising Taliban blitz that has threatened — and by now taken — several of the country's 34 provincial capitals.

Rahmani, the council chief in Sar-e Pul, said the provincial capital had been under siege by the militants for weeks, with no reinforcements being sent to the overstretched Afghan forces. A video circulating on social media Monday shows a number of Taliban fighters, standing in front of the Sar-e Pul governor's office and congratulating each other for the victory.

The country-wide Taliban offensive intensified as U.S. and NATO troops began to wrap up their withdrawal from Afghanistan this summer. With Taliban attacks increasing, Afghan security forces and government troops have retaliated with airstrikes aided by the United States. The fighting has also raised growing concerns about civilian casualties.

On Monday, UNICEF said it was shocked by the increasing number of casualties among children amid the escalating violence in Afghanistan. Over the past three days, at least 27 children have been killed in various provinces, including 20 in Kandahar, it said.

"These atrocities are also evidence of the brutal nature and scale of violence in Afghanistan which preys on already vulnerable children," the agency said. It did not identify the side responsible for the killings. UNICEF also raised the alarm over what it said was increased recruitment of children by armed groups.

The Taliban have also taken most of Lashkar Gah, the capital of southern Helmand province, where they took nine of the 10 police districts in the city last week. Heavy fighting there continues, as do U.S. and Afghan government airstrikes, one of which damaged a health clinic and a high school.

Helmand health department chief Sher Ali Shakir said Monday that in the previous 24 hours, seven people were killed and 95 were wounded in the fighting and were transferred to hospitals in the province.

As they rolled through provincial capitals, the Taliban issued an English language statement on Sunday saying that residents, government employees, and security officials had nothing to fear from them.

However, revenge attacks and repressive treatment of women have been reported in areas now under Taliban control.

Meanwhile, hundreds of people displaced by fighting in northern provinces have reached Kabul, where they are living in parks without adequate access to drinking water amid scorching summer temperatures.

"We walked with slippers, didn't have the chance to wear our shoes," said Bibi Ruqia, who left northern Takhar province after a bomb hit her house. "We had to escape, now we are here in a park."

In Kabul on Sunday, unknown gunmen shot dead a journalist and a colleague, said police spokesman Ferdaws Famarz. He said Toofan Omar was also a prosecutor in Paktia province. Omar was traveling from Bagram to Kabul when his car was ambushed.

"It's not clear whether it was the result of a personal dispute or he was killed for being a prosecutor or journalist," Famarz said.

The Taliban in response to a query from The Associated Press said they were investigating the incident.

The Taliban often target government officials and those they perceive as working for the government or foreign forces, though several attacks have been claimed by the Islamic State group.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 55 of 56

London's Tower Bridge stuck open due to a technical fault

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — London's Tower Bridge was stuck with its roadway arms raised Monday afternoon, snarling traffic on both sides of the River Thames.

Images of the 127-year-old drawbridge, one of several spans that connect the northern and southern parts of the British capital, show the two halves of the roadway pointing skyward with vehicles backed up on either side. The bridge remained stuck at 6 p.m., (1700 GMT/1300 EDT) more than three hours after the problems began.

"Due to a technical issue, Tower Bridge is currently stuck in a raised position," the City of London Corp., which owns the bridge, said in a statement. "We are working to resolve the issue as quickly as possible."

The bridge opens about 800 times a year to allow large ships to pass, with the times arranged at least 24 hours in advance.

Tower Bridge was repaired in 2006 after the mechanism became stuck four times the previous year. Malfunctions have been less frequent since then, with the last incident reported on Aug. 22, 2020, when it was stuck for more than an hour.

In May of 1997, U.S. President Bill Clinton was separated from Prime Minister Tony Blair when the bridge opened before his motorcade could cross. In that case there was no technical fault. Just bad timing.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Aug. 10, the 222nd day of 2021. There are 143 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On August 10, 1993, Ruth Bader Ginsburg was sworn in as the second female justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

On this date:

In 1792, during the French Revolution, mobs in Paris attacked the Tuileries (TWEE'-luh-reez) Palace, where King Louis XVI resided. (The king was later arrested, put on trial for treason, and executed.)

In 1821, Missouri became the 24th state.

In 1861, Confederate forces routed Union troops in the Battle of Wilson's Creek in Missouri, the first major engagement of the Civil War west of the Mississippi River.

In 1944, during World War II, American forces overcame remaining Japanese resistance on Guam.

In 1945, a day after the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, Imperial Japan conveyed its willingness to surrender provided the status of Emperor Hirohito remained unchanged. (The Allies responded the next day, saying they would determine the Emperor's future status.)

In 1969, Leno and Rosemary LaBianca were murdered in their Los Angeles home by members of Charles Manson's cult, one day after actor Sharon Tate and four other people were slain.

In 1977, postal employee David Berkowitz was arrested in Yonkers, New York, accused of being "Son of Sam," the gunman who killed six people and wounded seven others in the New York City area. (Berkowitz is serving six consecutive 25-years-to-life sentences.)

In 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed a measure providing \$20,000 payments to still-living Japanese-Americans who were interned by their government during World War II.

In 1991, nine Buddhists were found slain at their temple outside Phoenix, Arizona. (Two teenagers were later arrested; one was sentenced to life in prison, while the other received 281 years.)

In 1995, Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols were charged with 11 counts in the Oklahoma City bombing (McVeigh was convicted of murder and executed; Nichols was convicted of conspiracy and involuntary manslaughter and sentenced to life in prison).

In 2006, British authorities announced they had thwarted a terrorist plot to simultaneously blow up 10

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 034 ~ 56 of 56

aircraft heading to the U.S. using explosives smuggled in hand luggage.

In 2019, Jeffrey Epstein, accused of orchestrating a sex-trafficking ring and sexually abusing dozens of underage girls, was found unresponsive in his cell at a New York City jail; he was later pronounced dead at a hospital. (The city's medical examiner ruled the death a suicide by hanging.)

Ten years ago: Marine Corps Gen. John Allen, the top American commander in Afghanistan, said international forces had slain the Taliban insurgents responsible for shooting down a U.S. helicopter, killing 30 Americans and seven Afghan commandos. Country singer-musician Billy Grammer, 85, died in Benton, Illinois.

Five years ago: During a raucous campaign rally outside Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Republican Donald Trump accused President Barack Obama of being the "founder" of the Islamic State group. (Trump later said he was "being sarcastic" before adding, "but not that sarcastic, to be honest with you.") Lonnie Franklin Jr., the Los Angeles serial killer known as the "Grim Sleeper," was sentenced to death for the murders of nine women and a teenage girl. (Franklin was found dead in his cell on March 20, 2020.) At the Rio Olympics, Katie Ledecky turned in another overpowering performance to carry the United States to victory in the 4x200-meter freestyle relay.

One year ago: According to a tally kept by Johns Hopkins University, the confirmed number of coronavirus cases worldwide had reached 20 million; the number had doubled in a little more than six weeks. Lebanon's prime minister, Hassan Diab, said he and his government were stepping down, nearly a week after a catastrophic explosion in Beirut that triggered public outrage and mass protests. A wind storm packing the power of a Category 3 hurricane swept across the Midwest, damaging farms and homes; at least four people died in Iowa and Indiana, and hundreds of thousands were left without power.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Ronnie Spector is 78. Actor James Reynolds is 75. Rock singer-musician Ian Anderson (Jethro Tull) is 74. Country musician Gene Johnson (Diamond Rio) is 72. Singer Patti Austin is 71. Actor Daniel Hugh Kelly is 69. Folk singer-songwriter Sam Baker is 67. Actor Rosanna Arquette is 62. Actor Antonio Banderas is 61. Rock musician Jon Farriss (INXS) is 60. Singer Julia Fordham is 59. Journalist-blogger Andrew Sullivan is 58. Actor Chris Caldovino is 58. Singer Neneh Cherry is 57. Singer Aaron Hall is 57. Former boxer Riddick Bowe is 54. Actor Sean Blakemore is 54. R&B singer Lorraine Pearson (Five Star) is 54. Singer-producer Michael Bivins is 53. Actor-writer Justin Theroux is 50. Actor Angie Harmon is 49. Country singer Jennifer Hanson is 48. Actor-turned-lawyer Craig Kirkwood is 47. Actor JoAnna Garcia Swisher is 42. Singer Cary Ann Hearst (Shovels & Rope) is 42. Actor Aaron Staton is 41. Actor Ryan Eggold is 37. Actor Charley Koontz is 34. Actor Lucas Till is 31. Reality TV star Kylie Jenner is 24. Actor Jeremy Maguire is 10.