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## BRIDAL SHOWER

OPEN HOUSE BRIDAL Shower for Melynda Sletten, bride-to-be of Lance Larsen, will be held Sunday, Aug. 29, 2021, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Groton. No RSVP needed. Hosted by aunts of the groom. They are registered at Amazon, Target, Wayfair and Menards Gift Cards.



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

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

## Hubsch is new business/computer teacher

by Dorene Nelson



The Groton School District is getting ready for a new school year with the hiring of five new teachers and one new paraprofessional. Three of the five are filling positions for teachers who retired at the end of last year.

Becky Hubsch is the new middle school / high school business and computer teacher for the Groton Area School District.

"After I graduated from Summit High School, I attended South Dakota State University, receiving a Bachelor's Degree in Education with a minor in business," Hubsch explained. "Following that I earned a Master's

Certificate in non-profit management from the University of South Dakota."

"Prior to accepting employment in the Groton district, I was active in other school districts including Enemy Swim Day School as the Community Education Director and GED instructor. I was also the business manager for the Summit School District," she stated.

"My job here has many parts since I teach computers to sixth and eighth graders, personal finance, business classes for high school students, and assist with the dual credit program," Hubsch listed.

"The dual credit classes provide high school students with high school credit and college credit at the same time. The cost of these dual credit classes is one-third the cost of college tuition."

Becky and her husband live near Bristol, SD, with their two children.

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## Yard of the Week

The Duane and Laura Hinmann yard at 1103 N. Broadway is this week's Yard of the Week. The Yard of the Week is sponsored by the Groton Garden Club. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



## Yard of the Week

The Jason and Tara Hill yard at 907 N. 1st St was chosen as the Yard of the Week for the week of July 25. The Yard of the Week is sponsored by the Groton Garden Club. Pictured are Jason, Hank and Hazel. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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## Yard of the Week

The David and Val McGannon yard at 106 N. Broadway was chosen as the Yard of the Week for the week of August 8. The Yard of the Week is sponsored by the Groton Garden Club. Pictured are Jason, Hank and Hazel. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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## Crude Oil Price Drops \$5/bbl to Lowest Price since May Gas Demand and National Gas Price Average Decline on the Week

August 23, 2021 — Crude oil prices saw a significant decline of \$5/bbl on the week, down to \$62.32/bbl at Friday's close. Prices are declining as market concerns grow that crude demand will decline as coronavirus infections increase across the globe. The downward crude price trend could spell good news for motorists.

### South Dakota Gas Prices

Today \$3.16  
Yesterday \$3.16  
Last week \$3.16  
Last month \$3.09  
Last year \$2.15

"Crude oil prices saw not only a dramatic drop on the week, but the price per barrel is at the cheapest in three months," said Marilyn Buskohl, AAA spokesperson. "If this downward trend continues and less expensive prices are sustained, Americans can expect to see relief at the pump in the near future."

While today's national gas price average (\$3.16) is just two cents cheaper than last Monday, by the end of this week it could be even less. All eyes are on gasoline demand, which has declined for three straight weeks. The Energy Information Administration's (EIA) latest reading puts demand at 9.3 million b/d. That is a healthy pandemic demand reading, but still about 6% below the same week in August 2019. The softer demand readings have pushed gasoline stock levels over 228 million bbl.

"Cheaper crude, softening demand and growing stock levels equal the right combination for cheaper prices at the pump, which many Americans would likely welcome after such an expensive summer," added Buskohl.

At \$3.16, today's national average is 98 cents more than a year ago and 56 cents more than two years ago.

### Quick Stats

The nation's top 10 largest weekly decreases: Ohio (-9 cents), Washington, D.C. (-8 cents), Kentucky (-8 cents), Indiana (-7 cents), Michigan (-6 cents), Illinois (-5 cents), Kansas (-4 cents), Florida (-4 cents), Wisconsin (-4 cents) and Texas (-3 cents).

The nation's top 10 least expensive markets: Mississippi (\$2.78), Texas (\$2.81), Louisiana (\$2.82), Alabama (\$2.82), Tennessee (\$2.84), Missouri (\$2.84), Arkansas (\$2.85), Kentucky (\$2.85), Oklahoma (\$2.86) and South Carolina (\$2.86).

### Oil Market Dynamics

At the close of Friday's formal trading session, WTI decreased by \$1.37 to settle at \$62.32. Price decreases occurred despite EIA's latest report showing that total domestic crude stocks decreased by 3.3 million bbl to 435.5 million bbl last week. For this week, crude prices could decrease further if demand concerns persist due to surging coronavirus infection rates across the globe.

Motorists can find current gas prices along their route with the free AAA Mobile app for iPhone, iPad and Android. The app can also be used to map a route, find discounts, book a hotel and access AAA roadside assistance. Learn more at [AAA.com/mobile](http://AAA.com/mobile).

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## You won't read this

The Ashley Tribune turned 120 years old this year, and the Wishek Star 77, and it's a miracle, because as the Wishek mayor said this month, "No one reads the paper." She suggested that residents' feedback should be sought instead on Facebook. The Ashley mayor told a constituent that he doubted enough people read the paper to warrant advertising the forthcoming controversial city destruction of gravesite décor.

So what kind of outlier are you? Some kind of educated freak?

Several years ago, during my purchase of the papers from my business partner, an independent analysis reported that those two papers covered 70% of the people in McIntosh County. And for all the apparent disinterest in newspapers, 8.5 nobodies out of 10 people in North Dakota still voted to publish the official minutes in the paper. The people have spoken.

When communities lose their newspapers, they lose government accountability because the public watchdog is gone. In the absence of journalistic scrutiny, taxes rise. There was a recent study of nearly 1600 newspapers including about 300 closures. "Papers show that there are political consequences, or political outcomes, when local newspapers close," said co-author Chang Lee, assistant professor of finance at the University of Illinois at Chicago. "(However) If you look at the municipal bond market, you can actually see the financial consequences that have to be borne by local citizens as a result of newspaper closures."

Your local newspaper remains the best source for critical news that affects your pocketbook, and we're a hub for millions of dollars in commerce. Does real journalism happen on Facebook? We know you can get an immunology degree there. But did they cover the county commission? School board? City council? Rodeo? Fair? 4-H? The big football game? Do they donate to school fundraisers? Do they record our community's history?

We often have folks coming in to research family history, obituaries—and even dispute a high school scoring record, which subsequently changed. The scorebooks were long gone.

It's a godsend to discover that we have anecdotal circulation experts in our midst. Please come to work Wednesday to answer the phone, where it will begin to ring if the paper isn't in post office boxes at the usual delivery time. Folks (who apparently don't even subscribe) sure are in a hurry not to read the paper. I tell employees who've received tongue-lashings over subscription issues, callers are showing us great respect. Because they want the paper that badly. For the birdcage, I guess. It's been well established by our mayors that no one reads it.

Hundreds of online readers like the immediacy and reliability of our website. We sell hundreds of newsstand copies, too. To nobody, apparently.

Several weeks ago, I wrote admiringly of our local government, and I like and respect our mayors, which is why their disrespect of our business suggests a disconnect. The median age in McIntosh County is nearly 54. Nationwide it's 38; we have an older population, which is why newspapers remain the central news hub in rural America. Not everyone does Facebook.

Did I suggest the newspaper is a business with payroll, taxes, overhead, and budgets just like "real" businesses? I did. But we're the Rodney Dangerfield's of businesses. We're also magicians. We've managed to stay afloat for nearly 200 cumulative years with no readers!

You'd think elected leaders would have the best interests of their businesses at heart. You don't hear them disparage other businesses, saying things like, "No one buys groceries at that store. No one drives Fords, anymore. Or Chevies. No one gets their hair cut there. No one eats at that cafe. No one banks there." Because that would be incompatible with the facts. Besides, they don't know the ins and outs of those businesses. But apparently, they know newspapers.

Hold it, did you hear that radio ad? Me neither. I don't listen to that station. The nightly news? Don't watch it. It's shallow headlines. In-depth news comes from print journalists. What about Facebook? No, I missed your kitty picture because surprisingly not everyone sees everything there, either. 70%, maybe? Not even close.

"Gosh, Tony," you're thinking, "Aren't you being a little hard on those mayors?" Maybe. I suspect no malice on their part, just off-the-cuff remarks that threw us under the bus. At any rate, they won't read this. Or admit it, anyway. Maybe I'll post it on Facebook.



**That's  
Life**  
by Tony Bender

## Audiences enthusiastically embrace summer arts

By Jim Speirs, Executive Director, Arts South Dakota

Throughout the state, artists, neighbors and visitors are finding a connection through the power of the arts—and gathering to embrace arts opportunities in South Dakota communities.

The resiliency of our cultural community during the pandemic is inspiring. Artists, youth and community leaders have worked together to keep the arts strong, and use creativity as a way to bring their communities back better than ever.

The Cave Collective is an amazing Rapid City arts organization that recently moved into a new downtown space. All are welcome at the Cave Collective, and it's readily apparent that through the power of the arts, young people find the Cave to be a place they can truly be themselves. Every community needs a Cave Collective!

The Black Hills Playhouse hasn't cancelled a season since 1946, but that all changed last summer due to Covid-19. This summer BHP is back with the "New Frontier Theatre," which is essentially a fully operational musical theater stage set outside under the summer stars of Custer State Park. Covid wasn't going to stop the Playhouse two years in a row, and this year the show went on, with a creatively safe experience of theater in Custer.

In Sioux Falls, Levitt at the Falls resumed their outdoor concert series with 40 free live performances at the Levitt Shell through September 11. So far this summer, 320 volunteers have participated in welcoming approximately 52,000 attendees, and all the shows are live streamed to add to the excitement. Levitt also produces video shorts and South Dakota Public Broadcasting specials with visiting musicians, in addition to outreach activities to young audiences.

From border to border, South Dakota is welcoming audiences to live performances and opportunities to experience and create art. It's an exciting time that we've all been waiting for!

For a calendar of arts opportunities throughout South Dakota in every season, please visit [www.Arts-SouthDakota.org](http://www.Arts-SouthDakota.org).





## SDSU Extension to Tackle Weed, Pest and Drought Inquiries at State Fair

Brookings, S.D. - To address drought concerns, as well as weed and pest inquiries, South Dakota State University (SDSU) Extension will feature two booth locations at the 2021 South Dakota State Fair Sept. 2-6 in Huron. The SDSU WEED Project and SDSU Extension will both be showcased in the Expo Building.

According to Paul O. Johnson, SDSU Extension Weed Science Coordinator, this is the 52nd year the SDSU WEED Project has had a presence at the State Fair.

"With the very trying year, there will not be a featured weed or plant, but we will be ready to answer any questions you may have with the problems this year's weather has caused in weed control," says Johnson. "In addition, we will be ready to answer questions you may have in planning for next year's crops."

The weed display will have crop and pasture weeds along with a lawn and garden weed area. The display will again have several publications that attendees can take home to reference areas of concern.

The SDSU Extension booth will host resources from various disciplines and educational programs across the state. Information on forage and water quality testing will be available, as well as free water quality testing meters, courtesy of SDSU Extension and the South Dakota Cattlemen's Cattle Feeders Council. A limited number of water meters are available, so interested individuals should make sure to visit the booth early in the day.

The Food and Families capstone will showcase the Farm to School program, along with several other health and wellness initiatives, while the Community Vitality team will highlight the South Dakota Remote Works training program and the new Building Highly Effective Boards course.

## Deadwood Gaming Continues to Roll Along

Media: Click [HERE](#) for complete Deadwood gaming numbers

DEADWOOD, S.D. (08/23/21) - According to statistics released today by the South Dakota Commission on Gaming, the July 2021 gaming handle showed a 9.55 percent increase over July 2020, with slot machine handle increasing by 8.41 percent when compared to July 2020. The table game handle increased by 29.18 percent when compared to 2020 July's table game handle. Deadwood gaming operators rewarded players with \$1,125,871 in "free-play" for the month of July, leaving taxable adjusted gross revenues of \$12,688,755 for July of 2021. Deadwood's July YTD numbers put 2021 revenues up 50.56% over 2020 and up 32.07% over 2019.

"July's revenue increase continues to build on the phenomenal comeback story that 2021 is shaping up to become," said Mike Rodman, executive director of the Deadwood Gaming Association. "All indications point to 2021 as becoming the strongest year on record for Deadwood gaming."

Deadwood gaming properties are gearing up for the September start date for legal sports wagering in South Dakota.

## Residue helps farmers save on water, fertilizer costs

By Janelle Atyeo

For South Dakota Soil Health Coalition

PIERRE, SD – What's left behind after a cash crop can be pretty valuable if it remains in the field. South Dakota farmers see a range of benefits from crop residue – corn stalks, soybean stems and wheat straw left after harvest – especially in a dry season.

It can be tempting to cut corn for silage or bale oat straw to feed to cattle when yields and feed supplies come up short. But there are major costs to removing residue.

In northeastern South Dakota near Twin Brooks, farmer Dave Kruger planted his soybeans on light, sandy ground and watched them burn up in last summer's heat. Across the road, soybeans planted in the same sandy soils held on.

The difference was that the second field of beans grew through a thick mat of rye straw. It took another two to three weeks to see signs of heat stress, Kruger said.

Residue's role in moisture retention is two-fold. It acts like a lid, keeping soil covered and moisture from escaping. It also helps build organic matter and carbon, which in turn increases the soil's capacity for holding water.

Kruger is short on moisture again this year. Most of his farm has seen 10-11 inches of rain or snow since January – about 3-4 inches below normal.

But Kruger's crops continue to pull through.

"It definitely has helped it hold on and survive through drier spells," Kruger said.

### Removing residue removes nutrients

It wasn't a great year for small grains in central South Dakota. Marvin Schumacher, who farms north of Pierre, had to abandon one of his oat fields because the grain just didn't fill in the hot, dry summer.

"It's been a tough year," said Schumacher.

Even so, he left the failed oats instead of putting them up for hay.

"I hate to remove residue anytime if I can help it. What you lose for residue doesn't pencil out," he said.

Some of the most concrete costs of removing residue come from the nutrients that must be replaced when straw and stalks are baled up and hauled away.

A ton of dry harvested corn residue contains 17 pounds of nitrogen, 4 pounds of phosphorus, 34 pounds of potash and 3 pounds of sulfur, according to research from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. At today's fertilizer prices, each round bale of corn stalks would add up to \$32.61 worth of fertilizer.

The nutrient values of wheat straw and soybean residue are a little less, with 1 ton of wheat or bean stubble at around \$20 worth of fertilizer.

Those numbers align with what Kruger has experienced on his farm. He has four quarters of ground that have been managed with continuous light tillage. While most of his ground has been no-till since 1993, those acres serve as a good side-by-side comparison. When it comes to fertilizer, his no-till land saves him \$20-30 per acre per year.

"I think that's the result of building that organic matter," he said. "When you take any of the straw or the residue, you're just carrying more fertilizer off the fields."

Producers should consider the long-term impact of removing residue, said Dwayne Beck, a soil health expert who manages the Dakota Lakes Research Farm near Pierre.

"When you take off residue and you don't replace it, that's a permanent thing. It takes a long time to recover from that," he said.

### Cover crops, diverse rotation can help

A lot of less-than-stellar corn crops are being cut for silage this year. That takes a lot of potential residue out of the mix.

A high-residue cover crop planted behind the silage cutters can stem those losses, Beck said. Cereal rye, triticale or winter wheat are good options.

He also urges producers who cut silage to consider changing their rotation if they were going to plant

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soybeans next year. Growing a high-residue crop would be more appropriate. Producers will have to factor in the nutrients they'll miss out on and maybe apply some manure to bring some of that fertility back.

"You've turned a high-residue crop, corn, into a low-residue crop. With two low-residue crops in a row, it could cause some real issues," Beck said. "The worst thing you can do to a piece of ground is to take the forage off year after year."

According to Beck, the best rotations are made up of 80% high-residue crops such as corn, wheat and other cereal grains.

## **Saving water**

Combining his oats in south central South Dakota this summer, Clint Vanneman could look down the row and see residue from the previous milo and wheat crops. Those layers of cover helped to hold moisture and insulate the ground.

"The ability to save some of it for a dry day is big," said Vanneman, who farms near Ideal with his son Justin.

No-till management, residue, cover crops and a diverse crop rotation work together on the Vanneman farm to build soil health. They've been able to reduce applied nitrogen as their organic matter has climbed.

Carbon feeds a thriving community of micronutrients below ground, and that contributes to a healthy soil structure with stable pores that can move water through the soil profile.

"That's where you get your water infiltration and your root development," Schumacher said.

Reducing runoff helps keep nutrients in place. A residue cover also saves valuable topsoil from wind erosion.

Schumacher pays close attention to soil cover in his rotation. He plants two years of corn to build residue and rotates to soybeans, wheat, then a cover crop before going back to corn.

Planting through heavy residue can be a problem, which is why his planter is equipped with a trash manager that moves the residue to the side as he makes his furrow. The cover also cools his soil in spring, so his crops start slower.

"They will look a little worse at the beginning, but this time of year, it really starts to shine now," he said.

Schumacher sees the benefits of a residue cover in his irrigated fields, saving him 4-6 inches of water a year.

"It's cut our water use by a third with no-till management and residue cover," he said.

The Vannemans work to make sure the residue is evenly distributed after harvest. Most of the time, the combine does a pretty good job of spreading it out, Justin Vanneman said, but sometimes in wheat or oats he'll run over it with a harrow to spread the straw.

The Vannemans' cattle benefit from the residue, as well, grazing the wheat stubble and the cover crops planted into it after harvest.

"In the fall and winter time, that's where you'll find our cows," Justin said, adding that they manage their grazing to be sure the cattle don't remove too much.

"If grazed appropriately, very little nutrient goes away," Beck added, "You keep a lot of the armor there, you just change its form a bit."

When it comes to cover crops and residue, bigger is better. Over the winter months, soil cover catches snow and holds moisture.

The Vanneman farm didn't get much snow last winter, but milo stalks caught what fell, and the oats planted into those stalks in early spring reaped the benefits.

Some harvest small grains with a stripper head so the straw is left standing in the fields.

"There's a lot of value in leaving it on the ground," Vanneman said.

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## Week 1 - SDFBCA Coaches Poll

### 11AAA

Brandon Valley (13)  
Harrisburg (8) 83  
SF Roosevelt (2) 54  
SF Washington 34  
O'Gorman 32  
Others: SF Lincoln 18, SF Jefferson 8

### 11AA

Pierre (19) 112  
Brookings (2) 56  
Tea Area (1) 51  
Yankton 51  
Aberdeen Central 39  
Others: Watertown 28, Mitchell 10

### 11A

Canton (11) 76  
Dell Rapids (1) 45  
Madison (1) 45  
Dakota Valley 41  
West Central (1) 19  
Others: Lennox 19, Milbank 14

### 11B

Winner (9) 1-0 57  
Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan (4) 1-0 46  
Sioux Valley 0-1 37  
W/WS/SC 0-0 17  
Elk Point-Jefferson 1-0 15  
Others: McCook Central/Montrose 10, Aberdeen Roncalli 7

### 9AA

1 Platte-Geddes (13) 68 1-0  
2 Hanson 29 1-0  
3 Hamlin 25 1-0  
4 Timber Lake 25 1-0  
5 Canistota/Freeman 24 0-1  
Others: Ipswich 15, Garretson 14, Chester Area 10

### 9A

1 DeSmet (7) 51 1-0  
2 Wolsey-Wessington (1) 38 0-1  
3 Herreid/Selby (2) 35 1-0  
4 Howard (3) 34 1-0  
5 Wall 19 1-0  
Others: Kimball/White Lake 7, Burke 4, Castlewood 4, Kadoka Area 4

### 9B

1 Harding County/Bison (6) 48 1-0  
2 Faulkton Area (4) 37 1-0  
3 Dell Rapids St. Mary 18 0-1  
4 Sully Buttes 17 1-0  
5 Alcester-Hudson 15 0-0  
Others: Gayville-Volin (2) 15, Avon 14

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## Week Two Soccer Coaches Poll

### Boys AA

1. Sioux Falls Jefferson
2. Rapid City Stevens
3. Aberdeen Central
4. Sioux Falls Lincoln
5. Sioux Falls Washington

Receiving Votes: Yankton, Pierre, T.F. Riggs, Spearfish, Huron, Douglas/RC Christian, Sturgis Brown

### Girls AA

1. Aberdeen Central
2. Brandon Valley
3. Rapid City Stevens
4. Pierre T.F. Riggs
5. Rapid City Central

Receiving Votes: Harrisburg, SF Lincoln, O'Gorman, SF Roosevelt, Spearfish, Watertown

### Boys A

1. Sioux Falls Christian
2. Vermillion
3. Belle Fourche
4. Tea Area
5. St. Thomas More

Receiving Votes: Freeman Academy, Groton Area, James Valley Christian

### Girls A

1. West Central
2. Tea Area
3. Sioux Falls Christian
4. Groton Area
5. Vermillion

Receiving Votes: Dakota Valley, St. Thomas More, Garretson

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## #461 in a series Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Coming off weekend reporting, it's difficult to get a handle on just how we're doing, particularly now that I'm not doing a daily Update any more. This difficulty is more pronounced now that many states only report from Monday through Friday these days. Nonetheless, things look pretty bad. We've hit another million total cases, and we're adding a million at a pace matched only in January. Here's the rundown:

April 28, 2020 – 1 million – 98 days  
June 11 – 2 million – 44 days  
July 8 – 3 million – 27 days  
July 23 – 4 million – 15 days  
August 9 – 5 million – 17 days  
August 31 – 6 million – 22 days  
September 24 – 7 million – 24 days  
October 15 – 8 million – 21 days  
October 29 – 9 million – 14 days  
November 8 – 10 million – 10 days  
November 15 – 11 million – 7 days  
November 21 – 12 million – 6 days  
November 27 – 13 million – 6 days  
December 3 – 14 million – 6 days  
December 7 – 15 million – 4 days  
December 12 – 16 million – 5 days  
December 17 – 17 million – 5 days  
December 21 – 18 million – 4 days  
December 26 – 19 million – 5 days  
December 31 – 20 million – 5 days  
January 5 – 21 million – 5 days  
January 9 – 22 million – 4 days  
January 13 – 23 million – 4 days  
January 18 – 24 million – 5 days  
January 23 – 25 million – 5 days  
January 30 – 26 million – 7 days  
February 7 – 27 million – 8 days  
February 19 – 28 million – 12 days  
March 7 – 29 million – 16 days  
March 24 – 30 million – 17 days  
April 8 – 31 million – 15 days  
April 24 – 32 million – 16 days  
May 18 – 33 million – 23 days  
July 16 – 34 million – 59 days  
July 31 – 35 million – 15 days  
August 11 – 36 million – 11 days  
August 17 – 37 million – 6 days  
August 23 – 38 million – 6 days

So we're at 38,043,754 total cases, averaging 150,625 new cases per day. You have to go back to January 30 to see a new-case average this high—and please remember that January is the poster child for the bad old days when almost no one was vaccinated and everything was awful. Hospitalizations are up

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to 93,318, consistent with what we were seeing in February. And deaths now total 629,644 with a seven-day average that finally climbed back up over 1000 on Saturday and now stands at 1057. When this surge started, I remember rather confidently mentioning that I did not foresee deaths numbers getting as bad as they were before; yet here we are with the numbers of five months ago. It's sort of shocking to me that we're still even talking about deaths at this rate. We're a long way from OK, and while we know what we need to do to get to OK, we're simply not going to do it.

Schools continue to see large numbers of infections and exposures. Before school even started, the Los Angeles Unified district had over 3200 students testing positive. We've talked about the Brevard County schools in Florida. Nashville schools have well over 700 students and employees testing positive and more than 4000 students and employees quarantined since school started. And some schools in Hawaii have already returned to remote learning—none of which is what we should be wanting for our kids. Fact is 23 percent more children tested positive between August 5 and August 12 than in the prior week. Kids are coming home from school infected and exposing entire families. Even when the kid's case is mild, it can upend a family—missed work due to quarantine, concomitant difficulty with expenses, illness, hospitalization, and sometimes death, leaving children without one parent—or two. While vaccinated people are largely protected from severe disease, hospitalization, and death, nine percent of new cases are breakthroughs and some percentage of those go badly. As with children, most of whom never get very sick and do well, the more vaccinated people who are infected, the larger the raw number of those who don't do well.

So we continue to weigh the all the risks of infection against the known risks of keeping kids out of school. There aren't any great choices available at the moment, not as long as a fair percentage of us refuse to protect our friends and neighbors by taking measures to mitigate transmission or by receiving vaccine.

Biggest news this week is likely to be that, first thing this morning, the FDA granted a Biologics License to the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for Covid-19. This is what most folks call "full approval." That was done in roughly 40 percent of the usual time such a process takes; there was around-the-clock work at the FDA. No corners were cut; all of the manufacturing facilities were inspected. The agency repeated every analysis of the data for themselves rather than simply relying on the companies' analyses. They actually had a lot more data to work with than is usual for vaccines that never received emergency use authorization (EUA). In the usual case, there are just the clinical trial data to deal with; instead, there are hundreds of millions of people who've received this vaccine and fed data into the system, which provides more than the usual margin of safety in these assessments—and more than the usual workload for the regulators. All those people who said, "This vaccine isn't even FDA-approved," are going to have to come up with something else—as I'm sure they will. It is generally expected that more and more businesses will move now to mandate vaccination for employees, clients, and others who come in contact with their workforces. Likewise for some schools. That has already begun throughout the day today.

This little summer problem we've been having is stacking up to be quite the doozy. We're looking at hospitalization numbers as high as those we saw over the winter when things were truly horrifying. Not only has the number of people in the hospital risen, but also the number of those requiring intensive care has ballooned. One in five ICUs are at or over 95 percent occupancy, which means it is close to impossible for the hospital staffs to adequately care for those folks. In normal times, two-thirds occupancy is more usual. While a normal staffing ratio on a medical unit tends to be around 1:5, that is one nurse for every five patients, ICU care is more like 1:1 or 1:2. There's a reason it's called intensive care. Hospitals have cut back on this ratio because they're so stretched, and that means some folks may not be receiving adequate care even as they stretch out their staff to the breaking point—and beyond. Employees who haven't had a break in in over 18 months are burning out on overtime, and there aren't enough contract nurses to pick up the slack. You can set up a tent hospital in the parking ramp, but if you don't have employees to staff them, then those beds will have to remain empty. This situation has become critical in several locations.

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There is an added stressor in that the patients are running younger—many under 40—than we've seen yet in this pandemic. Coupled with the fact that the vast majority of them are unvaccinated, therefore preventable, this makes the situation a good deal tougher on hospital staff. The good news is that Missouri and Nevada, states where hospitalization rates have been high for weeks, are showing signs of leveling off. That may mean a respite is in sight. This would be a very good thing.

Throughout this pandemic, we've read stories of patients dying alone while their family members were outside in the parking lot or across town at home, barred from visiting. Now what we're seeing is patients being shipped to far-flung locations for treatment as hospitals nearer home turn them away because there's no room and no one to care for them. This particularly affects patients from small rural hospitals without ICUs that seek to transfer patients to the nearest metro area which is full-up. Hospitals were pushed before this surge as they sought to catch up on procedures that were put off during the winter surge. With hospitalizations at very high levels and cases concentrating in some states more than others, this sort of thing was inevitable. Sometimes it takes 40 or more calls to find a bed for a patient, and that bed might be hundreds of miles away. Dr. Richard Watson, founder of a company that contracts to manage transfers, told NPR, "That is just the worst day that you can have in the emergency room as a provider to be taking care of a patient that you are totally helpless to give them what you know they need." Sounds like a bad day to me for sure.

Earlier in the pandemic, the crush in hospitals was elderly patients, people with a high risk of severe disease. Now that the elderly are highly-vaccinated, there are more and more young patients, largely unvaccinated, taking their place. With fairs and school and sports starting and last-minute family vacations and fall festivals approaching, expect matters to get worse before they get better.

Another thing to consider is that the crush of Covid-19 patients in hospitals is crowding out folks who need other kinds of care. I'm guessing you've already read about the man shot six times who waited 10 days for surgery. Seriously. At least, he was apparently stable. Not sure what you do with someone who has a life-threatening condition. Triage, I guess.

The CDC is now recommending unvaccinated people stay off cruise ships. They are also recommending vaccinated people with high risk for severe Covid-19 also stay home. Even though the cruise lines have been working with the CDC to set up safe practices for cruises, there is apparently enough residual concern to cause this guidance to be issued.

Vaccinations continue to increase, a very good sign. More than a million doses went into arms on Thursday, more than 70 percent over what we were seeing a month ago and the highest since early last month. We are seeing large increases in some of the least-vaccinated states, which is better yet. Since it is generally believed (I think with good reason) that the grant of a Biologics License to one of the vaccines, the Pfizer/BioNTech, will further promote vaccine acceptance, we may have more increases in our near future, which would be grand. This is none too soon given the case rates we're seeing across the country. We should, however, remember that any benefit from increased vaccinations is five weeks off. We should also note that, at a million doses per day, we are months off from anything resembling adequate rates of vaccination. Long way to go.

Twenty-five states have fully vaccinated more than half their residents: Hawaii, Washington, Oregon, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Nebraska, Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Maine, Vermont (leading at 67.5%), New Hampshire, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, the District of Columbia, Delaware, Virginia, and Florida. We have 51.5 percent of our population fully vaccinated with an average 446,177 doses going into arms daily. Long way to go, but



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we're making some progress. It will not be soon enough to head off whatever's coming in the next couple of months, however.

Also on the topic of vaccination, we've discussed the possibility there is going to be a recommendation for booster doses of the mRNA vaccines (and probably the DNA vaccine too, for that matter). We also discussed that some folks are rushing in and getting boosters early by lying about their immunization status. Now that the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine has received its Biologics License, you can ask your physician to order you a third dose off-label, no lying needed. You probably don't want to do that. There's going to be an optimal time to deliver a boost; we know that doing it too soon tends to blunt the response, so waiting for that optimal time results in more robust protection. Just hang on a bit (1) to discover whether the FDA determines that a third dose is even safe and (2) to assure you receive it on the most beneficial schedule.

For the record—in case you were wondering—while off-label use is something that happens a lot with medications the FDA has fully approved, the agency wants us to know that the grant of a Biologics License to the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine was only for administration to those 16 and older. The License does not mean it can be given off-label to children younger than 12; of course, the original EUA still applies to those from 12 to 15. I'm not sure exactly what the law is on this matter—whether it would actually be illegal to administer it to, say, a 10-year-old, but the FDA says this “would not be appropriate,” and I'm thinking a physician who ordered it for a child might find her/himself in some hot water if anything went wrong with that kid. Probably not going to see a lot of that at this point. And yes, I'm in a hurry too; there are people for whom I care deeply who are too young to be vaccinated at the moment.

There's been some ugly commentary circulating recently that says the current surge in Covid-19 case rates across the South is driven by Black people. This is an old racist trope, writing off “the coloreds” as dirty and diseased a danger to their “betters,” and it is divisive, reprehensible, and false. Despite the fact that people of color have somewhat lower vaccination rates than White folks in the South, Black, Hispanic, and White populations are experiencing the surge in proportions roughly equal to their proportions in the population. That means there is simply no truth to this assertion at all. It is racist, it reflects medieval attitudes, and it is wrong.

I can't believe I am typing this, but I'm typing this: Please do not take veterinary medications—any of them. Ever. At all. For any reason. These medications are not formulated for humans, they do not contain proper dosing information for humans, they are not produced in factories with the same standards as those manufacturing human medications, they can be toxic to humans, and even if the active ingredient is approved for use in humans, the veterinary formulation is neither produced nor intended for use in humans. Cattle and horses weigh a lot more than people do, and these medications intended for them tend to be highly concentrated, containing doses far above what might be safe for a person. These are not interchangeable with the drugs available at your friendly local neighborhood pharmacy. State health departments are putting out warnings to this effect; they're not wrong. Believe them.

This little talk is necessary because there has been a rash of calls to poison control centers after people got sick from ingesting livestock drugs available at the local feed store to self-treat their Covid-19 symptoms. Yesterday, I mentioned one person using these who is hospitalized for toxicity symptoms right now; there have been more than a few others. I read a series of Facebook posts by a couple who attended the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, unmasked and symptomatic, actually pretty darned sick, and were chronicling their torturous trip home on their bike while seriously ill. Fans were, in addition to prayers and good wishes, posting instructions for mixing and (get ready for this) injecting the livestock medication to help them get better faster. I sincerely hope they were too sick to go to the feed store in whatever town they'd fetched up in. I understand many business places that sell this stuff have removed it from the shelf; folks seeking

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it for its intended use--to treat their livestock—have to ask for it, I guess.

This is all linked to the rise of the Ivermectin Fan Club we've talked about more than once or twice, most recently in my Update #375 posted March 4, 2021, at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwab-miller/posts/4494831047199933>. The Club, encouraged by irresponsible and mostly-discredited doctors, is convinced there are treatments "they" don't want us to know about and have settled on this drug as one such. I was happier when it was just vitamin D and zinc on the list of treatments "they" are hiding from us; while you can overdose on those, the margin of error for a supplement is considerably larger, and they are at least intended for human use. For the record, while the oral form of this stuff is apparently flavored to taste like apples (because horses like apples, I guess), human users report it doesn't really. They did have some suggestions to make it palatable, but you're going to have to look those up for yourself. I'm not going to help you be stupid. To repeat, taking veterinary ivermectin is a terrible idea—the worst. Seriously.

I read a couple of what I'd call round-ups of what is currently known about the chronic condition known as long-Covid or more properly post-covid syndrome (PCS), that persistence of one or more symptoms for longer than 12 weeks. It can range from an inconvenience to debilitating with a possible wide array of symptoms like brain fog, severe fatigue, chronic pain, shortness of breath, palpitations, and gastrointestinal symptoms, the worst of which appear to be severe breathlessness, fatigue, and brain fog. Current estimates from the UK's database are that around 14 percent of people who've tested positive for Covid-19 develop PCS, and 90 percent of those were never sick enough to be hospitalized. If you consider that in Britain, this affects 1.5 percent of working-age adults and translate it to our population of 327 million with its 37 million reported cases, that's a lot of people—and a large societal and economic impact.

It's difficult to know whether a case is PCS or one of the other sort of mysterious and chronic conditions like chronic fatigue syndrome; that's because, especially in the early days of the pandemic, we didn't necessarily have either the testing capacity or the quality of tests that could reliably identify a case of Covid-19 and, even now, not everyone with a mild case gets tested at all. By the time we realize the lingering symptoms might be Covid-19-related, the antibodies produced during infection might have fallen to difficult-to-detect levels; so sometimes, we're never completely sure that's what the patient had.

These folks seem to sort into three groups, each with a primary kind of complaint: (1) exercise intolerance (breathlessness and exhaustion from even small physical tasks), (2) cognitive difficulties (memory problems and brain fog), and (3) problems with the autonomic nervous system, the nerves that control automatic processes like heartbeat, digestion, and breathing (palpitations and dizziness). The likeliest explanations for these symptoms include a persistent viral infection which might be treated with antivirals, autoimmunity which might be treated with drugs that target the offending immunologic process, and tissue damage caused by the infection. Could be there is more than one thing operating here as well or that different people have different mechanisms in play.

For now, the only treatment available is rehabilitation, a typically lengthy process involving identifying exactly what problems a patient is having and then targeting those problems in the rehab process. One clinic reports that, after an average of 150 days with two half-hour sessions per week plus remote follow-up, patients are reporting a 30 to 40 percent improvement. Very few have recovered fully. Since a large proportion of these patients are unable to work, the implications of this on a societal scale are devastating—that's a whole lot of disabled people who will require financial, social, and ongoing medical supports.

Here's an odd piece of news: Orlando, Florida, residents have been asked to stop watering lawns and washing cars due to the Covid-19 surge in the area. A friend sent me the public notice, but I had to do some digging to figure out what watering has to do with Covid-19. Turns out the city uses this new fancy-

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pants method to treat water, producing ozone gas from liquid oxygen and then injecting the gas into water to oxidize organic compounds that affect the color and taste of the water, thus reducing the amount of chlorine needed to make the water potable. Since the same water supplied for drinking is used for all other purposes—like lawn-watering and car-washing, there is a need to reduce all of that usage. There were a lot of things I didn't expect when I started on this little Covid-19 project of mine; one is that I would end up learning something about water treatment along the way. So here I am, another day older, another day smarter.

At any rate, with the hospital demand for oxygen at an all-time high, the city's liquid oxygen supply for water-treatment has been reduced, which seems appropriate: Saving lives is probably more important than luxuriant lawns, huh? The Mayor's office did note that, if water usage does not drop sufficiently and the city is no longer able to treat a sufficient supply, residents will be issued a boil-water alert for water needed to cook and drink. Since 40 percent of the city's water is used for irrigation, projections are that compliance with this request will be sufficient to avoid the need. I hope so. And I hope Florida gets a break pretty soon; things are stretched close to the limit these days.

Something not enough people know about are the monoclonal antibody treatments available. You may recall monoclonal antibodies are lab-made, highly-purified antibodies against SARS-CoV-2, which can reduce the severity and duration of illness for those infected. There are two such treatments available under FDA emergency use authorization (EUA), the Regeneron cocktail of casirivimab and imdevimab and the GlaxoSmithKline/Vir Biotechnology's sotrovimab. The Regeneron medication is available free to the patient except for administration costs because the US government bought a million and a half doses a while back; the GSK drug is not free, but should be covered by insurance for those who are insured or covered by Medicaid or Medicare for others. At around \$2000 per dose, this stuff isn't cheap, but it is effective.

I'm going to step back for a minute and point out that these are not cure-alls, and they're not better than vaccine—not at all. They cost more—a lot more, and they're not as effective as vaccines; but if you're already having symptoms or are high-risk and have been exposed, they're a valuable tool in the kit. The Regeneron treatment is useful in infected patients within 10 days of first symptoms, reducing the likelihood of hospitalization and death by 70 percent; and the GlaxoSmithKline treatment is useful as a prophylactic medication in exposed high-risk patients (unvaccinated, not fully vaccinated, immunocompromised, people over 65, and people with a body mass index of 25 or greater who have been exposed), reducing the risk of hospitalization or deaths by 85 percent.

They're logistically complicated. These drugs must be infused intravenously, so there's about a half-hour to an hour for that followed by a one-hour follow-up to observe for adverse effects. This means they're not generally given in doctors' offices, but more likely in hospitals and certain clinics or infusion centers. Since they must be given within 10 days of symptoms or within four days of exposure, you can't dally too long before asking about them. But if you find yourself in a situation where one of these may be beneficial, you should ask. They're not always offered, but they are available, and they can be a game-changer for you. Better to prevent, but failing that, good to move quickly.

On the subject of monoclonals, AstraZeneca is prepared to seek regulatory approval for its entry into this category, a long-acting cocktail of tixagevimab and cilgavimab, derived from B-cells donated by convalescent patients after infection, which is the usual source for these things. Now monoclonal antibodies, being foreign proteins, things to which our immune systems react pretty quickly, generally don't last long—not past 90 days at best, which makes them most useful post-exposure to high-risk people and after symptoms start in anyone. These monoclonals, however, are different; by tweaking a couple of amino acids in these proteins, AstraZeneca is getting a much longer-lasting product, one that can reasonably be expected to remain active in a patient up to six to 12 months after administration. The goal here is to

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cover people who aren't going to have a robust response to vaccines and who need protection by virtue of their specific health problems; with a duration of protection like that, they can become a primary way to protect those people.

The company announced on Friday that the drug showed solid efficacy in preventing symptomatic Covid-19. It has not been as effective in treating symptoms after they develop, but shows 77 percent efficacy in reducing the risk of symptomatic infection in a trial including three-quarters people with comorbidities or chronic disease, including those with compromised immune responses. Among the almost 5200 participants, there were no cases of severe Covid-19 or deaths; while this is a small sample, these are very promising results. There were no serious safety signals in the trial. We don't have the data yet, but if they hold up once released, this will be very good news. Because of its high cost, this is not expected to supplant vaccines, but offers a viable alternative to those for whom vaccines are not a good alternative.

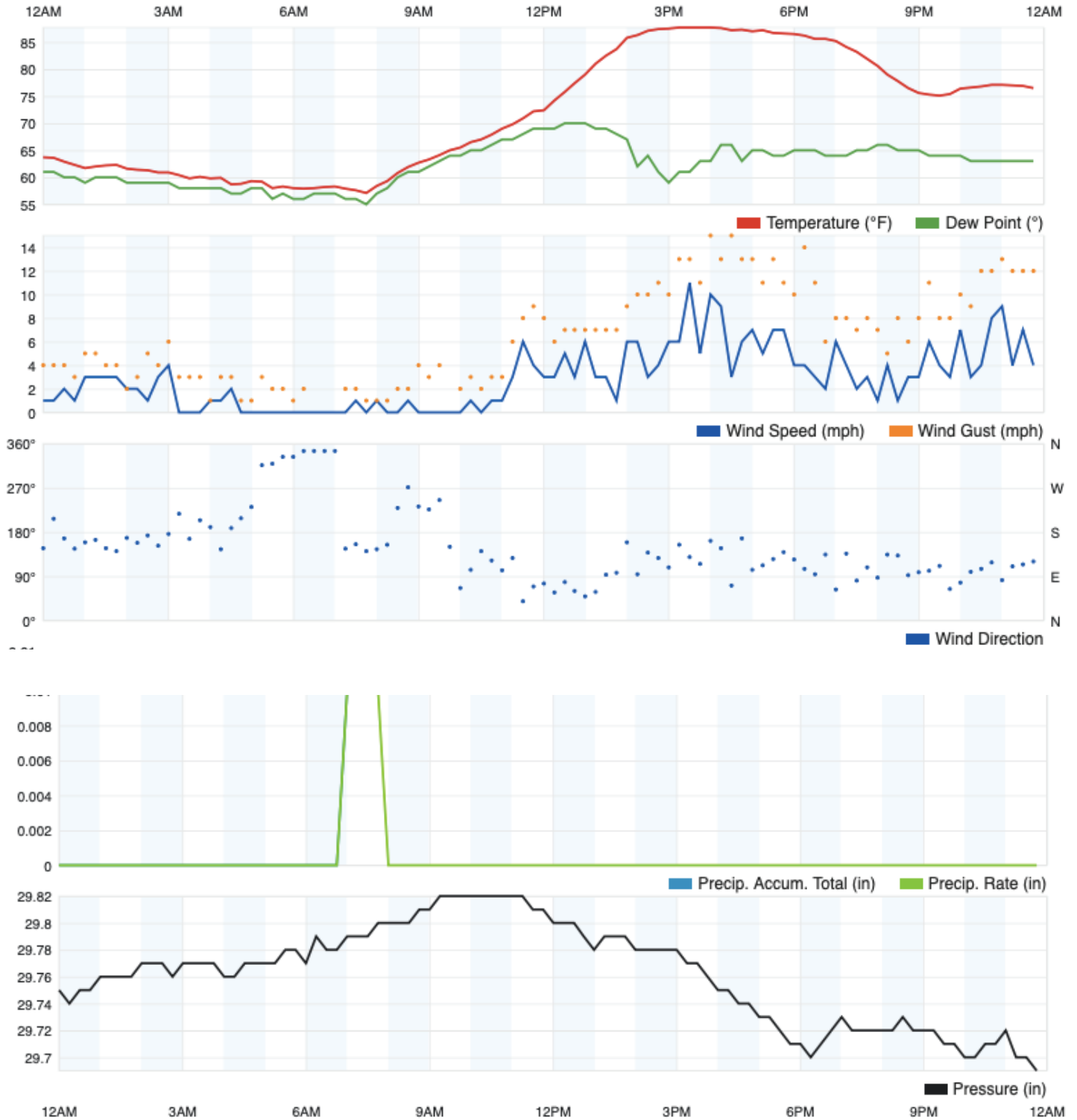
Something I don't think we're giving enough attention when we consider costs of the pandemic is the actual cost of care for those who are infected. I read an analysis from the Kaiser Family Foundation today that indicates the health system in this country spent \$2.3 billion on care for unvaccinated people in just June and July of this year. That represents 37,000 preventable hospitalizations in June and 76,000 preventable hospitalizations in July and does account for the fact that some percentage of vaccinated people also end up hospitalized. This includes only costs associated with hospitalization, so out-patient costs are not accounted for here. And under the heading of "preventable" costs, it did not include the costs of treating hospitalized vaccinated people who were exposed by unvaccinated people and would have remained healthy if the unvaccinated had not been—you know—unvaccinated. Here's another way the unvaccinated externalize the costs of their "personal choices," a description I am exceedingly tired of hearing.

And so, that's it for the night. Be well. We'll talk again.

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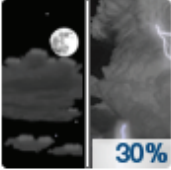

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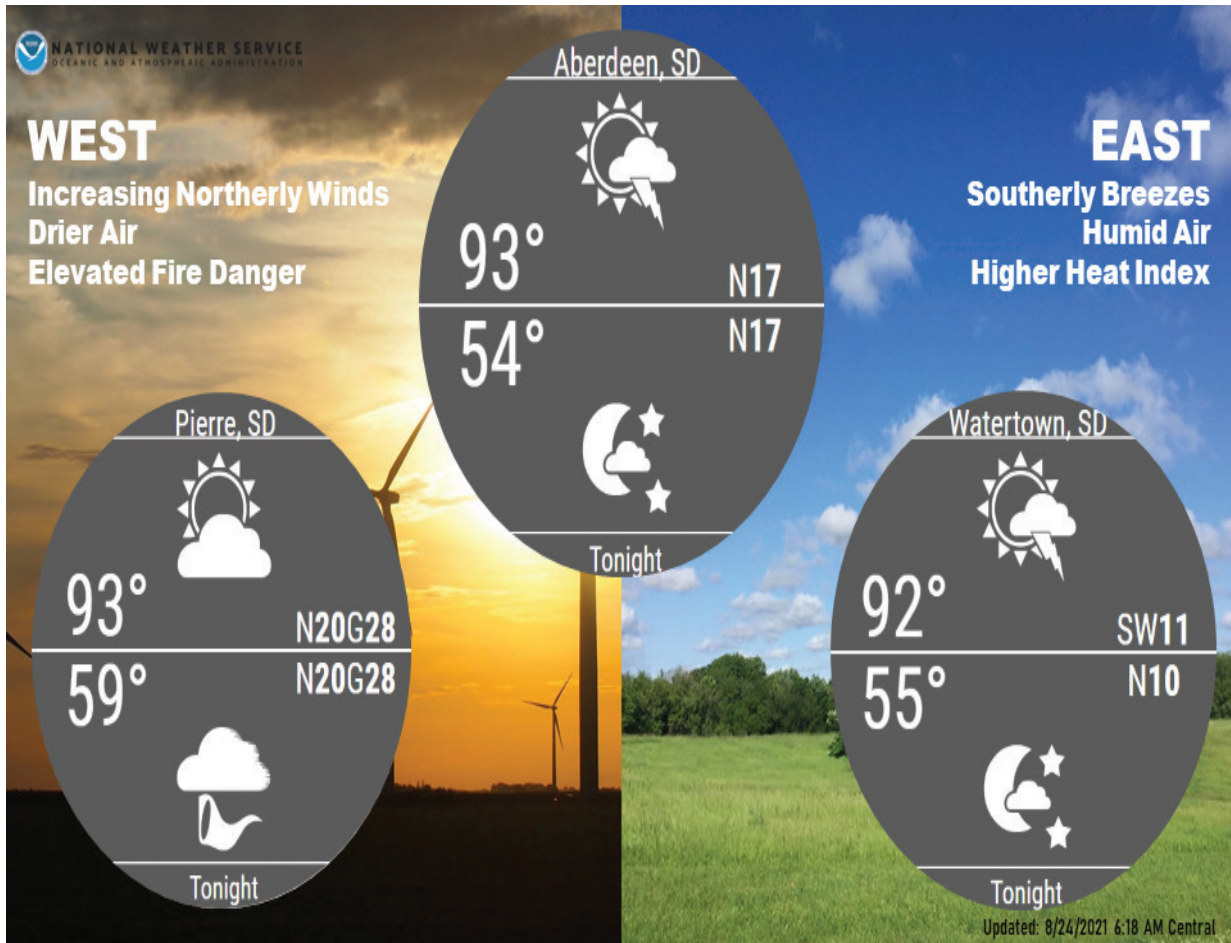
## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
				
Chance T-storms then Sunny	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy then Chance T-storms	T-storms
<b>High: 91 °F</b>	<b>Low: 54 °F</b>	<b>High: 75 °F</b>	<b>Low: 53 °F</b>	<b>High: 68 °F</b>



Showers and thunderstorms will eventually exit the area through the morning hours. Otherwise, expect dry conditions later today, with hot temperatures continuing. Eastern portions of the area will stay humid, while central South Dakota begins to see breezy and gusty winds, lowering humidity, and increasing fire danger. The weather pattern will stay rather active as we head through the end of the week into the upcoming weekend, with on and off chances for showers and thunderstorms, some of which could be strong to severe.

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## Today in Weather History

August 24, 1960: A man was injured when a barn was blown over by an F2 tornado that touched down near Hayes, in Stanley County. Hail, up to golf ball size accompanied the storm as well as about three inches of rain, causing some damage to crops and a farmhouse. The sky color in a westerly direction shortly before the tornado hit was described as a distinct shade of green. Evidence suggests that the tornado may have touched down again in northeast Sully County, destroying a barn, a chicken coop, and haystacks on two farms. Also, precipitation more than 3 inches and locally 6 to 8 inches was accompanied by severe hail, causing damage to buildings and crops. Hail damage was most substantial in Stanly County. The wind carried away an estimated 400 tons of baled hay in Haakon County. A measured rainfall amount of 5.1 inches in less than six hours occurred in Onida, causing extensive flooding of basements, streets, and cropland. Additional rainfall amounts include 5.58 inches 4 NW of Onida, 4.50 inches 23 N of Highmore, 3.05 inches 2N of Onaka, 3.42 inches in Clear Lake, 3.11 inches in Miller, 3.02 inches in Eureka, 2.55 inches 1 NW of Faulkton, 2.40 inches in Gettysburg, 2.22 inches in Blunt, 2.20 inches at Oahe Dam, and 2.16 inches in Clark.

August 24, 1998: A line of severe thunderstorms raced southeast across Sully, Hyde, and Hand counties during the morning hours, producing destructive winds up to 100 mph and hail up to the size of baseballs. The winds and hail damaged or destroyed a wide swath of sunflowers and corn. Four power poles south of Highmore on Highway 47 were snapped off. The school in Highmore had twenty screens shredded by the hail and the winds. On a farm northeast of Onida, a grain bin was blown over a distance of 200 yards.

August 24, 2006: Up to 4.25" diameter hail and 9 tornadoes developed across central and northeastern South Dakota between 4:30 pm and 8:00 pm, two of which were rated as F3 intensity. The first of these F3 tornadoes developed in McPherson County west of Hillsview at 5:03 pm, and tracked 24.5 miles southeast to just north of Hosmer before lifting at 5:30 pm. Numerous livestock and deer were killed. Devastating damage was observed to farm equipment, homes, barns, grain bins, and vehicles. A well-anchored mobile home was completely destroyed. Debris from each site was observed up to 3 miles away. One person received minor scrapes and bruises. The second F3 tornado of the event was spawned by a long-track supercell, and this supercell produced the other 7 tornadoes of the day (two F2, an F1, and four F0 roughly from Onida to De Smet). It touched down just south of Wessington in Beadle County at 6:37 pm, and tracked 19.5 miles southeast to just southwest of Huron before lifting at 7:18 pm. This tornado destroyed 8 houses and numerous farm buildings and damaged at least 7 other houses. Five large high-voltage transmission towers were blown down about 3 miles southeast of Wessington. A woman was cut on the neck at a farm southwest of Wolsey where the house and all other buildings were destroyed (non-life threatening). One other injury occurred southeast of Wolsey.

79: Stratovolcano, Mount Vesuvius erupted on this day, burying the Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

1456: Machiavelli wrote, "On the 24th of August, about an hour before day-break there arose from the Adriatic near Ancona, a whirlwind, which crossing Italy from east to west, again reached the sea near Pisa, accompanied by thick clouds, and the most intense and impenetrable darkness."

1992: Hurricane Andrew made landfall in southern Florida at 4:30 AM on this day. The high winds caused catastrophic damage in Florida, with Miami-Dade County cities of Florida City, Homestead, and Cutler Ridge receiving the brunt of the storm. About 63,000 homes were destroyed, and over 101,000 others were damaged. This storm left roughly 175,000 people homeless. As many as 1.4 million people were left without electricity at the height of the storm. In the Everglades, 70,000 acres (280 km<sup>2</sup>) of trees were knocked down. Additionally, rainfall in Florida was substantial, peaking at 13.98 in (355 mm) in western Miami-Dade County. About \$25 billion in damage and 44 fatalities were reported in Florida.

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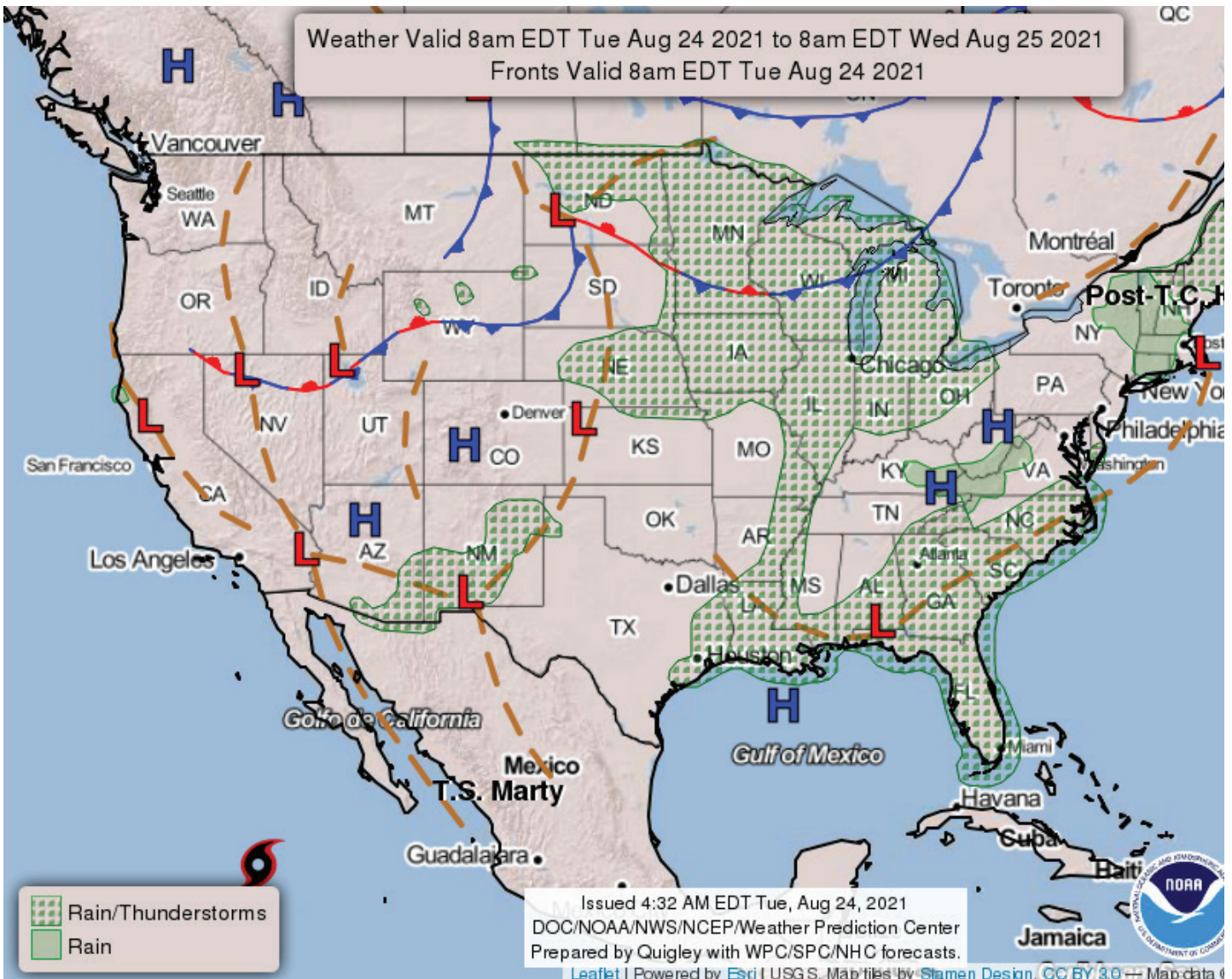
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 88 °F at 3:51 PM**  
**Low Temp: 57 °F at 7:41 AM**  
**Wind: 16 mph at 4:16 PM**  
**Precip: 0.53 this morning**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 103° in 1929**  
**Record Low: 38° in 1934**  
**Average High: 82°F**  
**Average Low: 55°F**  
**Average Precip in Aug.: 1.67**  
**Precip to date in Aug.: 2.19**  
**Average Precip to date: 15.77**  
**Precip Year to Date: 9.46**  
**Sunset Tonight: 8:25 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:47 a.m.**





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## DELIVERANCE

Several weeks ago I was waiting in line for my "pre-op room" assignment. It was a time of anxiety and fear, apprehension and uncertainty. The surgeon had carefully laid out the risks as well as the rewards. All of the tests and examinations confirmed that my physical condition was strong and able to withstand the lengthy procedure.

When it was my turn to speak with the scheduler, I noticed that she had a well-worn Bible in her kiosk next to her computer keyboard. "It's good to see you reading the Bible. Obviously you must love the Lord. What are you reading today?" I asked.

"Yes, Sir. I surely do love the Lord. He's my best Friend. And this morning I am reading Psalm 91 and I'm meditating on verse two: 'I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress.'"

Suddenly the God of all comfort appeared and spoke to me through one of His angels. What an unexpected message from God. As I stood before her, tears streamed down my face and splashed on my medical records while her words comforted my heart and put my soul at ease.

The words "refuge" and "fortress" are normally used in a military context. As used here they convey a special significance. God is in control and has established Himself in a defensive position against all enemies. Moreover, the Psalmist says that He is "My God!" assuring us that He is personal, present and prepared to protect us from any and all enemies. Because of His faithfulness in the past, we have no reason to ever doubt His presence and protection.

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for the comfort of Your Word, the assurance of Your grace when we face life's challenges. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Psalm 91:2 Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

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## 2021 Community Events

- Cancelled** Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)  
03/27/2021 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)  
04/10/2021 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm  
04/24/2021 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)  
04/25/2021 Princess Prom (Sunday after GHS Prom)  
05/01/2021 Lions Club Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)  
05/31/2021 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)  
6/7-9/2021 St. John's Lutheran Church VBS  
06/17/2021 Groton Transit Fundraiser, 4-7 p.m.  
06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
06/19/2021 U8 Baseball Tournament  
06/19/2021 **Postponed to Aug. 28th:** Lions Crazy Golf Fest at Olive Grove Golf Course, Noon  
06/26/2021 U10 Baseball Tournament  
06/27/2021 U12 Baseball Tournament  
07/04/2021 Firecracker Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
07/11/2021 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 10am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)  
07/22/2021 Pro-Am Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course  
07/30/2021-08/03/2021 State "B" American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton  
08/06/2021 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course  
08/13/2021 Groton Basketball Golf Tournament  
08/28/2021 Lions Club Crazy Golf Fest 9am Olive Grove Golf Course  
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)  
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

### **Nine women now serving as governors in US, tying a record**

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

Taking over on short notice for a scandal-plagued predecessor in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul began her tenure Tuesday with more than enough challenges for a new administration.

She also began with an historic opportunity: Hochul is the first woman to hold one of the most prominent governorships in the U.S.

"New York as a whole has been a tough place for women to break into the highest levels, because there is very much a tight set of powerful gatekeepers," said Debbie Walsh, director of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University.

"And unfortunately — even in 2021 — women are still seen, in effect, as newcomers," she said.

Hochul, a Democrat, became the ninth woman currently serving as a governor. That ties a record that was set in 2004 and matched in 2007 and 2019, but it's still well shy of gender proportionality.

A century after women gained the right to vote, 19 states still have never been led by a woman. That includes some of the most populous states, such as California, Florida, Pennsylvania and Illinois. Even if it succeeds, California's recall election of Gov. Gavin Newsom next month doesn't appear likely to elevate a woman to the state's top job.

Hochul had served as New York's lieutenant governor until succeeding fellow Democrat Andrew Cuomo, who resigned after a decade in office. Cuomo had faced a potential impeachment battle after an attorney general's investigation said he had sexually harassed or inappropriately touched 11 women. Among other things, Cuomo also had faced a legislative investigation into whether he misled the public last year about COVID-19 deaths in nursing homes.

Hochul already has announced she will seek a full four-year term in 2022.

Next year could be a pivotal one for women running for governor. Democratic Gov. Kate Brown of Oregon will be the only female incumbent barred from seeking re-election by term limits. Six male governors also will be term-limited, opening a path to office for fresh candidates from both parties.

In Arizona, where Republican Gov. Doug Ducey can't run again, the field already has several candidates who are women, including Republican state Treasurer Kimberly Yee and Democratic Secretary of State Katie Hobbs. Arizona already holds the record for the most women who have served as governor — four. Kansas has had three.

In Arkansas, which has never had a woman serve as governor, a high-profile Republican primary pits Attorney General Leslie Rutledge against Sarah Sanders, press secretary for former President Donald Trump and daughter of former Gov. Mike Huckabee. The incumbent, Republican Gov. Asa Hutchinson, will be termed out.

In 2018, women's political advocates also thought they were primed for success with a record number of candidates for governor. But they did not ultimately set a new record for victories.

Women currently hold 18% of governors' offices — significantly less than this year's new records of 27% of U.S. congressional seats and 31% of state legislative seats. In addition, Vice President Kamala Harris also became the first woman in that role this year.

Part of the challenge in electing women as governors is overcoming stereotypes of men as stronger, more decisive leaders, Walsh said.

Another challenge is deepening the pool of women willing to enter politics, said Wendy Doyle, president and CEO of the Kansas City, Missouri-based nonprofit United WE.

The organization is coordinating an effort to get more women appointed to positions on state, county and city boards and commissions. It's working with local officials in California, Kansas, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania Texas and Washington. The idea is that some women appointed to

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positions eventually will run for elected offices.

"It's a long game," Doyle said. "But we've got to build the pipeline; we've got to build the bench."

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$270 million

Powerball

17-36-47-60-61, Powerball: 15, Power Play: 3

(seventeen, thirty-six, forty-seven, sixty, sixty-one; Powerball: fifteen; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$293 million

## Crash closes Interstate 90 near Rapid City for 10 hours

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — An overturned semitrailer blocked traffic on westbound Interstate 90 near Rapid City for more than 10 hours Monday.

The Rapid City Journal reported the 2018 Kenworth semitrailer was westbound around 4:45 a.m. Monday when it veered to the right, hit a concrete construction barrier, overturned and slid across the interstate. The lanes were closed until about 3:15 p.m.

The 62-year-old driver suffered serious but non-life-threatening injuries. He was taken to a hospital and could face charges. The lanes reopened about 3:15 p.m.

## South Dakota Volleyball Polls

By The Associated Press \ \ \

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Here is the South Dakota Media volleyball poll for the week of August 23, 2021. Teams are listed with first place votes in parenthesis, record, points and previous ranking.

CLASS AA

- |                    |    |    |
|--------------------|----|----|
| 1. O'Gorman (12)   | 60 | 1  |
| 2. S.F. Washington | 47 | 2  |
| 3. S.F. Roosevelt  | 31 | RV |
| 4. Harrisburg      | 20 | NR |
| 5. Brandon Valley  | 13 | 5  |

CLASS A

- |                        |    |    |
|------------------------|----|----|
| 1. S.F. Christian (12) | 60 | 1  |
| 2. Dakota Valley       | 47 | 3  |
| 3. Winner              | 31 | 5  |
| 4. Madison             | 16 | 2  |
| 5. R.C. Christian      | 13 | RV |

RECEIVING VOTES: Parker 11; Hill City 1; Hamlin 1.

CLASS B

- |                      |    |    |
|----------------------|----|----|
| 1. Northwestern (11) | 59 | 1  |
| 2. Warner (1)        | 49 | 2  |
| 3. Chester Area      | 36 | 3  |
| 4. Bridgewater-Emery | 20 | 4  |
| 5. Burke             | 8  | NR |

RECEIVING VOTES: Faulkton Area 2; Aberdeen Roncalli 2; Arlington 1; Kimball-White Lake 1; Philip 1; Colman-Egan 1.

## US boarding school review prompts calls for trauma support

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — Some members of Congress want to ensure that protections are put in place to address ongoing trauma as more information comes to light about the troubled history of Indigenous boarding schools in the United States.

A group of 21 Democratic lawmakers representing states stretching from the Southwest to the East Coast sent a letter last week to the Indian Health Service. They are asking that the federal agency make available culturally appropriate support services such as a hotline and other mental and spiritual programs as the federal government embarks on its investigation into the schools.

Agency officials said in a statement Monday they are reviewing the request and discussing what steps to take next.

Advocacy groups say additional trauma resources for Indigenous communities are more urgent than ever. "The first step we need to take is caring for our boarding school survivors," said Deborah Parker, a citizen of the Tulalip Tribes and director of policy and advocacy at the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition.

U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland has acknowledged the process will be painful. She and many others have talked about the federal government's attempt to wipe out tribal identity, language and culture through its boarding school policies and how that past has continued to manifest itself through long-standing trauma, cycles of violence and abuse, premature deaths, mental health issues and substance abuse.

Part of the Interior Department's work includes identifying potential burial sites at former schools and documenting the names and tribal affiliations of the students buried there. The agency has promised to work with tribes on how best to protect the sites and respect families and communities.

The lawmakers in their letter described the boarding school era as a "stain in America's history." They wrote that revisiting that history undoubtedly will be traumatic for survivors and their communities.

"We are confident that IHS is equipped to consider ways to prevent inflicting or worsening existing intergenerational trauma," the letter reads.

The Indian Health Service noted Monday that Native American youth are 2.5 times more likely to experience trauma compared to their non-Native peers and that the agency aims to provide a "safe, supportive, welcoming, non-punitive, respectful, healthy and healing environment for all patients and staff."

Still, it will take work to ensure services are widely available, as criticism of the Indian Health Service and chronic funding inadequacies have spanned decades and numerous presidential administrations. The pandemic exacerbated health care disparities seen in many Indigenous communities.

Under the Biden administration's latest spending proposal, the agency would see a 36% increase in its annual budget for the next fiscal year. That would mark the largest single-year funding increase for the agency in decades, officials have said. About \$420 million in pandemic relief funds also will be aimed at expanding mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment services at IHS and tribal health programs.

Beginning in the early 1800s, the effort to assimilate Indigenous youth into white society by removing them from their homes and shipping them off to boarding schools spanned more than a century. According to the boarding school healing coalition, hundreds of thousands of Native American children passed through boarding schools in the U.S. between 1869 and the 1960s.

While research and family accounts confirm there were children who never made it home, a full accounting of deaths at the schools has never been done.

Some tribes and others have embarked on their own investigations.

In the coming months, researchers are planning to use ground-penetrating radar at the site of a former boarding school in Utah where tribal leaders say there may be unmarked graves. Corrina Bow, chairwoman for the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, said boarding school officials would take children as young as 6 years old and force them to work at a farm on the property.

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## As cases climb, GOP lawmakers try to ban vaccine mandates

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota House lawmakers have tried to pressure Gov. Kristi Noem to call a special session to pass a ban on employers requiring COVID-19 vaccinations even as virus cases climbed on Monday.

Several Republicans in the House of Representatives have circulated drafts of bills that would stop employers from mandating vaccinations against the virus, stepping up pressure on Noem to call a special session for them to approve the bills. But she has resisted those calls, saying there is not widespread support for a special session. The issue has Noem, who has carved out a nationwide following for her hands-off approach to the virus, being pushed from the right to intervene on the state's largest employer, Sanford Health.

House Speaker Spencer Gosch said late Friday he wanted the governor to call a special session as he released a draft of a bill that would make COVID-19 vaccination status "strictly confidential medical information" that would be off-limits to employers. The state's largest employer, Sanford Health, plans to require all employees to get a shot by Nov. 1.

"Gov. Noem has been a leader in fighting tyranny this past year, and we believe that she can understand the urgency here," Gosch said in a statement.

However, Noem's spokesman Ian Fury cast Noem's resistance to the idea as keeping with her conservative approach to the pandemic and argued that government should not be dictating whether or not employers require vaccinations for their employees.

"Throughout this pandemic Gov. Noem has remained focused on government's proper role, as well as her own authority," he said in a statement.

However, whether or not the governor calls a special session may have little bearing on the deadlines employers throughout the state have set for employees to be vaccinated. In order to cause any passed bill to take immediate effect before the deadlines, it must gain a two-thirds majority in both the House and Senate. With some in Senate leadership already opposed to the mandate bans, that is unlikely.

Nearly 56% of people eligible for a vaccine in the state have received one, according to the Department of Health.

Meanwhile, cases of the virus have resurged to their highest levels since February. The Department of Health reported 331 new cases Monday. New cases in the state have more-than-tripled in the last two weeks, according to Johns Hopkins researchers.

The number of people hospitalized with COVID-19 statewide climbed to 127, leaving about 42% of hospital beds open. Sanford Health is preparing for a fresh wave of the virus over the next four to six weeks, the Argus Leader reported.

## South Dakota Prep Polls

By The Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Prep Media football polls for the week of Aug. 23 are listed below, ranking the top-five teams in each class. First-place votes received are indicated in parentheses.

### Class 11AAA

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP	Pvs
1. Harrisburg	(8)	0-0	72	1
2. Brandon Valley	(7)	0-0	69	2
3. Sioux Falls Roosevelt	(1)	0-0	45	3
4. Sioux Falls O' Gorman	-	0-0	30	4
5. Sioux Falls Jefferson	-	0-0	10	5

Others receiving votes: Washington 8, Lincoln 6.

### Class 11AA

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP	Pvs
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1. Pierre (13)	0-0	76	1	
2. Brookings (2)	0-0	48	2	
3. Yankton -	0-0	39	3	
4. Tea Area (1)	0-0	37	4	
5. Watertown -	0-0	14	5	

Others receiving votes: Aberdeen Central 12, Mitchell 7, Sturgis 4, Huron 3.

## Class 11A

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP	Pvs
1. Canton (9)	0-0	71	1	
2. Dell Rapids (6)	0-0	61	2	
3. Madison (1)	0-0	48	3	
4. West Central -	0-0	31	4	
5. Dakota Valley -	0-0	15	5	

Others receiving votes: Sioux Falls Christian 9, Milbank 4, Custer 1.

## Class 11B

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP	Pvs
1. Winner (18)	1-0	90	1	
2. Bridgewater-Emery-Ethan	-	-	1-0	72 2
3. Sioux Valley -	0-1	49	3	
4. Woon.-Wess. Springs-SC	-	-	0-0	26 5
5. Elk Point-Jefferson	-	0-0	22	RV

Receiving votes: McCook Central-Montrose 5, Aberdeen Roncalli 3, St. Thomas More 2, Mobridge-Pollock 1.

## Class 9AA

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP	Pvs
1. Platte-Geddes (18)	1-0	90	1	
2. Canistota-Freeman	-	0-1	58	2
3. Hanson -	1-0	57	3	
4. Hamlin -	1-0	43	4	
5. Garretson -	1-0	11	NR	

Others receiving votes: Timber Lake 7, Viborg-Hurley 2, Chester Area 2.

## Class 9A

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP	Pvs
1. De Smet (18)	1-0	90	2	
2. Howard -	1-0	63	3	
3. Wolsey-Wessington	-	0-1	53	1
4. Herreid-Selby Area	-	1-0	44	4
5. Wall -	1-0	9	RV	

Others receiving votes: Castlewood 8, Kimball-White Lake 3, Kadoka Area 1, Warner 1.

## Class 9B

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP	Pvs	1.HardingCo.-Bison (11)	1-0	82	2	2.FaulktonArea (6)	1-0	75	3	3.Alcester-Hudson -	0-0	42	4	4.SullyButtes
-	1-0	30	RV	5.Gayville-Volin (1)	1-0	28	RV										

Others receiving votes: Dell Rapids St. Mary 5, Avon 4, Faith 2, Hitchcock-Tulare 1, Potter County 1.<

## Man arrested after crashing vehicle into two houses

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Pierre man has been arrested after he allegedly drove a truck into two houses in Sioux Falls, sending a homeowner to the hospital.

The Argus Leader reported the 24-year-old man failed to navigate a curb early Monday morning. He hit one house, then crashed into a second. His truck ended up in a bedroom. The 41-year-old homeowner

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was sleeping in the room and suffered a concussion when he was hit by debris.

Jesse Peterson, the owner of the first home that was struck, said the impact sounded like an explosion. He said he found the driver unconscious. Nobody in his house was hurt.

A police spokesman says the driver could face charges of driving under the influence and vehicular battery.

## Hochul, NY's 1st female governor, inherits vast challenges

By MARINA VILLENEUVE Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Kathy Hochul became the first female governor of New York on Tuesday, inheriting immense challenges as she takes over an administration facing criticism for inaction during Andrew Cuomo's distracted final months in office.

Hochul, a Democrat and former member of Congress from Western New York, took the oath of office just after midnight in a brief, private event overseen by the state's chief judge, Janet DiFiore.

A ceremonial swearing-in was planned Tuesday morning at the New York State Capitol, with more pomp than the brief, legally required event during the night. Hochul planned a public address at 3 p.m.

"I feel the weight of responsibility on my shoulders and I'll tell New Yorkers I'm up to the task. And I'm really proud to be able to serve as their governor and I won't let them down," Hochul told one of her hometown Buffalo television stations, WGRZ, as she left the Capitol early Tuesday morning.

Over the next few months, Hochul, who was a little-known figure as lieutenant governor, will have an opportunity to reshape the way power works in Albany, where Cuomo dominated decision-making for years before being felled in a sexual harassment scandal.

For generations, it's been said that all of the real decisions in the state government were made by "three men in a room," the governor and the leaders of the state Senate and Assembly.

Now, for the first time in state history, two of those three — Hochul and Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins — are women. Only the state Assembly is led by a man, Speaker Carl Heastie.

Cuomo left office at 12:00 a.m., two weeks after he announced he would resign rather than face an impeachment battle that seemed inevitable after a report by independent investigators, overseen by Attorney General Letitia James, concluded he had sexually harassed 11 women.

On his final day in office, Cuomo released a pre-recorded farewell address in which he again said he was innocent and portrayed himself as the victim of a "media frenzy."

Hochul takes over with the state still dealing with rolling crises caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

In the coming weeks she is expected to make decisions about whether to mandate masks for children returning to school — something she's already said she favors.

She will be under pressure to get federal rent relief money into the hands of tenants. Little of the \$2 billion set aside by the federal government to help New Yorkers pay off rent debt has been distributed to date in the state and thousands face the possibility of eviction if the state allows protections to expire.

And Hochul faces questions about whether she'll change the culture of governance in New York, where many other top Democrats have, for years, complained about being shut out of key decisions and bullied by Cuomo.

Former Gov. David Paterson, who, like Hochul, unexpectedly became governor when his predecessor resigned, said she will need to restore faith in the office.

"There's going to be some pressure on Gov. Hochul, as there was on me, to kind of restore the values and to restore the conduct and the decorum that bespeaks a governor," Paterson said.

She'll also have to work quickly. Hochul has already said she intends to run for a full term next year, and will have just months to establish herself as the favorite before a spring Democratic primary.

In the meantime, she'll be building an administration — a task that began early Tuesday with the oath of office.

DiFiore administered the oath in front of a stone fireplace in a room at the Capitol, atop which were placed family pictures.

Hochul, her husband, Bill Hochul, and DiFiore entered the room wearing masks, taking them off when



the ceremony began. Hochul placed her hand on a bible held by her smiling husband, a former federal prosecutor and current general counsel for Buffalo-based food service and hospitality company Delaware North.

Hochul signed a pile of papers — including the oath — using a set of ten pens dated “August 24, 2021,” while her family stood behind her looking on. She then said thank to her individual members of her staff, and told them she’d see them tomorrow before she left the room.

## UN rights chief warns of abuses amid Taliban’s Afghan blitz

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — The U.N. human rights chief warned Tuesday that she had credible reports of “summary executions” and restrictions on women in areas under Taliban control in Afghanistan, fueling fears of what their rule might hold a week before U.S. forces are set to withdraw.

Michelle Bachelet urged the Human Rights Council to take “bold and vigorous action” to monitor the rights situation in Afghanistan in the wake of the Taliban’s stunning takeover, as she sought to ensure that international attention on the country doesn’t wane.

Taliban leaders have promised to restore security and tried to project an image of moderation, but many Afghans are skeptical and are racing to leave the country, leading to chaos at Kabul’s international airport. Amid scattered reports, it has been difficult to determine how widespread abuses might be and whether they reflect that Taliban leaders are saying one thing and doing another, or if fighters on the ground are taking matters into their own hands.

Leaders from the Group of Seven nations plan to meet later Tuesday to discuss the burgeoning refugee crisis and the collapse of the Afghan government amid wrangling over whether the full U.S. withdrawal of troops could be extended beyond the end of the month to allow more time to evacuate those desperate to leave.

U.S. administration officials have refused to be pinned down about whether an extension is likely or even possible given that a Taliban spokesman has warned that Aug. 31 is a “red line” and that extending the American presence would “provoke a reaction.”

In the meantime, tragic scenes at the airport have transfixed the world. Afghans poured onto the tarmac last week and some clung to a U.S. military transport plane as it took off, later plunging to their deaths. At least seven people died that day, and another seven died Sunday in a panicked stampede. An Afghan soldier was killed Monday in a gunfight.

On Tuesday, Bachelet called for strong action to investigate reports of rights abuses.

“At this critical moment, the people of Afghanistan look to the Human Rights Council to defend and protect their rights,” she said. “I urge this council to take bold and vigorous action, commensurate with the gravity of this crisis, by establishing a dedicated mechanism to closely monitor the evolving human rights situation in Afghanistan.”

By “mechanism,” Bachelet was referring to the possibility that the council might appoint a commission of inquiry, special rapporteur or fact-finding mission on the situation in Afghanistan.

While advocacy groups like Human Rights Watch echoed such calls, a draft resolution at the council stopped far short of intensified scrutiny — and appeared to push back any deeper look at the rights situation until next year.

Bachelet cited reports of “summary executions” of civilians and former security forces who were no longer fighting, the recruitment of child soldiers, and restrictions on the rights of women to move around freely and of girls to go to school. She cited repression of peaceful protests and expressions of dissent.

Bachelet did not specify what time timeframe she was referring to or the source of her reports.

Days earlier, a Norway-based private intelligence group said it obtained evidence that the Taliban have rounded up Afghans on a blacklist of people they believe worked in key roles with the previous Afghan administration or with U.S.-led forces. Several Afghans are in hiding, saying they fear such reprisals.

When the Taliban last ruled Afghanistan in the late 1990s, the group largely confined women to their

homes, banned television and music, chopped off the hands of suspected thieves and held public executions. Bachelet noted that Taliban leaders have recently pledged to respect the rights of women, girls and ethnic minorities and refrain from reprisals.

"The onus is now fully on the Taliban to translate these commitments into reality," she told the 47-member-state council, which is the U.N.'s top human rights body.

## Gig apps for a pandemic economy: Part time, no commitment

By UROOBA JAMAL Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — For months, Gabrielle Walker had been looking for a part-time job. She applied to restaurant chains and retailers like Nando's and Primark, and she scoured the job search site Indeed.

Nothing.

Then one day, Walker, a 19-year-old student at University College London, was scrolling through TikTok and stumbled on a video about an app called Stint. A face on the screen explained that Stint could help students earn money by working brief temporary stints at places like restaurants and bars that require little training or experience.

Walker downloaded the app, took a 15-minute intro course and days later snagged a job polishing cutlery at a Michelin-star restaurant in London — for one day. Between May and June, she took on several other gigs, squeezing them into her class schedule where she could.

"Everyone could do it," Walker said.

Stint, in use across the U.K., has grown in popularity, alongside similar apps in the United States like Instaworks and Gigpro, as one response to the peculiar ways in which economies have been rebounding from the pandemic recession. Uncertainty about the durability of the recoveries and the tentative re-openings of businesses still threatened by the coronavirus have made flexibility a top priority — for workers and employees alike.

As the hospitality industry, in particular, confronts worker shortages, these apps are helping form an ultra-short-term worker-employee relationship, something that hasn't widely existed in recent decades. Walker noted that even students with no relevant experience could sign up with one of these apps and likely find paid work — as brief as a couple of hours — that fits their schedule from week to week.

In contrast to Stint, Instaworks and Gigpro are suited more for skilled or experienced workers who want or need short-term shifts. Collectively, the newer apps represent a variation on the many gig apps that sprang up in recent years — from Uber and DoorDash to TaskRabbit and Thumbtack — that typically serve households in need of a one-time service. What distinguishes the latest apps is that they link workers with employers that have a steady need for labor but don't necessarily want to commit to permanent hires given the uncertainties from the pandemic.

"It's no surprise that during COVID, when everything became virtual that these ... marketplaces might have exploded," said Fiona Greig, co-president of the JPMorgan Chase Institute, a global financial thinktank, whose research expertise includes the online platform economy.

The newer gig apps could potentially help ease the labor shortage in England, where nearly all pandemic restrictions were lifted last month. Most recently, its "pingdemic" — by which the National Health Service alerted people to self-isolate if they had been in close proximity to someone who had tested positive for the virus — disrupted businesses. Many workers had to isolate themselves, and some stores had to shut down temporarily for lack of labor.

"Gig economy workers can help plug the gap," said Mariano Mamertino, a senior economist at LinkedIn.

While Mamertino holds out hope that pandemic-related shortages will ease as England's economy reopens and vaccine rollouts continue, "one question mark that remains for the UK," he said, "is whether firms will have to permanently adapt to a new post-Brexit status quo."

Not everyone is celebrating the trend. UKHospitality, the leading trade association for Britain's hospitality sector, suggested that while businesses are used to innovating, the economic forces that have created staff shortages in the industry could pose enduring problems.

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The association, along with the British Beer and Pub Association and the British Institute of Innkeeping, asserted that the road to recovery requires that the government “put in place the right trading environment,” including an expansion of business tax cuts. UKHospitality has also urged an overhaul of post-Brexit visa rules to make it easier for foreigners to work in the industry.

Sol Schlagman, who co-founded Stint along with his brother, Sam, drew from his own experience as a college student in creating it.

“It’s the student that needs to have money to pay their rent,” he said, “but it’s also the student that wants to buy a pair of shoes they wouldn’t necessarily buy otherwise.”

The restaurant chain Chipotle uses Stint to recruit workers “at short notice to cover peak times in our restaurants,” said Jacob Sumner, its director of European operations. Chilango, another food chain, said its stores use the app when they need “extra pairs of hands during busy times.”

The use of apps to connect businesses and workers for short-term gig work appears to be a growing trend in the United States as well.

“The biggest change we see is this desire for flexible staffing on both sides,” said Sumir Meghani, CEO and co-founder of Instaworks, which connects businesses with temporary or short-term hourly workers.

During the pandemic, Meghani said, businesses discovered that the rise and fall of viral cases — and the resulting disruptions to their operations — sometimes require them to scale up or down at any given notice.

Greater flexibility in the worker-employer relationship during the pandemic period is also what Gigpro’s founder, Ben Ellsworth, has observed. His app, which operates in three Southern U.S. states, is expanding, to try to address staffing shortages exacerbated by the pandemic.

Ellsworth, who spent years in the restaurant industry, said that with eateries in particular, workers have been “plagued with low wages, lack of incentive, no real focus on flexibility or quality of life.” Stuck at home after being laid off, many of these workers either turned to other industries, Ellsworth suggested, or came to recognize gig work as an opportunity to tailor their work hours to their own needs. That realization arrived just as businesses, too, sought workers to fill part-time hourly slots — at least temporarily — as business restrictions eased.

“Now that restrictions have been lifted and businesses are starting to boom again,” Ellsworth said, “they’re getting stretched.”

While the flexibility provided by these apps serves a need now, some critics foresee a threat to workers over the long run. If gig workers replace jobs formerly filled by permanent restaurant or retail employees, they could diminish job security, along with sick pay and other benefits.

“The flexibility of the gig economy may be welcome when crises take out regular staff, but this comes at a potential cost to society,” said Ann Light, a professor of design and creative technology at the University of Sussex.

Still, Greig acknowledged that the apps can lower barriers to entry for people who need cash quickly, a category that includes many young workers with limited work experience.

The role of gig workers, for employment purposes, can vary widely with these apps. Student users of Stint are employed as workers, guaranteed a set wage and accrued holiday pay. On the other hand, those who use Instaworks are considered independent workers who can choose to be either contractors or employees. Gigpro users are independent contractors.

Platforms also take their cue from an international perspective, Light suggested, even as they battle local jurisdictions. This year, Uber drivers in Britain won rights as workers. Similarly, last week, a judge struck down a California measure that exempted app-based ride and delivery services like Uber from a state law requiring that drivers be classified as employees eligible for benefits.

In the meantime, the worker apps appear to be filling a niche. For Monty Jackson, a student at the University of Plymouth in England, the work gigs he’s obtained through Stint have helped fund his swimming hobby.

He had been working part time at restaurants and bars. But the work shifts he received had interfered with his studies. Now, he plugs in only the hours when he’s available and picks up a work slot sometimes

the same day he looks for one.

"The flexibility attracted me," Jackson said.

## G-7 grapples with Afghanistan, an afterthought not long ago

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two months ago, the leaders of the world's seven major industrialized democracies met at the height of summer on England's southwest coast. It was a happy occasion: the first in-person summit of the Group of Seven nations in two years due to the coronavirus pandemic and the welcomed appearance of President Joe Biden and his "America is back" message on matters ranging from comity to COVID-19 to climate change.

The smiles and sunshine seem distant as G-7 leaders meet again Tuesday, in virtual format, for crisis talks on Afghanistan. The country's burgeoning refugee crisis, the collapse of its government and fears of a resurgence in Afghan-based terrorism have left the G-7 allies scrambling and threaten the unity of the bloc.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the host of the June summit in the English resort of Carbis Bay, is reconvening the leaders amid widespread unhappiness from America's allies about Biden's handling of the Afghanistan withdrawal. Complaints have come from Britain, France, Germany and others in the G-7, which includes only one non-NATO member, Japan.

The lawmakers who head the G-7 nations' foreign affairs committees urged leaders in a letter on Tuesday to "avoid arbitrary dates for ending military support to the evacuation."

Johnson and others, including French President Emmanuel Macron, are pushing Biden to extend his self-imposed Aug. 31 deadline for the total withdrawal of U.S. forces in order to ensure the evacuation of all foreign nationals as well as Afghans who worked for or supported the American-led NATO operation that vanquished the Taliban in 2001 and has now accepted defeat.

"The British position is we want to stay longer if it is possible to do so," said U.K. Defense Secretary Ben Wallace.

But he said the 1,000 British troops at Kabul's airport would be unable to keep up the operation when the much larger American contingent leaves.

Despite Biden's April announcement that the U.S. would completely withdraw from Afghanistan by the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, the nation was almost an afterthought when the G-7 met in June. COVID-19, China and climate change dominated the agenda. And expectations for Biden's impending summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin were at the top of people's tongues.

The leaders put Afghanistan as number 57 out of 70 points in their final 25-page communique -- behind Ukraine, Belarus and Ethiopia. Afghanistan didn't even feature in the one-and-a-half page summary of the document. NATO had already signed off on the U.S. withdrawal and all that appeared to be left was the completion of an orderly withdrawal and hopes for a peace deal between the Afghan government and Taliban.

"We call on all Afghan parties to reduce violence and agree on steps that enable the successful implementation of a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire and to engage fully with the peace process. In Afghanistan, a sustainable, inclusive political settlement is the only way to achieve a just and durable peace that benefits all Afghans," the leaders said, without a hint of urgency.

The leaders said they were determined "to help the people of Afghanistan, including women, young people and minority groups, as they seek to preserve hard-won rights and freedoms."

But as summer swings into fall, those hopes have been dashed.

On the eve of the meeting, the White House said Biden and Johnson had spoken by phone and discussed "the importance of close coordination with allies and partners in managing the current situation and forging a common approach to Afghanistan policy."

Johnson's office said the two leaders "agreed to continue working together to ensure those who are eligible to leave are able to, including after the initial phase of the evacuation has ended."

Biden administration officials have refused to be pinned down about whether an extension is likely or

even possible given the Taliban's demand that all U.S. forces leave by the Aug. 31 deadline.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said she expected questions about the Afghanistan evacuation timeline to be part the G-7 meeting. Psaki would not predict any announcements from the meeting but said the focus would be to evacuate Americans and Afghan allies as quickly as possible.

White House aides have said they think the meeting could grow contentious, as U.S. allies have looked on with disapproval at the tumultuous American drawdown.

Senior British military officers have expressed anger over the U.S. pullout, saying it exposes the hollowness of the trans-Atlantic "special relationship" — a phrase used since World War II to stress the bonds of history, friendship and shared diplomatic interests between London and Washington.

And the German government is expressing impatience with the pace of the evacuation effort. Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said the majority of local staff who worked for his country in Afghanistan haven't yet been gotten out and called Tuesday's G-7 meeting "very important" for discussing international access to the Kabul airport beyond Aug. 31.

British defense minister Wallace, who has called the U.S. deal with the Taliban that set the deadline a "mistake," was downbeat about the prospects of an extension to the evacuation effort.

"I think it is unlikely," he told Sky News. "Not only because of what the Taliban has said but if you look at the public statements of President Biden I think it is unlikely.

"It is definitely worth us all trying, and we will."

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AP writers Jonathan Lemire in New York, and Jill Lawless in London, contributed to this report.

## Harris rebukes China in major speech on Indo-Pacific

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP) — U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris delivered a sharp rebuke to China for its incursions in the South China Sea, warning its actions there amount to "coercion" and "intimidation" and affirming that the U.S. will support its allies in the region against Beijing's advances.

"We know that Beijing continues to coerce, to intimidate and to make claims to the vast majority of the South China Sea," she said in a major foreign policy speech Tuesday in Singapore in which she laid out the Biden administration's vision for the Indo-Pacific. "Beijing's actions continue to undermine the rules-based order and threaten the sovereignty of nations."

Harris, who is on a weeklong swing through Southeast Asia, declared that the U.S. "stands with our allies and our partners" in the face of threats from China.

The speech sought to cement the U.S. commitment to supporting its allies in an area of growing importance to the Biden administration, which has made countering China's influence globally a centerpiece of its foreign policy. And it came during a critical moment for the United States, as the Biden administration seeks to further solidify its pivot toward Asia while America's decades-long focus on the Middle East comes to a messy end with the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Harris underscored this shift, calling the Indo-Pacific "critically important to our nation's security and prosperity." She said that while the U.S. is focused on closing out its Afghanistan engagement by evacuating as many people as possible, "it is also imperative that as we address developments in one region, we continue to advance our interests in other regions, including this region."

Her rebuke to Beijing amounted to her sharpest comments yet on the U.S. foe. And China hit back, with Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin invoking Afghanistan in his response to a question about Harris' comments, saying the messy withdrawal from Kabul showed the U.S. had lost credibility. He charged that the U.S. "can smear, suppress, coerce, and bully other countries at will in order to maintain America first, without paying any price."

"This is the order that the U.S. wants. The U.S. always tries to make use of the rules and order to justify its own selfish, bullying and hegemonic behavior, but who still believe it now?" Wang said.

In her remarks, Harris was careful to emphasize that the U.S. is seeking greater engagement in the

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Indo-Pacific region not just to counter China, but to advance an "optimistic vision that we have for our participation and partnership in the region." In deference to Singapore's staunch neutrality in the U.S.-China dispute, Harris also affirmed that the U.S. isn't looking to "make anyone choose between countries."

Speaking in a country that serves as the anchor of the U.S. naval presence in Southeast Asia, Harris emphasized the significance the region holds for U.S. defense. She also emphasized the significant U.S. economic ties there, noting that Southeast Asia represents America's fourth largest export market.

On Monday, Harris told sailors aboard a U.S. combat ship at the Changi naval base in Singapore that "a big part of the history of the 21st century will be written about this very region" and that their work defending the region was pivotal.

"It is in our vital interest to stand united with our allies and our partners in Southeast Asia in defense of a free and open Indo-Pacific," she said.

Harris also met Monday with Singapore President Halimah Yacob and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. The vice president's office announced a number of agreements out of that meeting aimed at combating cyberthreats, tackling climate change, addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and alleviating supply chain issues.

After her speech Tuesday, Harris held a roundtable discussion with business leaders on supply chain issues. Later, she planned to travel to Vietnam, where she'll meet with top officials Wednesday.

President Joe Biden himself has repeatedly emphasized his focus on China as one of America's main adversaries. In recent months, his administration has ramped up outreach to the Indo-Pacific region, with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman both visiting the area in the spring and summer. Secretary of State Antony Blinken also held a number of virtual meetings with Southeast Asian officials earlier this month.

The chaotic U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, however, complicated that message of support to the region, raising questions about the U.S. commitment to its allies. While Biden said last week that an indefinite engagement would have benefited "true strategic competitors" China and Russia, China has seized on the images of violence from the evacuation to slam the U.S. for its engagement there.

But Harris, during a joint news conference with Prime Minister Lee on Monday, said that her presence in the country, combined with the agreements around greater cooperation that the Biden administration has pursued with Indo-Pacific countries, speak "volumes in terms of the integrity of the relationships that the United States has around the world on many issues."

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This article corrects the name of the U.S. deputy secretary of state to Sherman instead of Austin.

## US WWII veteran reunites with Italians he saved as children

By CHARLENE PELE Associated Press

BOLOGNA, Italy (AP) — For more than seven decades, Martin Adler treasured a black-and-white photo of himself as a young American soldier with a broad smile with three impeccably dressed Italian children he is credited with saving as the Nazis retreated northward in 1944.

On Monday, the 97-year-old World War II veteran met the three siblings — now octogenarians themselves — in person for the first time since the war.

Adler held out his hand to grasp those of Bruno, Mafalda and Giuliana Naldi for the joyful reunion at Bologna's airport after a 20-hour journey from Boca Raton, Florida. Then, just as he did as a 20-year-old soldier in their village of Monterenzio, he handed out bars of American chocolate.

"Look at my smile," Adler said of the long-awaited in-person reunion, made possible by the reach of social media.

It was a happy ending to a story that could easily have been a tragedy.

The very first time the soldier and the children saw each other, in 1944, the three faces peeked out of a huge wicker basket where their mother had hidden them as soldiers approached. Adler thought the house was empty, so he trained his machine gun on the basket when he heard a sound, thinking a Ger-

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man soldier was hiding inside.

"The mother, Mamma, came out and stood right in front of my gun to stop me (from) shooting," Adler recalled. "She put her stomach right against my gun, yelling, 'Bambinis! Bambinis! Bambinis!' pounding my chest," Adler recalled.

"That was a real hero, the mother, not me. The mother was a real hero. Can you imagine you standing yourself in front of a gun and screaming 'Children! No!'" he said.

Adler still trembles when he remembers that he was only seconds away from opening fire on the basket. And after all these decades, he still suffers nightmares from the war, said his daughter, Rachele Donley.

The children, aged 3 to 6 when they met, were a happy memory. His company stayed on in the village for a while and he would come by and play with them.

Giuliana Naldi, the youngest, is the only one of the three with any recollection of the event. She recalls climbing out of the basket and seeing Adler and another U.S. soldier, who has since died.

"They were laughing," Naldi, now 80, remembers. "They were happy they didn't shoot."

She, on the other hand, didn't quite comprehend the close call.

"We weren't afraid for anything," she said.

She also remembers the soldier's chocolate, which came in a blue-and-white wrapper.

"We ate so much of that chocolate," she laughed.

Donley decided during the COVID-19 lockdown to use social media to try to track down the children in the old black-and-white photo, starting with veterans' groups in North America.

Eventually the photo was spotted by Italian journalist Matteo Incerti who had written books on World War II. He was able to track down Adler's regiment and where it had been stationed from a small detail in another photograph. The smiling photo was then published in a local newspaper, leading to the discovery of the identities of the three children, who by then were grandparents themselves.

They shared a video reunion in December, and waited until the easing of pandemic travel rules made the trans-Atlantic trip possible.

"I am so happy and so proud of him. Because things could have been so different in just a second. Because he hesitated, there have been generations of people," Donley said.

The serendipity isn't lost on Giuliana Naldi's 30-year-old granddaughter, Roberta Fontana, one of six children, eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren who descended from the three children hidden in the wicker basket.

"Knowing that Martin could have shot and that none of my family would exist is something very big," Fontana said. "It is very emotional."

During his stay in Italy, Adler will spend some time in the village where he was stationed, before traveling on to Florence, Naples and Rome, where he hopes to meet Pope Francis.

"My dad really wants to meet the pope," Donley said. "He wants to share his message of peace and love. My dad is all about peace."

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Colleen Barry contributed to this report from Milan.

## **At-risk Afghans fearing Taliban hunker down, wait to leave**

By SAMYA KULLAB and ELAINE GANLEY Associated Press

A knock at the door could spell doom. Every passing hour seems endless. That's the new reality for many Afghans who feel they have most to fear from the Taliban and have gone into hiding or are staying off the streets since the fighters swept to power this month.

Those hunkering down include employees of the collapsed government, civil society activists and women. They are desperate for news that they might be granted asylum somewhere else.

They fear a massive rollback of women's rights, or they are distrustful of the Taliban's promises that they won't seek revenge on former adversaries and that they want to form an inclusive government as the U.S. ends its 20-year war.

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One of those in hiding is Mobina, 39, a journalist from the city of Mazar-e-Sharif. After the Taliban overran her city, she fled with her two children and has found refuge in a safe house in Kabul.

"We are asking ourselves 'What is next?' We are crying because nothing can be fixed," Mobina said.

Elsewhere in the Afghan capital, Mumtaz is huddled with his family in their apartment. His father worked for the government and his brother was killed in a grenade attack in 2010 in Laghman province, where the Taliban have long been active. The family made a run to Kabul's airport after the Taliban entered the city on Aug. 15, but they encountered huge crowds, chaos and gunfire and went back home.

They haven't left the apartment since. Their anxiety grew after a neighbor warned them a group of armed men were looking for them. It is not always clear whether those knocking on doors or spreading fear are Taliban or criminals freed from prison during their sweep through the country.

"We can't go out. We just ask our neighbor to bring us food. ... We are really scared," said Mumtaz, 26, who recently graduated from law school. He said he has lost all sense of time.

Mobina and Mumtaz spoke on condition they be identified only by their first names, fearing reprisals. Both said they have not received threats directly from the Taliban so far.

Taliban fighters have set up checkpoints throughout Kabul, stopping motorists to ask where they are headed or checking car papers. There have also been some reports of Taliban going door to door in search of former government workers and civil activists.

Such reports could not always be independently verified, and it's not clear if they indicate that Taliban leaders are saying one thing and doing another, or if some on the ground are taking matters into their own hands. There is no indication of large-scale house-to-house searches.

Taliban commanders have said they have instructions to confiscate government property, including weapons and cars, but that they have told their men to respect private property. Taliban leaders have also encouraged government workers to return to work.

Still, there are growing signs of restrictions.

In the province of Sar-e-Pol, the Taliban issued a list of directives. They included banning music, Western-style dress, and jobs that require women to appear in public. The punishment for transgressions is beating. Girls in the city of Herat, the country's third-largest, meanwhile, were allowed to return to school as long as their teachers were women, or elderly men.

Some say it is in the interest of the Taliban not to revert to the brutality they displayed when they ruled from 1996 to 2001. In those years, they denied girls and women the right to an education, barred them from the public life, meted out brutal punishments, such as cutting of the hands of thieves, and carried out public executions.

Today, the Taliban will depend on foreign donor assistance to run the country, and may have a motive not to alienate the international community.

But those looking to leave the country fear that may not be enough, expressing concern what will happen as time passes and international focus falls elsewhere.

Mobina, the journalist, is in hiding with 25 people. The others include heads of civil society groups, women's rights defenders and leaders of development projects.

They are too scared to leave the safe house. They say they hear Taliban fighters are roaming the streets, stopping women and asking them where their male escort is. Under the Taliban's previous rule, women were required to have such an escort.

"Our friends are sending us money so we can afford to eat," Mobina said. "That is how we know we aren't forgotten."

And yet, the way out of Afghanistan is also treacherous.

Evacuations are being organized largely by embassies prioritizing their own nationals and the Afghans who worked directly with them. But thousands of other at-risk Afghans don't immediately qualify.

Those who are approved for evacuation face huge crowds at the airport, and Taliban patrols make it difficult for travelers to reach the gates. Stories abound of failed attempts over successive days.

Many others struggle to even reach the airport. Humaira Sadeq, the co-founder of the Afghan Women's Media Network, said women who fear they are on the Taliban's radar are advised to take precautions



when they travel to Kabul from the outlying areas, including leaving behind mobile phones and covering up with a burqa.

Sadeq managed to get out of Afghanistan after the Taliban seizure of the capital and traveled to another country. She spoke on condition that country was not named.

Now she spends sleepless nights fighting to get her fellow activists out. She submitted 22 names to an organization helping people leave, but none have made it onto evacuation lists yet. Sadeq said that some of the women don't have passports or are stuck in the provinces.

Women's rights activists say the world's seeming disregard for their fate was apparent when the United States, starting under then-President Donald Trump, negotiated a deal directly with the Taliban, bypassing Afghan political leaders and civil society groups. The deal, signed more than a year ago, included the terms and timetable for a withdrawal of foreign troops.

"The U.S. made a deal with the Taliban on our behalf," said Zubaida Akbar, an activist now based in the U.S. She works with FEMENA, a women's organization that is helping Mobina and others with temporary housing and trying to get them on evacuation lists.

President Joe Biden called the anguish of trapped Afghans "gut-wrenching" and insisted that the U.S. would work to help get vulnerable Afghans, including women leaders and journalists, out of the country.

Mobina said she can't bring herself to tell the young women who looked to her for inspiration that she is trying to leave.

"If there was any chance for me to stay, I would," she said.

## Taliban takeover prompts fears of a resurgent al-Qaida

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The lightning-fast changes in Afghanistan are forcing the Biden administration to confront the prospect of a resurgent al-Qaida, the group that attacked America on Sept. 11, 2001, at the same time the U.S. is trying to stanch violent extremism at home and cyberattacks from Russia and China.

With the rapid withdrawal of U.S. forces and rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, "I think al-Qaida has an opportunity, and they're going to take advantage of that opportunity," says Chris Costa, who was senior director for counterterrorism in the Trump administration.

"This is a galvanizing event for jihadists everywhere."

Al-Qaida's ranks have been significantly diminished by 20 years of war in Afghanistan, and it's far from clear that the group has the capacity in the near future to carry out catastrophic attacks on America such as the 9/11 strikes, especially given how the U.S. has fortified itself in the past two decades with surveillance and other protective measures.

But a June report from the U.N. Security Council said the group's senior leadership remains present inside Afghanistan, along with hundreds of armed operatives. It noted that the Taliban, who sheltered al-Qaida fighters before the Sept. 11 attacks, "remain close, based on friendship, a history of shared struggle, ideological sympathy and intermarriage."

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby acknowledged Friday that al-Qaida remains a presence in Afghanistan, though quantifying it is hard because of a reduced intelligence-gathering capability in the country and "because it's not like they carry identification cards and register somewhere."

Even inside the country, al-Qaida and the Taliban represent only two of the urgent terrorism concerns, as evidenced by unease about the potential for Islamic State attacks against Americans in Afghanistan that over the weekend forced the U.S. military to develop new ways to get evacuees to the airport in Kabul. The Taliban and IS have fought each other in the past, but the worry now is that Afghanistan could again be a safe harbor for multiple extremists determined to attack the U.S. or other countries.

President Joe Biden has spoken repeatedly of what he calls an "over-the-horizon capability" that he says will enable the U.S. to keep track of terrorism threats from afar. His national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, told reporters Monday that Biden has been clear that counterterrorism capabilities have evolved to the point where the threat can be suppressed without a strong boots-on-the-ground presence. He said the

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intelligence community does not believe al-Qaida currently has the capability to attack the U.S.

The U.S. is also presumably anticipating that strengthened airport screening and more sophisticated surveillance can be more effective than 20 years ago in thwarting an attack. But experts worry that intelligence-gathering capabilities needed as an early-warning system against an attack will be negatively affected by the troop withdrawal.

An added complication is the sheer volume of pressing national security threats that dwarf what the U.S. government was confronting before the Sept. 11 attacks. These include sophisticated cyber operations from China and Russia that can cripple critical infrastructure or pilfer sensitive secrets, nuclear ambitions in Iran and an ascendant domestic terrorism threat laid bare by the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

FBI Director Chris Wray has described that home-grown threat as "metastasizing," with the number of arrests of white supremacists and racially motivated extremists nearly tripling since his first year on the job. "My concern is that you can't compare 2001 to today," said Bruce Hoffman, a terrorism expert at Georgetown University. There's a "much vaster and better organized bureaucracy," he said, but it's burdened with demands not specifically tied to terrorism.

Hoffman said that although he didn't think al-Qaida would be able to quickly use Afghanistan as a launchpad for attacks against the U.S., it may re-establish "its coordinating function" in the region to work with and encourage strikes by its affiliates — a patient strategy that may yet be vindicated.

"Terrorist groups don't conform to train timetables or flight schedules," Hoffman said. "They do things when it suits them and, as al-Qaida was doing, they quietly lay the foundation in hopes that that foundation will eventually affect or determine their success."

The concern is resonant enough that Biden administration officials told Congress last week that, based on the evolving situation, they now believe terror groups like al-Qaida may be able to grow much faster than expected. In June, the Pentagon's top leaders said an extremist group like al-Qaida may be able to regenerate in Afghanistan and pose a threat to the U.S. homeland within two years of the American military's withdrawal.

The Sept. 11 attacks made al-Qaida the most internationally recognizable terror group, but in the past decade at least, the most potent threat inside the U.S. has come from individuals inspired by the Islamic State, resulting in deadly massacres like the ones in San Bernardino, California, and Orlando.

But al-Qaida hardly disappeared. U.S. authorities alleged last year that a Saudi gunman who killed three U.S. sailors at a military base in Florida in 2019 had communicated with al-Qaida operatives about planning and tactics. Last December, the Justice Department charged a Kenyan man with trying to stage a 9/11-style attack on the U.S. on behalf of the terrorist organization al-Shabab, which is linked to al-Qaida.

Now it's possible that other extremists will find themselves inspired by al-Qaida, even if not directed by it. "Until recently, I would have said that the threat from al-Qaida core is pretty modest. They didn't have safe haven in Afghanistan, their senior leadership was scattered," said Nathan Sales, former coordinator for counterterrorism at the State Department.

But, now with the Taliban back in control, "all of that could change and could change very rapidly."

Follow Eric Tucker on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP>

## US troops surge evacuations out of Kabul but threats persist

By ROBERT BURNS and ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military pulled off its biggest day of evacuation flights out of Afghanistan by far on Monday, but deadly violence that has blocked many desperate evacuees from entering Kabul's airport persisted, and the Taliban signaled they might soon seek to shut down the airlifts.

Twenty-eight U.S. military flights ferried about 10,400 people to safety out of Taliban-held Afghanistan over 24 hours that ended early Monday morning, and 15 C-17 flights over the next 12 hours brought out another 6,660, White House officials said. The chief Pentagon spokesman, John Kirby, said the faster pace of evacuation was due in part to coordination with Taliban commanders on getting evacuees into the airport.

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"Thus far, and going forward, it does require constant coordination and deconfliction with the Taliban," Kirby said. "What we've seen is, this deconfliction has worked well in terms of allowing access and flow as well as reducing the overall size of the crowds just outside the airport."

With access still difficult, the U.S. military went beyond the airport to carry out another helicopter retrieval of Americans. U.S. officials said a military helicopter picked up 16 American citizens Monday and brought them onto the airfield for evacuation. This was at least the second such rescue mission beyond the airport; Kirby said that last Thursday, three Army helicopters picked up 169 Americans near a hotel just beyond the airport gate and flew them onto the airfield.

President Joe Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said at the White House that talks with the Taliban are continuing as the administration looks for additional ways to safely move more Americans and others into the Kabul airport.

"We are in talks with the Taliban on a daily basis through both political and security channels," he said, adding that ultimately it will be Biden's decision alone whether to continue military-led evacuation operations beyond Aug. 31. That's the date Biden had set for completing the withdrawal of troops.

California Democrat Rep Adam Schiff, chairman of the House intelligence committee, told reporters after a committee briefing Monday on the Afghanistan withdrawal "it was hard for me to imagine" wrapping up the airlifts by the end of the month. He also said it was clear "there were any number of warnings" to the administration "of a very rapid takeover" by the Taliban.

After more than a week of evacuations plagued by major obstacles, including Taliban forces and crushing crowds that are making approaching the airport difficult and dangerous, the number of people flown out met — and exceeded — U.S. projections for the first time. The count was more than twice the 3,900 flown out in the previous 24 hours on U.S. military planes.

Army Gen. Stephen Lyons, head of U.S. Transportation Command, which manages the military aircraft that are executing the Kabul airlift, told a Pentagon news conference that more than 200 planes are involved, including aerial refueling planes, and that arriving planes are spending less than an hour on the tarmac at Kabul before loading and taking off. He said the nonstop mission is taking a toll on aircrews.

"They're tired," Lyons said of the crews. "They're probably exhausted in some cases."

On a more positive note, Lyons said that in addition to the widely reported case of an Afghan woman giving birth aboard a U.S. evacuation aircraft, two other babies have been born in similar circumstances. He did not provide details.

The Pentagon said it has added a fourth U.S. military base, in New Jersey, to three others — in Virginia, Texas and Wisconsin — that are prepared to temporarily house arriving Afghans. Maj. Gen. Hank Williams, the Joint Staff deputy director for regional operations, told reporters there are now about 1,200 Afghans at those military bases. The four bases combined are capable of housing up to 25,000 evacuees, Kirby said.

Afghan evacuees continued to arrive at Dulles International Airport outside of Washington. Exhaustion clouded the faces of many of the adults. How does it feel to be here, a journalist asked one man. "We are safe," he answered.

An older woman sank with relief into an offered wheelchair, and a little girl carried by an older boy shaded her eyes to look curiously around. The scramble to evacuate left many arrivals carrying only a bookbag or purse, or a plastic shopping bag of belongings. Some arrived for their new lives entirely empty-handed.

Biden said Sunday he would not rule out extending the evacuation beyond Aug. 31. But British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who will meet with Biden virtually on Tuesday in a G-7 leaders' summit on the chaotic withdrawal, is expected to press Biden for an extension to get out the maximum number of foreigners and Afghan allies possible.

Lawmakers, veterans organizations and refugee advocates in the U.S. also are urging Biden to keep up the U.S. military's evacuation out of the Kabul airport as long as it takes to airlift not just Americans, but Afghan allies and other Afghans most at risk from the Taliban.

But Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen, in an interview with Sky News, said that Aug. 31 is a "red line" the U.S. must not cross and that extending the American presence would "provoke a reaction."

Since the Taliban seized the capital Aug. 15, completing a stunning rout of the U.S.-backed Afghan

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government and military, the U.S. has been carrying out the evacuation in coordination with the Taliban, who have held off on attacking Americans under a 2020 withdrawal deal with the Trump administration.

Monday's warning signaled the Taliban could insist on shutting down the airlifts out of the Kabul airport in just over a week. Lawmakers, refugee groups, veterans' organizations and U.S. allies have said ending the evacuation then could strand countless Afghans and foreigners still hoping for flights out.

Since Aug. 14, the U.S. has evacuated and facilitated the evacuation of about 37,000 people.

A firefight just outside the airport killed at least one Afghan soldier early Monday, German officials said. It was the latest in days of often-lethal turmoil outside the airport. People coming in hopes of escaping Taliban rule face sporadic gunfire, beatings by the Taliban, and crowds that have trampled many.

Associated Press writers Aamer Madhani, Nomaan Merchant, Lolita C. Baldor, Hope Yen, Alexandra Jaffe, James LaPorta, Jonathan Lemire, Matthew Lee and Dan Huff contributed to this report.

## Kathy Hochul becomes New York's first female governor

By MARINA VILLENEUVE Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Kathy Hochul became the first female governor of New York at the stroke of midnight Tuesday, taking control of a state government desperate to get back to business after months of distractions over sexual harassment allegations against Andrew Cuomo.

The Democrat from western New York was sworn in as governor in a brief, private ceremony in the New York State Capitol overseen by the state's chief judge, Janet DiFiore.

Afterward, she told WGRZ, a Buffalo television station, she felt "the weight of responsibility" on her shoulders.

"I'll tell New Yorkers I'm up to the task. And I'm really proud to be able to serve as their governor and I won't let them down," she said.

Hochul's ascent to the top job was a history-making moment in a capital where women have only recently begun chipping away at a notoriously male-dominated political culture.

Cuomo left office at 12:00 a.m., two weeks after he announced he would resign rather than face a likely impeachment battle. He submitted his resignation letter late Monday to the leaders of the state Assembly and Senate.

On his final day in office, Cuomo released a pre-recorded farewell address in which he defended his record over a decade as New York's governor and portrayed himself as the victim of a "media frenzy."

Hochul was scheduled to have a ceremonial swearing-in event Tuesday morning at the Capitol, with more pomp than the brief, legally required event during the night.

She planned to meet with legislative leaders later in the morning and make a public address at 3 p.m.

For the first time, a majority of the most powerful figures in New York state government will be women, including state Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Attorney General Letitia James and the chief judge, DiFiore. The state Assembly is led by a man, Speaker Carl Heastie.

Hochul will inherit immense challenges as she takes over an administration facing criticism for inaction in Cuomo's final months.

COVID-19 has made a comeback, with new cases up nearly 1,370% since late June. Hospitalizations are climbing even as schools prepare to go back into session.

Big decisions lay ahead on whether to mandate masks or vaccines for certain groups, or whether to reinstate social distancing restrictions if the state's latest wave of infections worsens. Hochul has said she favors making masks mandatory for schoolchildren, a contrast with Cuomo, who said he lacked that authority.

The economy remains unsettled. Jobs lost during the pandemic have been coming back, but unemployment remains double what it was two years ago.

New York has also struggled to get federal relief money into the hands of tenants behind on their rent because of the pandemic, releasing just 6% of the budgeted \$2 billion so far. Thousands of households

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face the possibility of losing their homes if the state allows eviction protections to expire.

Hochul also faces questions about whether she'll change the culture of governance in New York, following a Cuomo administration that favored force over charm.

Cuomo's resignation comes after an independent investigation overseen by state Attorney General Letitia James concluded there was credible evidence he'd sexually harassed at least 11 women.

In his farewell remarks, Cuomo struck a defiant tone, saying the attorney general's report that triggered his resignation was designed to be "a political firecracker on an explosive topic, and it did work."

"There was a political and media stampede," he said.

Cuomo also touted himself as a bulwark against his party's left wing, which he said wants to defund the police and demonize businesses, and boasted of making government effective in his years in office. He cited his work battling the COVID-19 pandemic, legalizing same-sex marriage and hiking the minimum wage to \$15.

"I tried my best to deliver for you," Cuomo said.

Some critics jumped on Cuomo's remarks as self-serving.

Assemblymember Yuh-Line Niou, a fellow Democrat, tweeted he had a hundred million opportunities to improve as a leader and "Chose himself every time. Goodbye, Governor Cuomo."

Cuomo's top aide, Melissa DeRosa, released a statement saying the governor was exploring his options for his post-gubernatorial life but had "no interest in running for office again."

Cuomo's resignation won't end his legal problems.

An aide who said Cuomo groped her breast has filed a complaint with the Albany County Sheriff's Office. Separately, Cuomo was facing a legislative investigation into whether he misled the public about COVID-19 deaths in nursing homes to protect his reputation as a pandemic leader and improperly got help from state employees in writing a book that may net him \$5 million.

The switch in leadership was happening in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Henri, which narrowly missed Long Island on Sunday but dumped rain over the Catskill Mountains and Hudson Valley.

Hochul will need to quickly build her own team of advisers to steer the administration for at least the next 16 months.

Hochul, who said she didn't work closely with Cuomo and wasn't aware of the harassment allegations before they became public, has vowed no one will ever call her workplace "toxic."

"I have a different approach to governing," Hochul said Wednesday in Queens, adding, "I get the job done because I don't have time for distractions, particularly coming into this position."

She announced the planned appointments Monday of two top aides: Karen Persichilli Keogh will become Secretary to the Governor and Elizabeth Fine will be Hochul's chief legal counselor.

She plans to keep on Cuomo-era employees for 45 days to allow her time to interview new hires, but said she will not keep anyone found to have behaved unethically.

Hochul, who has already said she plans to run for a full term next year, is expected to pick a left-leaning New York City politician as her lieutenant governor. Hochul once represented a conservative Western New York district in Congress for a year and has a reputation as a moderate.

State Democratic Party Chair Jay Jacobs praised Hochul as "formidable."

"She's very experienced and I think she'll be a refreshing and exciting new governor," he said.

## Fossil leaves may reveal climate in last era of dinosaurs

By CHRISTINA LARSON AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Richard Barclay opens a metal drawer in archives of the Smithsonian Natural History Museum containing fossils that are nearly 100 million years old. Despite their age, these rocks aren't fragile. The geologist and botanist handles them with casual ease, placing one in his palm for closer examination.

Embedded in the ancient rock is a triangular leaf with rounded upper lobes. This leaf fell off a tree around the time that T-rex and triceratops roamed prehistoric forests, but the plant is instantly recognizable. "You can tell this is ginkgo, it's a unique shape," said Barclay. "It hasn't changed much in many millions of years."

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What's also special about ginkgo trees is that their fossils often preserve actual plant material, not simply a leaf's impression. And that thin sheet of organic matter may be key to understanding the ancient climate system — and the possible future of our warming planet.

But Barclay and his team first need to crack the plant's code to read information contained in the ancient leaf.

"Ginkgo is a pretty unique time capsule," said Peter Crane, a Yale University paleobotanist. As he wrote in "Ginkgo," his book on the plant, "It is hard to imagine that these trees, now towering above cars and commuters, grew up with the dinosaurs and have come down to us almost unchanged for 200 million years."

If a tree fell in an ancient forest, what can it tell scientists today?

"The reason scientists look back in the past is to understand what's coming in the future," said Kevin Anchukaitis, a climate researcher at the University of Arizona. "We want to understand how the planet has responded in the past to large-scale changes in climate — how ecosystems changed, how ocean chemistry and sea levels changed, how forests worked."

Of particular interest to scientists are "hothouse" periods when they believe carbon levels and temperatures were significantly higher than today. One such time occurred during the late Cretaceous period (66 million to 100 million years ago), the last era of the dinosaurs before a meteor slammed into Earth and most species went extinct.

Learning more about hothouse climates also gives scientists valuable data to test the accuracy of climate models for projecting the future, says Kim Cobb, a climate scientist at Georgia Tech University.

But climate information about the distant past is limited. Air bubbles trapped in ancient ice cores allow scientists to study ancient carbon dioxide levels, but those only go back about 800,000 years.

That's where the Smithsonian's collection of ginkgo leaves come in. Down a warren of corridors, Barclay hops across millennia — as is only possible in a museum — to the 19th century, when the Industrial Revolution had started changing the climate.

From a cabinet, he withdraws sheets of paper where Victorian-era scientists taped and tied ginkgo leaves plucked from botanical gardens of their time. Many specimens have labels written in beautiful cursive, including one dated Aug. 22, 1896.

The leaf shape is virtually identical to the fossil from around 100 million years ago, and to a modern leaf Barclay holds in his hand. But one key difference can be viewed with a microscope — how the leaf has responded to changing carbon in the air.

Tiny pores on a leaf's underside are arranged to take in carbon dioxide and respire water, allowing the plant to transform sunlight into energy. When there's a lot of carbon in the air, the plant needs fewer pores to absorb the carbon it needs. When carbon levels drop, the leaves produce more pores to compensate.

Today, scientists know the global average level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is about 410 parts per million — and Barclay knows what that makes the leaf look like. Thanks to the Victorian botanical sheets, he knows what ginkgo leaves looked like before humans had significantly transformed the planet's atmosphere.

Now he wants to know what pores in the fossilized ginkgo leaves can tell him about the atmosphere 100 million years ago.

But first he needs a codebreaker, a translation sheet — sort of a Rosetta stone to decipher the handwriting of the ancient atmosphere.

That's why he's running an experiment in a forest clearing in Maryland.

One morning earlier this year, Barclay and project assistant Ben Lloyd tended rows of ginkgo trees within open-topped enclosures of plastic sheeting that expose them to rain, sunlight and changing seasons. "We are growing them this way so the plants experience natural cycles," Barclay said.

The researchers adjust the carbon dioxide pumped into each chamber, and an electronic monitor outside flashes the levels every five seconds.

Some trees are growing at current carbon dioxide levels. Others are growing at significantly elevated levels, approximating levels in the distant past, or perhaps the future.

"We're looking for analogues — we need something to compare with," said Barclay. If there's a match between what the leaves in the experiment look like and what the fossil leaves look like, that will give researchers a rough guide to the ancient atmosphere.

They also are studying what happens when trees grow in super-charged environments, and they found that more carbon dioxide makes them grow faster.

But adds Barclay, "If plants grow very quickly, they are more likely to make mistakes and be more susceptible to damage. ... It's like a race car driver that's more likely to go off the rails at high speeds."

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Follow Christina Larson on Twitter: @larsonchristina

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The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## Moderates bring House to standstill in Biden budget clash

By LISA MASCARO and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Confronting moderates, House Democratic leaders tried to muscle President Joe Biden's multitrillion-dollar budget blueprint over a key hurdle, working overnight to ease an intraparty showdown that risks upending their domestic infrastructure agenda.

Tensions flared and spilled into early Tuesday as a band of moderate lawmakers threatened to withhold their votes for the \$3.5 trillion plan. They were demanding the House first approve a \$1 trillion package of road, power grid, broadband and other infrastructure projects that's already passed the Senate.

Despite hours of negotiations at the Capitol, the House chamber came to a standstill and plans were thrown into flux late Monday, as leaders and lawmakers huddled privately to broker an agreement. Shortly after midnight, leaders announced no further votes would be taken until Tuesday's session.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi implored Democrats during a private caucus not to bog down and miss this chance to deliver on the promises Biden and the party have made to Americans.

"Right now, we have an opportunity to pass something so substantial for our country, so transformative we haven't seen anything like it," Pelosi said, according to a person who requested anonymity to disclose the private comments.

Pelosi told them it was "unfortunate" they were discussing the process when they should be debating the policy. "We cannot squander this majority and this Democratic White House by not passing what we need to do," she said.

With Republicans fully opposed to the president's big plans, the Democratic leaders were trying to engineer a way out of a potentially devastating standoff between the party's moderate and progressive wings that risks Biden's agenda.

Pelosi's leadership sought to sidestep the issue by persuading lawmakers to take a procedural vote to simply start the process and save the policy fight for the months ahead, when they will be crafting and debating details within the full \$3.5 trillion budget proposal.

One by one, powerful committee chairmen urged their colleagues to move forward.

"There's a long way to go on legislative issues that are going to play out over the next month. But for the moment the argument here is about: Shall the House proceed," said Rep. Richard Neal, D-Mass., the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee.

But it soon became clear that moderates were not on board and as soon as one meeting broke, a series of other private sessions were convened with them for further discussion, including in Pelosi's office. At one point, bags of takeout food were delivered nearby. What had been a night of scheduled votes came to an unexpected standstill.

Challenging their party's most powerful leaders, nine moderate Democrats signed onto a letter late last week raising their objections to pushing ahead with Biden's broader infrastructure proposal without first considering the smaller public works plan that has already passed the Senate. Other moderates raised

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similar concerns in recent days.

"I'm bewildered by my party's misguided strategy to make passage of the popular, already-written, bipartisan infrastructure bill contingent upon passage of the contentious, yet-to-be-written, partisan reconciliation bill," wrote Rep. Stephanie Murphy, D-Fla., a leader of the centrist Blue Dog caucus, in the Orlando Sentinel. "It's bad policy and, yes, bad politics."

In the narrowly divided House, every vote matters and a few dissenters could conceivably end the Democratic majority's hopes for passing any proposal.

With most of Biden's domestic agenda at stake, it's unimaginable that Pelosi, D-Calif., would allow an embarrassing defeat. That's especially true because the package is stocked with priorities like child care, paid family leave and a Medicare expansion that are hard-fought party goals. It also comes as the president is already under criticism over his handling of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The \$3.5 trillion budget resolution will set the stage this fall for further legislation to fill in that blueprint, and committees are already fast at work drafting how that money would be spent on the social safety net, environment and other programs over the next decade.

The budget measure is at the heart of Biden's "Build Back Better" vision for helping families and combating climate change and is progressives' top priority, all of it largely financed with tax increases on the rich and big business.

Progressives signaled early on they wanted the Biden budget priorities first before they agree to the smaller package, worried it would be an insufficient down-payment on his goals.

But the moderates want the opposite, insisting Congress quickly send the smaller, bipartisan infrastructure measure to Biden so he can sign it before the political winds shift. That would nail down a victory they could point to in their reelection campaigns next year.

"The House can't afford to wait months or do anything to risk passing" the infrastructure bill, Rep. Josh Gottheimer, D-N.J., said late last week. He's a leader of the nine moderate mavericks who each released statements reaffirming a desire that the infrastructure vote come first.

So far, the White House has backed Pelosi as she led her party in a tightly scripted strategy that aims to keep moderate and progressive lawmakers on board, setting a goal of passing both bills by Oct. 1.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki on Monday underscored Biden's support for Pelosi's plans. Psaki deemed it a "healthy debate" within the party and said that it was "a high-class problem to have" as Democrats debate the particulars of the legislation.

Progressives are criticizing their colleagues, warning they are jamming Biden's plans.

Rep. Cori Bush, D-Mo., said the budget "isn't a political pawn. It's an opportunity to deliver on our agenda." She said in a statement, "We are not here to play politics with people's lives — we are here to pass transformative policies."

Republicans said the \$3.5 trillion effort that Democrats are seeking to advance fails to address "the crisis that American families are facing" and would lead to higher inflation and deficits.

"The inflation crisis, the border crisis, the energy crisis, the Afghanistan crisis — this budget only makes it worse," said Rep. Jason Smith of Missouri, top Republican on the House Budget Committee.

The conservative House Freedom Caucus said it opposes both the Biden budget and the bipartisan infrastructure bill.

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Associated Press writers Alan Fram and Jonathan Lemire contributed to this report.

## What does full approval of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine mean?

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

What does full approval of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine mean?

It means Pfizer's shot for people 16 and older has now undergone the same rigorous testing and regulatory review as dozens of other long-established vaccines.

COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S. were initially rolled out under the Food and Drug Administration's emer-



agency use authorization, which allows the agency to speed the availability of medical products during public health emergencies.

Under the process, the FDA waived some of its normal data requirements and procedures to make the COVID-19 vaccines available months earlier than would have been possible under normal circumstances.

Pfizer's vaccine — along with those from Moderna and Johnson & Johnson — still underwent testing in tens of thousands of people to establish safety and effectiveness against COVID-19. But the FDA initially required the companies to submit about only two months of safety monitoring data on study participants, the period when side effects are most likely to occur.

For full approval, the FDA required six months of follow-up data. FDA inspectors also visited the plants where the vaccines are made and reviewed each step of the production process for extra assurance that the shots are made under safe, sterile conditions.

Because vaccines are typically given to otherwise healthy individuals, they are generally subject to more regulatory scrutiny than other medical products, including prescription drugs. Full approval means the Pfizer vaccine now carries the FDA's strongest endorsement of safety and effectiveness.

Public health experts hope the change will convince more unvaccinated people to get the shot and spur more employers to require vaccinations.

Moderna has also applied for full approval, and Johnson & Johnson has said it hopes to apply later in the year.

Pfizer's shot still is available for 12- to 15-year-olds under emergency use authorization. The full approval also doesn't apply to boosters. The agency will decide separately whether an extra shot is necessary for healthy people.

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The AP is answering your questions about the coronavirus in this series. Submit them at: [FactCheck@AP.org](mailto:FactCheck@AP.org). Read more here:

Do I need a booster if I got the Johnson & Johnson vaccine?

Do the COVID-19 vaccines affect my chances of pregnancy?

Can I get 'long COVID' if I'm infected after vaccination?

## Cleanup begins in soggy Northeast as Henri plods back to sea

By DAVID PORTER and TED SHAFFREY Associated Press

MONROE TOWNSHIP, N.J. (AP) — Residents across the waterlogged Northeast began clearing mud and tearing out sodden carpets Monday after deluges dropped by Tropical Storm Henri, whose remnants threatened further flooding in New England as the system made a slow trek back to the sea.

The smell of sewage filled the air as residents of Rossmoor, a retirement community in central New Jersey's Monroe Township, returned to soaked homes and ruined possessions after Henri turned their streets into rivers.

Roseann and John Kiernan said they'd have to likely toss their appliances, tear up walls and carpets and replace their car after their house filled with nearly 2 feet of water on Sunday.

"This is what we were left with. Nothing, nothing," lamented Roseann Kiernan. "They told us that everything has to go."

A few miles away from Monroe, the whirring of portable pumps split the air on the main street in Jamesburg, another hard-hit New Jersey community.

Luke Becker, who operates the Four Boys ice cream stand along with his three brothers — one of six the family owns — said nearly 4 feet of water rushed into the shop, dislodging a tall cooler and leaving 3 inches of mud behind.

"We were initially hoping to be back open by Labor Day, but now it looks like we've got to go through all the plumbing and rip out a ton of electrical because we don't know how much of that was affected," he said. "Right now there's really no timetable."

New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy toured the storm-ravaged towns Monday, which remained under a flood

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warning until midnight.

Henri spared coastal areas of New York and New England major damage when its center made landfall Sunday in Rhode Island. But its size and slow speed led to deluges in areas from Maine to Pennsylvania.

On Monday, Henri's remnants, now considered a post-tropical cyclone, were moving eastward over New England at a leisurely 9 mph but were expected to accelerate later, prompting flood watches or warnings across swaths of the Northeast.

In the Catskills region of New York, Hunter Town Supervisor Daryl Legg believed his mountain community, which was devastated by Tropical Storm Irene in 2011, would be able to weather the slow-moving storm.

"I think we escaped any kind of danger so far only because of the length of time it took for the storm to move through," he said. "This has been a 24-hour period, so it's not really the same storm, thank goodness."

But downpours, flooding and even tornadoes were still possible in New England, where officials fretted that just a few more inches would be a back-breaker following a summer of record rainfall.

"The ground is so saturated with water that every inch of rain creates immediate floods and flash floods," Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont said Monday after seeing damage in the community of Canterbury, where nearly every home lost power Sunday amid heavy winds.

No deaths have been attributed to Henri, but thousands remained without power across the region as crews scrambled to remove toppled trees and power lines through Monday.

President Joe Biden has declared disasters in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont and Connecticut, opening the purse strings for federal recovery aid to those states.

Annette Landry, a resident of Manchester, Connecticut, a Hartford suburb some 40 miles inland, hoped Monday's rains wouldn't be a repeat of the deluge that left three units in her condo complex under a few inches of water Sunday.

Firefighters said they helped evacuate 18 homes and made several rescues after Henri dumped about 5 inches of rain.

"It was a tragedy that this happened, because the people who live here are people who can ill afford to live anywhere else," said Landry, a 72-year-old retiree whose second-floor home was spared.

In central New Jersey, Dolores Hebert was still shaken Monday after being ferried to safety by boat with her dog and cat as 8 inches of rain fell and water surged through the streets in Rossmoor.

"I was sleeping and when I woke up, it was up to my knees," the 76-year-old said as she stood by a front door bearing 18-inch-high watermarks. "I didn't know what to do. I panicked."

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Associated Press writers Dave Collins in Hartford, Connecticut, Michael Hill in Albany and Philip Marcelo in Boston contributed to this report.

## Oregon, once a virus success story, struggles with surge

By ANDREW SELSKY and SARA CLINE Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — Oregon was once the poster child for limiting the spread of the coronavirus, after its Democratic governor imposed some of the nation's strictest safety measures, including mask mandates indoors and outdoors, limits on gatherings and an order closing restaurants.

But now the state is being hammered by the super-transmissible delta variant, and hospitals are getting stretched to the breaking point. The vast majority of hospitalized COVID-19 patients are unvaccinated.

The intensive care unit at Salem Hospital in Oregon's capital city is completely full, with 19 of the 30 beds occupied last week by COVID-19 patients, the youngest only 20 years old. It's the same at a hospital in Roseburg, a former timber town in western Oregon. A COVID-19 patient died in its emergency room last week while waiting for an ICU bed to open, an event that was deeply distressing to the medical staff.

"We need your help, grace and kindness," the staff of CHI Health Medical Center said on Facebook. They are reeling "from the extraordinary onslaught of new cases and hospitalizations."

Oregon is among a handful of states, including Florida, Arkansas and Louisiana, that have more people hospitalized with COVID-19 than ever before.

"This is really a dire situation," said Jeff Absalon, chief physician executive for St. Charles Health System

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in Bend. National Guard troops were deployed to the mountain town's hospital last week to assist medical workers.

Some 1,500 guard troops have been dispatched to hospitals around the state by Gov. Kate Brown, who warned of the "seriousness of this crisis for all Oregonians, especially those needing emergency and intensive care."

Oregon keeps breaking records for the number of hospitalized COVID-19 patients, reaching 937 on Monday. That's a 50% increase over last year's record, when vaccines were not yet available. More than 90% of Oregon's adult hospital and ICU beds are currently full.

And on Monday Legacy Health, a hospital system in Portland that includes six hospitals, said it was pausing all non-urgent surgical procedures for two weeks to create bed capacity.

Lisa, a nurse in Salem Hospital's ICU, told a small group of visiting journalists Friday that she is both frustrated and sad to see a record number of COVID-19 patients, even though vaccines are widely available. She spoke on the condition that her last name not be used, because the pandemic and how to fight it have become highly politicized.

"We've been dealing with the second wave when we thought — I guess we hoped — it wouldn't come. And it's come. And it's harder and worse, way worse, than before," she said. Hours earlier, a COVID-19 patient died in the ICU.

As she spoke, a patient's heart monitor beeped. A mechanical ventilator occasionally added a higher-pitched tone. Fifteen of the COVID-19 patients were on ventilators. The hospital's wellness department, which normally recommends yoga and deep breathing for relaxation, recently set up a booth and filled it with dinner plates for a different kind of stress relief.

"We put on safety glasses," Lisa said. "And we took plates and we shattered them. And I kept going back. I kept going back, and they told me I had enough turns."

She said one advantage over last year's surge is that she's vaccinated, so she is not as scared of dying. Another improvement is that there are plenty of masks, gowns and other personal protective equipment.

Other than the beeping monitors, the ICU was quiet. The COVID-19 patients are heavily sedated and behind closed doors. Outside their rooms stand poles draped with IV bags, the tubes running through a crack in the door so nurses can change the bags without exposing themselves to the virus.

Beds outside the unit can be upgraded to ICU-level care by adding monitors and life-support machines, said Martin Johnson, the ICU medical director. A rapid-response team composed of an ICU nurse and an ICU-level respiratory therapist provide backup support, he said, stressing that the hospital can still take in patients.

After conferring on each patient's medical status, ICU team members, who have spent a year and a half trying to keep COVID-19 patients alive, stand in a circle, sometimes holding hands, and try to come up with positive things to say.

"Sometimes it's, 'Their oxygen needs are less, or their fever is gone,'" Johnson said. "At other times, it's 'The patient opened his eyes and squeezed my hand.'"

When there is no improvement, staff will instead express gratitude for each other or for the support of patients' relatives.

Oregon's early success against the virus may have helped fuel the delta variant's toll on the state, because the aggressive measures to curb the first surge left many population pockets with no immunity. And though some 72% of adults statewide are at least partially vaccinated, that number drops to less than 50% in 10 of Oregon's 36 counties.

Oregon's low immunity level, considering previous infection rates and the number of unvaccinated people, creates a high risk for new infections, said Renee Edwards, chief medical officer at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland.

Compounding the problem: Oregon has, along with Washington state, the lowest per-capita supply of hospital beds in the nation. The two states each have only 1.7 beds per 1,000 residents, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, a nonprofit focusing on national health issues. South Dakota ranks first, with 4.8 beds per 1,000.

It will be a race against time to see if Oregon's health care system can withstand the current surge before it eases off. Oregon Health & Science University predicts the peak will be Sept. 7.

\_\_\_ Cline reported from Portland, Oregon. Cline is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

## Moderates bring House to standstill in Biden budget clash

By LISA MASCARO and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Brushing past moderates, House Democratic leaders tried to muscle President Joe Biden's multitrillion-dollar budget blueprint over a key hurdle Monday night, hoping to shelve for now an intraparty showdown that risks upending their domestic infrastructure agenda.

Tensions rose as lawmakers returned for the evening session and a band of moderate lawmakers threatened to withhold their votes for the \$3.5 trillion plan. They were demanding the House first approve a \$1 trillion package of road, power grid, broadband and other infrastructure projects that's already passed the Senate.

But as the evening dragged on the chamber came to a standstill and plans were thrown into flux as leaders and lawmakers huddled privately at the Capitol trying to broker an agreement.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi implored Democrats during a private caucus not to bog down and miss this chance to deliver on the promises Biden and the party have made to Americans.

"Right now, we have an opportunity to pass something so substantial for our country, so transformative we haven't seen anything like it," Pelosi said, according to a person who requested anonymity to disclose the private comments.

Pelosi told them it was "unfortunate" they were discussing the process when they should be debating the policy. "We cannot squander this majority and this Democratic White House by not passing what we need to do," she said.

With Republicans fully opposed to the president's big plans, the Democratic leaders were trying to engineer a way out of a potentially devastating standoff between the party's moderate and progressive wings that risks Biden's agenda.

Pelosi's leadership sought to sidestep the issue by persuading lawmakers to vote to simply start the process and save the policy fight for the months ahead, when they will be crafting and debating details within the full \$3.5 trillion budget proposal.

One by one, powerful committee chairmen urged their colleagues to move forward.

"There's a long way to go on legislative issues that are going to play out over the next month. But for the moment the argument here is about: Shall the House proceed," said Rep. Richard Neal, D-Mass., the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee.

It was unclear if the moderates were fully on board and as soon as one meeting broke, another private session was convened with them for further discussion. What had been a night of scheduled votes came to an unexpected standstill.

Confronting their party's most powerful leaders, nine moderate Democrats signed onto a letter late last week raising their objections to pushing ahead with Biden's broader infrastructure proposal without first considering the smaller public works plan that has already passed the Senate. Other moderates raised similar concerns in recent days.

"I'm bewildered by my party's misguided strategy to make passage of the popular, already-written, bipartisan infrastructure bill contingent upon passage of the contentious, yet-to-be-written, partisan reconciliation bill," wrote Rep. Stephanie Murphy, D-Fla., a leader of the centrist Blue Dog caucus, in the Orlando Sentinel. "It's bad policy and, yes, bad politics."

In the narrowly divided House, every vote matters and a few dissenters could conceivably end the Democratic majority's hopes for passing any proposal.

With most of Biden's domestic agenda at stake, it's unimaginable that Pelosi, D-Calif., would allow an

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embarrassing defeat. That's especially true because the package is stocked with priorities like child care, paid family leave and a Medicare expansion that are hard-fought party goals, and at a time with the president already under criticism over his handling of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The \$3.5 trillion budget resolution will set the stage this fall for setting further legislation directing money to be spent on the social safety net, environment and other programs over the next decade.

That huge measure is at the heart of Biden's vision for helping families and combating climate change and is progressives' top priority, all of it largely financed with tax increases on the rich and big business.

Progressives signaled early on they wanted the Biden budget priorities first before they agree to the smaller package, worried it would be an insufficient down-payment on his goals.

But the moderates want the opposite, insisting Congress quickly send the smaller, bipartisan infrastructure measure to Biden so he can sign it before the political winds shift. That would nail down a victory they could point to in their reelection campaigns next year.

"The House can't afford to wait months or do anything to risk passing" the infrastructure bill, Rep. Josh Gottheimer, D-N.J., said late last week. He's a leader of the nine moderate mavericks who each released statements reaffirming a desire that the infrastructure vote come first.

So far, the White House has backed Pelosi as she led her party in a tightly scripted strategy that aims to keep moderate and progressive lawmakers on board.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki on Monday underscored Biden's support for Pelosi's plans. Psaki deemed it a "healthy debate" within the party and said that it was "a high-class problem to have" as Democrats debate the particulars of the legislation.

Republicans said the \$3.5 trillion effort that Democrats are seeking to advance fails to address "the crisis that American families are facing" and would lead to higher inflation and deficits.

"The inflation crisis, the border crisis, the energy crisis, the Afghanistan crisis — this budget only makes it worse," said Rep. Jason Smith of Missouri, top Republican on the House Budget Committee.

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Associated Press writers Alan Fram and Jonathan Lemire contributed to this report.

## Survivors grapple with aftermath of deadly Tennessee flood

By TRAVIS LOLLER and JONATHAN MATTISE Associated Press

WAVERLY, Tenn. (AP) — Anna Mays woke up in a panic attack Monday, thinking she was back in the rising floodwater.

Two days ago, she had been clinging for her life to the front door of her duplex in rural Tennessee as the water inched up to her neck. Her brother was hanging onto a tree.

Then Mays realized where she was: The gym at the Waverly Church of Christ, now her temporary home alongside other victims of record-breaking rain Saturday that sent floodwaters surging through the region, killing at least 22 people.

Her story has become a familiar one in Humphreys County, and particularly the small town of Waverly. Large swaths of the community are suddenly displaced, sorting through difficult decisions about what comes next even as they relive the horror of what just happened.

"This morning I was having a panic attack and thought I was in water, and I was trying to get that way and trying to get this way. I was just scared half to death," said Mays, who doesn't know how to swim. "I was just, something woke me up and I thought I was in the water, and — I never have seen — I've seen it on TV, but I've never have seen it like it in life, where cars was going by."

Mays started gathering up a few belongings after a police officer came to the door of her duplex Saturday morning, telling her to evacuate. She and her brother could see the water rising quickly. Her brother was trying to keep it out of the house by shoving towels under the door, but they were soon overwhelmed. Minutes later, the flooded creek pushed open the door and water poured into the house.

Mays' brother went outside to try to find a way onto the roof but ended up clinging to a tree. Mays held on to the front door until they were rescued by boat, escaping with nothing but the clothes they were

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wearing. Mays said the neighbor on the other side of the duplex lost her daughter, who was about 7 or 8 years old.

While survivors grappled with their recollections — more than 90 people stayed in shelters Sunday, according to the state's American Red Cross chapter — rescue workers continued their arduous searches for anyone else swept away.

Authorities rummaged through heaps of debris as search and rescue teams used dogs to try to sniff out any missing people, Waverly police Chief Grant Gillespie said.

"There's still a lot of debris in and along the creek that needs to be examined. That's a painstaking process," Gillespie said during a news conference. "We have to tear that apart, a lot of times, with equipment."

The police chief said the number of people considered missing has fluctuated, as people have not been able to reach loved ones who are later confirmed to be safe.

"I'm reasonably sure that we are less than 10 right now that we are truly not sure about the whereabouts of, or that we don't think we'll resolve fairly easily," Gillespie said.

Saturday's flooding took out roads, cellphone towers and telephone lines, leaving people uncertain about whether family and friends survived the unprecedented deluge, with rainfall that more than tripled forecasts and shattered the state record for one-day rainfall. Emergency workers were searching door to door, said Kristi Brown, coordinated health and safety supervisor with Humphreys County Schools.

Many of the missing live in the neighborhoods where the water rose the fastest, said Humphreys County Sheriff Chris Davis, who confirmed the 22 fatalities in his county. The names of the missing were on a board in the county's emergency center and listed on a city of Waverly Facebook page, which is being updated as people call in and report themselves safe.

The Humphreys County Sheriff Office Facebook page filled with people looking for missing friends and family. GoFundMe pages asked for help for funeral expenses for the dead, including 7-month-old twins swept from their father's arms as they tried to escape.

The death of the twins was confirmed by surviving family members. A foreman at country music star Loretta Lynn's ranch also died. The sheriff of the county of about 18,000 people some 60 miles (96 kilometers) west of Nashville said he lost one of his best friends.

Up to 17 inches (43 centimeters) of rain fell in Humphreys County in less than 24 hours Saturday, passing the Tennessee record for one-day rainfall by more than 3 inches (8 centimeters), the National Weather Service said, though Saturday's numbers will have to be confirmed.

School was canceled for the week, according to the sheriff's office. Waverly Elementary and Waverly Junior High suffered extensive damage, according to Brown. About 2,000 homes in the county were without power Monday evening, utility officials said.

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee toured the area, calling it a "devastating picture of loss and heartache." President Joe Biden offered condolences to the people of Tennessee and directed federal disaster officials to talk with the governor and offer assistance.

Survivors played back the harrowing moments when the water closed in.

Billy Ray Rushing was staying with his daughter, Annie Rushing, when they were told to evacuate.

"Right then and there, we got in the car and left," he said.

The water was already over their muffler. Their neighbor, Mary, on the other side of the duplex went back inside her home but soon was calling, asking them to come back for her, Rushing said. It was too late.

"There wasn't any way we could get back there. I hate it, but I couldn't take the chance of her and me drowning," he said, indicating his daughter.

That same neighbor warned Jodie Stawski, across the street, to get out before the water reached their apartment.

"But as we went, as we was driving out, we could see these people on their porches," said Stawski on Monday. "And I think in my mind, they thought they were safe. That the water was not going to get that high. But from what I heard, it gushed at them. And we lost Miss Mary. She drowned in the process. She was our hero. She saved us."

Kristin M. Hall contributed from Waverly.

## **NYC mandates vaccinations for public school teachers, staff**

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — All New York City public school teachers and other staffers will have to get vaccinated against the coronavirus, officials said Monday, ramping up pandemic protections as the nation's largest school system prepares for classes to start next month.

The city previously said teachers, like other city employees, would have to get the shots or get tested weekly for the virus. The new policy marks the first no-option vaccination mandate for a broad group of city workers in the nation's most populous city, though Mayor Bill de Blasio announced Friday that coaches and students in football, basketball and other "high-risk" sports would have to get inoculated before play begins.

Unions bristled at the new requirement, saying the city needed to negotiate, not dictate. Two big city workers' groups were planning to file a labor complaint or take legal action.

About 148,000 school employees — and contractors who work in schools — will have to get at least a first dose by Sept. 27, according to an announcement from the Democratic mayor and the city health and education departments.

"We're going to do whatever it takes to make sure that everyone is safe," de Blasio said at a virtual news briefing. Schools Chancellor Meisha Ross Porter called the policy "another layer of protection for our kids," including her own 11th-grader.

The city hasn't immediately said whether there will be exemptions or what the penalty will be for refusing, though de Blasio told MSNBC later Monday that "there will clearly be consequences." The previous vaccinate-or-test requirement had provisions for unpaid suspensions for workers who didn't comply.

De Blasio said the city would start bargaining this week with school system unions over specifics, and officials hope for agreements. But the mayor said the city intends to implement the requirement Sept. 27, with or without a deal.

A union known as DC 37 — which represents school aides, lunchroom workers and other staffers along with thousands of other city employees — said it would file an unfair labor practices complaint with the state Public Employment Relations Board. And the Municipal Labor Committee, an umbrella group of unions that together represent about 350,000 city workers, voted Monday to pursue legal action that could mean a lawsuit over the city's varying vaccination policies for city employees, chairperson Harry Nespoli said.

"All we want to do is sit down and try to negotiate the best policy that will protect the city and its workers," said Nespoli, who's vaccinated but worried about maintaining the option of undergoing testing instead of inoculation.

"We're concerned about the people in New York, too. We don't want to see people get sick," he said, but "there has to be an alternative if that person doesn't want to take that jab."

The city didn't immediately comment on the labor groups' planned actions.

Other school unions also said they needed answers and input.

"I understand completely why you have the requirement: There's a pandemic. We just have to make sure that we negotiate accommodations if a doctor certifies that someone shouldn't get vaccinated, said Gregory Floyd, the president of Teamsters Local 237. It represents about 4,400 school safety agents.

The United Federation of Teachers raised the potential of arbitration "if necessary."

Custodians' union President Robert Troeller said he believed about 60% of the 850 members of Local 891 of the International Union of Operating Engineers had gotten at least a first shot, but some others "are dead-set against this."

At least 63% of all school employees already have been vaccinated, not including those who may have gotten their shots outside the city.

Citywide, over 70% of adults have gotten at least a first dose.

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The new requirement came as federal regulators gave full approval to Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine, one of three vaccines available in the U.S. All already have authorization for emergency use, but officials hope the full approval will increase public confidence in the vaccines.

School starts Sept. 13 for the city's roughly 1 million public school students.

U.S. Education Secretary Miguel Cardona hailed the city's "leadership" on teacher vaccinations, tweeting that it's important to maximize the amount of inoculated people in schools.

New York, like some other cities and states, has been fighting the virus' highly contagious delta variant by ratcheting up pressure to get more people inoculated.

New York City last week began requiring proof of vaccination to enter restaurant dining rooms, gyms and many other public places, a first-in-the-nation policy that a few other cities have copied. Meanwhile, New York state announced last week that hospital and nursing home workers would have to get inoculated.

Vaccine mandates for teachers are fairly rare so far in the U.S., though Washington state, for one, says teachers must be inoculated or face dismissal.

Vaccinate-or-test requirements for school employees are somewhat more common, existing in places including Los Angeles and Chicago, which are the two biggest U.S. school districts after New York. The state of New Jersey joined the list Monday with a new policy affecting teachers and state employees.

New York state's court system announced a vaccinate-or-test rule Monday for judges and staffers. Such policies already exist for other state employees and transit system workers.

A new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that about 6 in 10 Americans say students and teachers should have to wear face masks while in school, and that teachers and eligible students should also be required to get vaccinated. But Democrats and Republicans differ sharply on these issues, the poll found.

## Study: Climate change makes European flooding more likely

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Scientists say that global warming makes the kind of extreme rainfall that caused deadly flash flooding in western Europe last month more likely, though it remains unclear exactly how much.

At least 220 people died in Germany and Belgium on July 14-15 when swollen streams turned into raging rivers, sweeping away houses, roads and bridges, and causing billions of euros (dollars) in damage.

A study released Tuesday by the World Weather Attribution group used historical records and computer simulations to examine how temperatures affected rainfall from the late 19th century to the present. While the study hasn't been assessed by independent scientists yet, its authors use widely accepted methods to conduct rapid assessments of specific weather events such as floods, droughts and heat waves.

It found that across a large strip of western Europe — stretching from the Netherlands to Switzerland — the amount of rainfall in a single day increased by 3% to 19% over the period, during which global temperatures increased by 1.2 degrees Celsius (2.2 degrees Fahrenheit).

Experts say that for every 1 degree Celsius (1.8 F) the planet warms, the air can absorb 7% more water. When that water is released, it causes more extreme rainfall.

The study, conducted by almost 40 researchers from six European countries and the United States, calculated that downpours of the kind that caused last month's floods are now 1.2 to 9 times more likely — and this will increase further if the planet continues to heat up.

Frank Kreienkamp of Germany's nation weather service DWD, who co-wrote the study, said the findings supported forecasts in a recent U.N. climate report.

"Humans are clearly changing and warming up the Earth's climate," he said. "And with this warming we are also seeing a change in weather extremes."

The authors said the damage and loss of life seen in this disaster highlight how nations need to do more to curb greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for such disasters.

"These floods have shown us that even developed countries are not safe from severe impacts of extreme weather that we have seen," said Friederike Otto, associate director of the Environmental Change Institute



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at Oxford University. "This is an urgent global challenge and we need to step up to it. The science is clear and has been for years."

Follow AP's climate coverage at <http://www.apnews.com/Climate>

## **EXPLAINER: How did Tennessee flooding downpour fall so fast?**

By JONATHAN MATTISE Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — A rural Tennessee community was pummeled Saturday with up to 17 inches (43 centimeters) of rain in less than 24 hours, shattering the state record for one-day rainfall by more than 3 inches and leading to quick-rushing floods that killed at least 22 people and left a trail of destruction.

The hardest-hit areas were inundated with nearly twice the amount of rain the region had seen in the previous worst-case flooding scenario, meteorologists said. Lines of storms moved over the area around the small town of Waverly for hours, wringing out a record amount of moisture — a situation scientists have warned may be more common because of global warming. The devastation centered on Humphreys County, with a population of about 18,000 some 60 miles (96 kilometers) west of Nashville.

### HOW DID SO MUCH RAIN FALL SO QUICKLY?

A flash flood watch was issued for the area before the rain started, with forecasters saying 4 to 6 inches (10 to 15 centimeters) were possible. Before Saturday's deluge, the worst storm recorded in this area of central Tennessee dropped more than 9 inches (23 centimeters) of rain in 2010, said Krissy Hurley, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Nashville.

She said Saturday's storms kept redeveloping as they moved and went over the same areas repeatedly, resulting in upwards of 3 to 4 inches of rain per hour.

"In my almost 20-year career, I've never seen rainfall amounts and rainfall rates this high not associated with some type of hurricane or tropical system," Hurley said. "So, to see something like this inland in Middle Tennessee is probably the rare of rare."

The town of McEwen near Waverly was pummeled Saturday with 17.02 inches (43.2 centimeters) of rain, smashing the state's 24-hour record of 13.6 inches (34.5 centimeters) from 1982, according to the National Weather Service in Nashville, though Saturday's numbers still have to be confirmed.

### WHY DID WAVERLY SEE SO MUCH DAMAGE?

The deluge left rescue teams scrambling to find those missing in Waverly, the town with the worst damage and now a landscape of collapsed houses, tangled debris and flipped vehicles strewn about town. The search was still ongoing Monday.

Because of the county's terrain, water gushed into Waverly westward down Trace Creek from surrounding areas, some of which are several-hundred feet higher, Hurley said.

"That's why folks who live there talk about this big wall of water that came on very quickly," Hurley said.

### HOW DOES CLIMATE CHANGE FACTOR IN?

Recent scientific research has determined that extreme rain events will become more frequent because of man-made climate change.

Dorian Burnette, a University of Memphis associate professor in earth sciences, said climate change has "put the atmosphere on steroids," offering a "more robust way to get super heavy rainfall rates out of thunderstorms now when you get the right meteorological setup."

"We're probably going to see more of these events as time goes along and as the Earth continues to warm," Burnette said.

A federal study found man-made climate change doubles the chances of the types of heavy downpours that in August 2016 dumped 26 inches (66 centimeters) of rain around Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Those floods killed at least 13 people and damaged 150,000 homes.

### HOW RARE WAS TENNESSEE'S FLOODING?

Hurley said her region of Tennessee has seen four significant flood events recently, happening nearly every six months. She noted floods once expected maybe every 100 years happened last September

south of Nashville and in March closer to the city.

Even so, Hurley said the rainfall over the weekend was exceedingly rare.

Waverly has endured other floods in the last decade or so, including in 2010 and 2019. The February 2019 flooding brought 10 to 12 inches of rain over two days. The weekend's storms exceeded that amount of rainfall over an eight- to 12-hour period, Hurley said.

## **Proud Boys leader who burned BLM flag gets 5 months in jail**

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

The leader of the Proud Boys extremist group was sentenced to more than five months in jail on Monday for burning a Black Lives Matter banner that was torn down from a historic Black church in downtown Washington and bringing two high-capacity firearm magazines into the nation's capital days shortly before the Jan. 6 riot.

Enrique Tarrío told the court he was "profusely" sorry for his actions, calling them a "grave mistake."

"What I did was wrong," Tarrío said during the hearing held via videoconference.

Tarrío, from Miami, was arrested as he arrived in Washington two days before thousands of supporters of then-President Donald Trump — including members of the Proud Boys — descended on the U.S. Capitol and disrupted the certification of the Electoral College vote. Tarrío was ordered to stay away from Washington, and law enforcement later said Tarrío was picked up in part to help quell potential violence.

Authorities say Proud Boys members stole the banner that read #BLACKLIVESMATTER from the Asbury United Methodist Church on Dec. 12 and then set it ablaze using lighter fluid and lighters. Tarrío posted a picture of himself holding an unlit lighter to his Parler account and admitted days later in an interview with The Washington Post that he joined in the burning of the banner.

Rev. Dr. Ianther Mills, senior pastor of the church, told the judge it was an "act of intimidation and racism" that caused "immeasurable and possibly irreparable harm" on the community.

"His careless act of violence and hatred, targeted at a congregation of individuals with a lived history of social and racial injustice, had the presumably desired effect," she said. "Asbury was forced to reckon with the very tangible evidence that we continue to live in a world where people radicalize hate based upon race and skin color."

When police pulled Tarrío over on Jan. 4 on the warrant for vandalizing the sign, officers found two unloaded magazines emblazoned with the Proud Boys logo in his bag. Tarrío said, according to a police report, that he sells the clips and the ones he was carrying were purchased by a customer.

Tarrío pleaded guilty last month to destruction of property and attempted possession of a large-capacity ammunition feeding device.

A police spokesman told The Associated Press in December that investigators were probing the events as potential hate crimes, but no hate crime charges were filed against Tarrío.

The judge said Tarrío deserved even more time behind bars than the three months that prosecutors had sought. Judge Harold Cushenberry blasted the Proud Boys leader for claiming that he didn't know that the banner came from a church even though there was a video of Tarrío standing near the church when it was stolen.

"Mr. Tarrío has clearly — intentionally and proudly — crossed the line from peaceful protest and assembly to dangerous and potentially violent criminal conduct," the judge said.

Proud Boys members describe themselves as a politically incorrect men's club for "Western chauvinists." Its members frequently have engaged in street fights with antifascist activists at rallies and protests.

Authorities have narrowed in on the Proud Boys and other extremist groups, like the Oath Keepers, in their investigation into the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol that sent lawmakers running and injured dozens of law enforcement officers.

Nearly 600 people have been charged in the Capitol insurrection, but some of the most serious charges — involving accusations of planning to block the certification of the vote — have been filed against members of the extremist groups.

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About three dozen people charged have been identified by federal authorities as Proud Boys leaders, members or associates. In one case, four group leaders have been charged with conspiring to impede the certification of President Joe Biden's victory. Tarrío hasn't been charged in the Capitol attack.

It was revealed in court records recently that Tarrío had worked undercover and cooperated with investigators after he was accused of fraud in 2012. After Tarrío's 2012 indictment for participating in a scheme involving the resale of diabetic test strips, he helped the government prosecute more than a dozen other people, the records show.

## US regulators give full approval to Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and MATTHEW PERRONE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. gave full approval to Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine Monday, potentially boosting public confidence in the shots and instantly opening the way for more universities, companies and local governments to make vaccinations mandatory.

The Pentagon promptly announced it will press ahead with plans to force members of the military to get vaccinated amid the battle against the extra-contagious delta variant. The University of Minnesota likewise said it will require its students get the shot, as did Louisiana's major public universities, including LSU, though state law there allows broad exemptions.

More than 200 million Pfizer doses have been administered in the U.S. under emergency provisions — and hundreds of millions more worldwide — since December. In going a step further and granting full approval, the Food and Drug Administration cited months of real-world evidence that serious side effects are extremely rare.

President Joe Biden said that for those who hesitated to get the vaccine until it received what he dubbed the "gold standard" of FDA approval, "the moment you've been waiting for is here."

"Please get vaccinated today," he said.

Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla called the FDA's action "an important milestone that I think will unlock some of the more skeptical minds."

Pfizer said the U.S. is the first country to grant full approval of its vaccine, in a process that required a 360,000-page application and rigorous inspections. Never before has the FDA had so much evidence to judge a shot's safety.

The formula, jointly developed with Germany's BioNTech, will be marketed under the brand name Comirnaty.

Moderna has also applied to the FDA for full approval of its vaccine. Johnson & Johnson, maker of the third option in the U.S., said it hopes to do so later this year.

Just over half of the U.S. population is fully vaccinated. Vaccinations in this country bottomed out in July at an average of about a half-million shots per day, down from a peak of 3.4 million a day in mid-April. As the delta variant fills hospital beds, shots are on the rise again, with a million a day given Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Full approval of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine means it meets the same "very high standards required of all the approved vaccines we rely on every day," said Dr. Jesse Goodman of Georgetown University, a former FDA vaccine chief. That should help "anyone who still has concerns gain confidence" in the shots.

Earlier this month, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said he would seek the president's OK to make the vaccine mandatory by mid-September or once the FDA grants final approval, whichever comes first. On Monday, after the FDA acted, the Pentagon said guidance on vaccinations will be worked out and a timeline will be provided in the coming days.

The approval also opened the way for swift action by colleges to require vaccines and solidified the legal ground for hundreds of universities that have already issued mandates for students and staff.

The public university systems in Louisiana and Minnesota had been waiting for FDA action before making vaccinations mandatory. Louisiana has become a COVID-19 hot spot, repeatedly breaking records for the number of people hospitalized with the virus. But certain other states forbid universities to require shots,

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including Texas and Florida.

"Mandating becomes much easier when you have full approval," said Dr. Carlos del Rio of Emory University. "I think a lot of businesses have been waiting for it."

On the same day the FDA decision came down, New York City announced that all public school teachers and other staffers will have to get vaccinated.

The delta variant has sent cases, deaths and hospitalizations soaring in recent weeks in the U.S., erasing months of progress. Deaths are running at about 1,000 a day on average for the first time since mid-March, and new cases are averaging 147,000 a day, a level last seen at the end of January.

Elizabeth Nichols, 18, of Akron, Ohio, said she felt "a rush of relief" after hearing the news of the FDA's approval. She already was on her way to get her first vaccine shot Monday morning after months of hesitation.

"I had an internal battle of whether I should get the shot or not," Nichols said in an email. "It can be scary subjecting yourself to something that is unapproved." But she added: "The authorization proves how safe it is."

The FDA, like regulators in Europe and much of the rest of the world, initially allowed emergency use of Pfizer's vaccine based on a study that tracked 44,000 people 16 and older for at least two months — the time period when serious side effects typically arise.

That's shorter than the six months of safety data normally required for full approval. So Pfizer kept that study going, and the FDA also examined real-world safety evidence.

Pfizer's shot will continue to be dispensed to 12- to 15-year-olds under an emergency use authorization, until the company files its application for full approval.

Normally, doctors can prescribe FDA-approved products for other reasons than their original use. But FDA's acting Commissioner Dr. Janet Woodcock strongly warned that the Pfizer vaccine should not be used "off-label" for children under 12 — a warning echoed by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Both Pfizer and Moderna have vaccine studies underway in youngsters, and they are using lower doses than those available for people 12 and older.

Pfizer's Bourla said he expects study results from 5- to 11-year-olds by the end of September, but data for those younger than 5 will take a couple of months.

Also, Woodcock said health providers are offering COVID-19 vaccines under agreements with the government that should preclude using Monday's approval as a pretext for offering booster shots to the general population.

Currently, the FDA has authorized third doses of either Pfizer's or Moderna's vaccine only for certain people with severely weakened immune systems, such as organ transplant recipients. For everyone else, the Biden administration is planning for boosters starting in the fall. But the FDA is evaluating that question separately.

In reaching Monday's decision, the FDA said serious side effects remain very rare, such as chest pain and heart inflammation a few days after the second dose, mostly in young men.

As for effectiveness, six months into Pfizer's original study, the vaccine remained 97% protective against severe COVID-19. Protection against milder infection waned slightly, from a peak of 96% two months after the second dose to 84% by six months.

Those findings came before the delta variant began spreading, but other data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows the vaccine is still doing a good job preventing severe disease.

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Associated Press Reporter Jonathan Lemire contributed to this report.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## Mayim Bialik to guest host 'Jeopardy!' after Richards' exit

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "Jeopardy!" is back to guest hosts after the resignation of Mike Richards, and

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actor Mayim Bialik will return as the first one up.

Sony Pictures Television announced Monday that Bialik will take the podium long occupied by the late Alex Trebek for three weeks of episodes.

The 45-year-old "Big Bang Theory" and "Blossom" actor was one of many guest hosts who filled in for two-week stints in the past season after the death of Trebek, who hosted the show for 37 seasons. Trebek died in November at age 80 of cancer.

When Richards was announced as the new host on Aug. 11, producers also revealed that Bialik would have an ongoing role as emcee for "Jeopardy!" prime-time and spinoff series, including a new college championship.

Sony's news release Monday said other guest hosts would follow Bialik and made no mention of a permanent replacement.

Richards, the show's executive producer, had been announced as host just nine days earlier when he stepped down Friday after a report of past demeaning comments he had made about women, homeless people and others on a podcast. Richards selection after a parade of celebrity contenders was met by a chorus of criticism.

The episodes that Richards taped last week will air when the show returns for its 38th season starting Sept. 13.

## Iowa State, Notre Dame highlight AP preseason All-Americans

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

Notre Dame and Iowa State each had three players selected to The Associated Press preseason All-America team, led by Fighting Irish defensive back Kyle Hamilton and Cyclones running back Breece Hall.

The preseason All-America team presented by Regions Bank was released Monday, five days before the first games of the season kickoff.

Eight teams have at least two first-team All-Americans, with seventh-ranked Iowa State and ninth-ranked Notre Dame leading the way.

Along with Hall, Iowa State is represented on the first team by tight end Charlie Kolar and linebacker Mike Rose. Hamilton is joined by Fighting Irish teammates Cain Madden, a guard who transferred from Marshall in the offseason, and running back Kyren Williams, who made the team as an all-purpose player.

Oklahoma's Spencer Rattler is the first-team quarterback and Sooners teammate Nik Bonitto made the team at linebacker.

Defending national champion Alabama is represented on the first team by outside linebacker Will Anderson Jr., and offensive tackle Evan Neal.

Clemson's two first-team All-Americans were receiver Justyn Ross, who missed all last season with a neck injury, and defensive lineman Bryan Bresee.

Ohio State's Chris Olave is the other first-team receiver, and Buckeyes defensive tackle Haskell Garrett made the preseason first team after being a second-team selection after last season.

LSU (cornerback Derek Stingley Jr. and kicker Cade York) and Texas A&M (tackle Kenyon Green and defensive end DeMarvin Leal) each had two first-team All-Americans.

Hall and Northwestern safety Brandon Joseph were the only preseason All-Americans who are coming off first-team All-America seasons.

### FIRST TEAM

#### Offense

Quarterback — Spencer Rattler, sophomore, Oklahoma.

Running backs — Breece Hall, junior, Iowa State; Bijan Robinson, sophomore, Texas.

Tackles — Evan Neal, junior, Alabama; Kenyon Green, junior, Texas A&M.

Guards — Cain Madden, senior, Notre Dame; Zion Johnson, senior, Boston College.

Center — Tyler Linderbaum, junior, Iowa.

Tight end — Charlie Kolar, senior, Iowa State.

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Wide receivers — Chris Olave, senior, Ohio State; Justyn Ross, junior, Clemson.

All-purpose player — Kyren Williams, sophomore, Notre Dame.

Kicker — Cade York, junior, LSU.

Defense

Ends — Kayvon Thibodeaux, junior, Oregon; DeMarvin Leal, junior, Texas A&M.

Tackles — Haskell Garrett, super senior, Ohio State; Bryan Bresee, sophomore, Clemson.

Linebackers — Will Anderson Jr., sophomore, Alabama; Nik Bonitto, junior, Oklahoma; Mike Rose, senior, Iowa State.

Cornerbacks — Derek Stingley, Jr., junior, LSU; Ahmad Gardner, junior, Cincinnati.

Safeties — Kyle Hamilton, junior, Notre Dame; Brandon Joseph, sophomore, Northwestern.

Punter — Jake Camarda, senior, Georgia.

SECOND TEAM

Offense

Quarterback — Sam Howell, junior, North Carolina.

Running backs — Mohamed Ibrahim, senior, Minnesota; Isaiah Spiller, junior, Texas A&M.

Tackles — Thayer Munford, senior, Ohio State; Darian Kinnard, senior, Kentucky.

Guards — Jamaree Salyer, senior, Georgia; Emil Ekiyor, junior, Alabama.

Center — Jarrett Patterson, junior, Notre Dame.

Tight end — Jalen Wydermyer, junior, Texas A&M.

Wide receivers — Garrett Wilson, junior, Ohio State; John Metchie III, junior, Alabama.

All-purpose player — Jerrion Ealy, junior, Mississippi.

Kicker — Anders Carlson, senior, Auburn.

Defense

Ends — Aidan Hutchinson, senior, Michigan; George Karlaftis, junior, Purdue.

Tackles — Jordan Davis, senior, Georgia; Dante Stills, senior, West Virginia.

Linebackers — Devin Lloyd, super senior Utah; Christian Harris, junior, Alabama; Micah McFadden, senior, Indiana.

Cornerbacks — Kaiir Elam, junior, Florida; Tiawan Mullen, junior, Indiana.

Safeties — Jalen Catalon, redshirt sophomore, Arkansas; Jaquan Brisker, super senior, Penn State.

Punter — Lou Hedley, senior, Miami.

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## School mask, vaccine mandates supported in US: AP-NORC poll

By COLLIN BINKLEY and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — As COVID-19 cases surge around the country, a majority of Americans say they support mask mandates for students and teachers in K-12 schools, according to a new poll, but their views are sharply divided along political lines.

About 6 in 10 Americans say students and teachers should be required to wear face masks while in school, according to a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Similar shares say teachers and eligible students should also be required to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

Masks have been a point of contention as U.S. schools reopen amid rising numbers of coronavirus cases. Questions about whether to require them have caused turmoil among parents and politicians, with some Republican governors banning mask mandates even as President Joe Biden threatens legal action against them.

In a reflection of that polarizing debate, the poll finds a wide partisan divide. About 3 in 10 Republicans

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said they favor mask requirements for students and teachers, compared with about 8 in 10 Democrats. There was a similar split over vaccine mandates in schools.

Some of the nation's largest school districts will require masks for all students and staff this fall, including in New York City. That's fine with Budhiono Riyanto, 37, of Queens, who will be sending his 7-year-old son, Gabriel, back to school next month.

"I understand personal choice, I understand personal freedom. But when it comes to public health, we should all be looking out for each other," Riyanto said. "The best protection so far is to mask up and vaccinate."

Others say masks shouldn't be forced upon children.

Kim Oldfield, who lives in rural Jessieville, Arkansas, said masks are unpopular in her area. She opposes the idea of a mandate and says it should be up to families to decide. In her local school district, masks are optional this fall.

"America is supposed to be the land of the free," said Oldfield, 70. "And when the government starts getting into your personal life and making you do things that you don't want to do, people don't like that."

Parents are slightly less likely to support mask requirements than the broader population, the poll shows. Fifty-two percent of parents with school-age children said they supported a mandate for kids, while 28% opposed it, with a similar split over mandates for teachers.

There were also differences by race: About two-thirds of Black parents said they back mask mandates for teachers and students, compared with about half of white and Hispanic parents.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recommended universal mask-wearing for teachers and students inside school buildings this fall, citing the rapid spread of the delta variant.

In some areas with school mask mandates, tensions have flared in recent weeks. Protesters opposing mask requirements have filled school board meetings from Maryland to California, in some cases disrupting meetings and forcing them to postpone.

Most states allow school districts to set their own mask policies, but some including California, Illinois and Louisiana are requiring masks for students and teachers statewide. At least eight Republican-led states have moved to ban universal mask mandates in schools, including in Texas, Florida and Tennessee.

In Land O' Lakes, Florida, Gail Jackson worries about sending her 12-year-old grandson to a school where masks are optional. Her grandson, Zahkai, wears a mask, she said, but some of his classmates don't.

"I don't know how it's all going to play out in the end," said Jackson, 74, who is Zahkai's legal guardian. "My prayer is that somehow or another, an angel passes over and these kids are allowed to grow and mature without finding themselves in a hospital on a ventilator."

Compared to mask mandates, school vaccine requirements have been rare. Some states and local districts have required vaccines for teachers, saying those who refuse must face regular virus testing. Some others have taken a harder stance, including Washington state, which says teachers must be inoculated or face dismissal.

Last week, the Culver City Unified district near Los Angeles was believed to be the first in the U.S. to require vaccines for all eligible students this fall. But student vaccine mandates are still uncommon, and the shots are not yet approved for children below age 12.

The poll shows 59% of Americans support vaccination requirements for teachers and nearly as many — 55% — say the same for students age 12 and over, who are eligible to be vaccinated. Among parents, support was lower, with 42% backing vaccine mandates for students.

Vaccinated parents were more likely to support mask and vaccine requirements than unvaccinated parents.

Jeff Hicklin in Falmouth, Maine, said he supports mask and vaccine mandates for teachers and eligible students. He says it's the best way to protect those who are too young to be vaccinated, including his 7-year-old son, Oscar.

"We need to do everything we can to keep schools open and safe," said Hicklin, 40, an accountant.

In Menomonie, Wisconsin, Erik Pederstuen has been vaccinated and plans to have his 9-year-old daughter inoculated once she's eligible. But Pederstuen, a technical college instructor, said he doesn't think coronavirus vaccines should be a requirement.

"I'm not an anti-vaccine person at all, I've just never liked the idea of it being forced," said Pederstuen,

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40. "I think everyone should get it, but I think it should be your choice."

Fingerhut reported from Washington.

The AP-NORC poll of 1,729 adults was conducted Aug. 12-16 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3.2 percentage points.

## Rotten judgment: UK court rules against Sex Pistols singer

LONDON (AP) — A British judge ruled Monday that songs by punk trailblazers the Sex Pistols can be used in a forthcoming TV series despite the opposition of former frontman John Lydon.

Ex-Pistols guitarist Steve Jones and drummer Paul Cook sued the singer, once known as Johnny Rotten, after he tried to block the music's use in "Pistol," a Disney-backed series based on a memoir by Jones.

Lydon said during hearings at the High Court last month that he "heart and soul" opposed the music's use in a show he considered to be "nonsense." He has previously expressed concerns the series will show him in a negative light.

Lydon said the songs could not be licensed without his consent, but Cook and Jones claimed that an agreement dating from 1998 allowed a majority decision.

Judge Anthony Mann agreed the pair were entitled to invoke "majority voting rules" as outlined in the band agreement. He said Lydon's claim that he was not aware of the details or implications of the agreement that he had signed was "a convenient contrivance."

"I reject the suggestion made by him that he did not really know or appreciate its effect," the judge said.

Cook and Jones welcomed the ruling. They said the court battle "has not been a pleasant experience, but we believe it was necessary to allow us to move forward and hopefully work together in the future with better relations."

"Pistol" is being made for Disney subsidiary FX and is directed by Danny Boyle, the Academy Award-winning director of "Trainspotting" and "Slumdog Millionaire."

Formed in London in 1975, the Sex Pistols energized and scandalized the British music scene with songs such as "God Save the Queen" and "Anarchy in the U.K."

The band split up in 1978 after releasing one album, and bassist Sid Vicious died the following year. The surviving members have reunited for several concerts, most recently in 2008.

"Mr. Lydon has not shrunk from describing his difficult relationships with the other members — difficult in different ways with different members — and that has persisted even through their comeback tours in the 1990s and 2000s," the judge said. "It persists today."

## Igor Vovkovinskiy, tallest man in US, dies in Minnesota

ROCHESTER, Minn. (AP) — Igor Vovkovinskiy, the tallest man in the United States, has died in Minnesota. He was 38.

His family said the Ukrainian-born Vovkovinskiy died of heart disease on Friday at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester. His mother, Svetlana Vovkovinska, an ICU nurse at Mayo, initially posted about his death on Facebook.

Vovkovinskiy came to the Mayo Clinic in 1989 as a child seeking treatment. A tumor pressing against his pituitary gland caused it to secrete abnormal levels of growth hormone. He grew to become the tallest man in the U.S. at 7 feet, 8.33 inches (2 meters, 34.5 centimeters) and ended up staying in Rochester.

His older brother, Oleh Ladan of Brooklyn Park, told the Star Tribune of Minneapolis that Vovkovinskiy was a celebrity when he arrived from Ukraine because of his size and the flickering Cold War of the late 1980s. But Ladan said Vovkovinskiy "would have rather lived a normal life than be known."

Vovkovinskiy appeared on "The Dr. Oz Show" and was called out by President Barack Obama during a



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campaign rally in 2009, when the president noticed him near the stage wearing a T-shirt that read, "World's Biggest Obama Supporter." In 2013, he carried the Ukrainian contestant onto the stage to perform in the Eurovision Song Contest.

When he was 27, Vovkovinskiy traveled to New York City and was declared America's tallest living person by a Guinness World Records adjudicator on Oz's show. He edged out a sheriff's deputy in Virginia by one-third of an inch.

He issued a plea in 2012 to cover the estimated \$16,000 cost for specially made shoes that wouldn't cause him crippling pain. At the time, he said he hadn't owned a pair for years that fit his size 26, 10E feet. Thousands donated more than double what he needed. Reebok provided the custom shoes for free.

Vovkovinskiy was born Sept. 8, 1982, in Bar, Ukraine, to Vovkovinska and Oleksandr Ladan, according to Ranfranz and Vine Funeral Home, which is holding a memorial service on Saturday. His father died earlier.

## US VP Harris: Focus must stay on Afghan evacuation

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris asserted Monday that the U.S. must maintain its focus on evacuating Americans and vulnerable Afghans and shouldn't get distracted by questions over what went wrong in the chaotic U.S. exit from Afghanistan.

Speaking at a news conference in Singapore, Harris repeatedly declined to engage when asked what she felt should have been done differently in the withdrawal.

"There's no question there will be and should be a robust analysis of what has happened, but right now there's no question that our focus has to be on evacuating American citizens, Afghans who worked with us and vulnerable Afghans, including women and children," she said.

Harris took questions alongside Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong after the two met for about two hours to discuss issues ranging from the COVID-19 response to cybersecurity and supply chain cooperation. The news conference was dominated by Afghanistan, after the messy U.S. withdrawal sparked concerns about America's commitments to its allies globally.

Harris' visit to Singapore and Vietnam this week is seen as the first real test of the Biden administration's ability to reassure key allies of its resolve.

Prime Minister Lee offered his country's support for the U.S. decision to withdraw, however, and said Singapore was "grateful" for the U.S. efforts to combat terrorism in Afghanistan. He also offered the U.S. the use of the Singapore Air Force's transport aircraft to help with the evacuation, and said the country is now watching what the U.S. does next.

"What matters is how the U.S. repositions itself in the Asia Pacific, engages the broader region and continues to fight against terrorism, because that will determine the perceptions of the countries of the U.S.' global priorities and of its strategic intentions," he said.

Harris' Southeast Asian trip, which brings her to Singapore and then later to Vietnam this week, is aimed at broadening cooperation with both nations to offer a counterweight to China's growing influence in the region.

On Monday, the vice president's office announced a series of new agreements with Singapore aimed at combating cyberthreats, tackling climate change, addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and alleviating supply chain issues.

On cybersecurity, the Treasury and Defense Departments, as well as the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, have each inked a memorandum of understanding with their Singapore counterparts expanding information sharing and training to combat cyberthreats.

The two nations agreed to cooperate more closely to track COVID-19 variants and engage in research on coronavirus treatments. And the Department of Commerce is joining with the Singapore Ministry of Trade and Industry to create a partnership focused on strengthening trade throughout a handful of key industries.

The White House announced additional agreements between the two nations fostering cooperation on

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space exploration and defense issues as well. The announcements came Monday after Harris met with Singapore President Halimah Yacob and Prime Minister Lee.

Later Monday, speaking to sailors on a U.S. Navy combat ship at Singapore's Changi naval base, Harris expressed gratitude for the U.S. soldiers and embassy staff working in an "incredibly challenging and dangerous environment" to evacuate Afghanistan.

On Tuesday, Harris will deliver a speech outlining the Biden administration's vision for the region, and meet with business leaders to discuss supply chain issues. During her remarks at Changi naval base, Harris seemed to preview her Tuesday speech, describing the Indo-Pacific region as "critical to the security and prosperity of the United States."

"I do believe a big part of the history of the 21st century will be written about this very region where you now serve. And we want to be the ones who are helping to shape and dictate that history," she said.

The trip marks Harris' second foreign trip in office — she visited Guatemala and Mexico in June — and will be the first time a U.S. vice president has visited Vietnam.

Singapore is the anchor of the U.S. naval presence in Southeast Asia and has a deep trade partnership with the U.S., but the country also seeks to maintain strong ties with China and a position of neutrality amid increasingly frosty U.S.-China relations.

Relations between the U.S. and China deteriorated sharply under Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump, and the two sides remain at odds over a host of issues including technology, cybersecurity and human rights.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin made their first overseas trips to Japan and South Korea. Austin traveled to Singapore, Vietnam and the Philippines last month and vowed U.S. support against Beijing's intrusions in the South China Sea.

Alexander Feldman, president and CEO of the US-ASEAN Business Council, said Harris will have to be careful in her conversations with Singapore's leaders not to focus too heavily on China, but to emphasize a positive, productive U.S. relationship with Singapore and Vietnam.

"Where she could fall into a trap is really trying to pit this as a U.S. versus China trip. It should be a U.S. trip to our friends and partners in Southeast Asia," Feldman said.

If China becomes the main focal point, he said, "that makes it harder for our friends to move forward across the region, not only in Singapore and Vietnam but beyond that."

Indeed, Singapore Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan said in a recent interview that Singapore will "be useful but we will not be made use of" in its relations with both countries, and the nation's prime minister previously warned the U.S. against pursuing an aggressive approach to China.

Beijing, however, has seized on Harris' trip, with China's official Xinhua News Agency issuing an editorial Saturday on the visit portraying it as part of a drive to contain China.

Visits to Southeast Asia by senior Biden officials are aiming to "woo these countries to form a ring of containment against China. But Southeast Asian countries are reluctant to choose sides between China and the United States, and America's 'wishful plan' will end in failure," Xinhua said.

The U.S. approach is based on "outdated Cold War thinking and is intended to provoke troubles in their relations with China, create division and confrontation, and try to create a ring of containment," the editorial said.

## For Afghan refugees in India, hopes dim for returning home

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Her memory of the assassination attempt is hazy. What she does know is that her father asked the Taliban to do it.

A former Afghan policewoman, Khatera Hashmi was shot multiple times on her way home from work last October in the capital of Ghazni province, south of Kabul.

As she slumped over, one of the attackers grabbed her by the hair, pulled a knife and gouged out her eyes.

Five months pregnant at the time, Hashmi survived the gruesome attack, as did her unborn child. Hashmi's

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father had vehemently opposed her decision to join the police force, and although she didn't elaborate on her father's involvement, she told The Associated Press that the police had arrested and imprisoned him.

After recovering from her wounds, she and her husband fled to India, leaving two children in the care of her mother-in-law. Her third child, a daughter, was born a few months after their arrival in India.

However, like thousands of other Afghan refugees in India, any plans they had of returning were dashed this month by the Taliban's shockingly swift takeover of the country.

What many thought would be a short, temporary escape has turned into a long-lasting exile.

Another Afghan refugee is Mohammad Akbar Farhad, a 50-year-old artist. He too dreams of home while living in suspended animation abroad.

On a hot August afternoon at his apartment in New Delhi, his brush made brief, generous strokes on a huge oil painting depicting the ruins of the Bala Hissar, or High Fort, Kabul's ancient citadel that housed Afghan rulers for centuries.

"This is my only source of income," Farhad said, tracing the contours of the canvas with his fingers.

Back in Kabul, he faced repeated threats from Taliban sympathizers — always armed — who demanded he close his art studio. They said his work fell outside the bounds of Islamic law.

When the threats became more frequent, his entire family ran away to their village in the countryside. In their absence, their house was ransacked and his paintings torn to shreds.

"After that, I didn't even have the courage to touch my brush for months," he said.

Farhad fled with his family to India in 2018, expecting to return.

Earlier this year, the insurgents burned his art studio. All of his artwork was destroyed, leaving him crestfallen. And that was before the government in Kabul collapsed.

Concern for her loved ones back home fills Hashmi, the policewoman, with dread.

"I will never be able to go back to Afghanistan now, even if I wanted to," the 33-year-old said in her modest two-room apartment in New Delhi, where she lives with her husband and daughter Bahar, now seven months old.

Many Afghans fear the Taliban will erase the gains, especially for women, achieved in the decades since the U.S.-led invasion in 2001. When the militant group ran the country in the late 1990s, they imposed a harsh interpretation of Islamic law, forcing a sequestered life for many, particularly women and girls who were forbidden from education and most employment.

The Taliban now seek to present themselves as a more moderate force, offering amnesty to those who fought them and declaring the rights of women would be honored under Islamic law.

Hashmi is bitterly pessimistic.

"Women there won't be able to live in peace now. They won't even die in peace, even if they wish to," she said.

"Everything is gone," she said after a brief pause. Her husband, Mohammad Nabi, looked at her with tenderness but said nothing.

Nabi was a shop salesman back in Ghazni. The two fell deeply in love, and she made it clear before they got married that she planned to join the police.

"I saw what the Taliban did to women. I wanted to do something for them. I wanted women to get their rights," she said.

Nabi supported her decision, even though it would eventually make his wife a target, and the two began building a family together.

Hashmi's father threatened her, insisting she quit. She wouldn't budge.

After the attack that blinded her, the police said they arrested her father and sent him to a prison at Bagram Air Base outside Kabul. When the Taliban swept into the capital, Afghan forces at the former U.S. base surrendered. The prison had housed 5,000 inmates, including Taliban and Islamic State group fighters.

Imagining that her father might now be a free man fills Hashmi with horror.

"If I go back to Afghanistan, the Taliban might cut off my legs this time," she said.

But life in India remains difficult.

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"Whenever I hold Bahar in my arms, I feel sad. My husband can't leave her alone. He can't even go to work. Sometimes we don't even have money to buy food," Hashmi said, winding her way back to the bedroom as Nabi holds her by the hand.

Although she says their love has grown while in exile, they also struggle. Food sometimes runs scarce because charity money from fellow refugees isn't enough. Phone calls home often cut out due to the poor cellular network. Being separated from her children is a nightmare.

And in particular, they fight to live a dignified life trapped within a complex bureaucratic process to register as refugees in India. The system strains under a yearslong backlog.

As of 2019, Afghans accounted for around a third of the nearly 40,000 refugees registered in India, according to the U.N. refugee agency. But that figure excludes those who, like Hashmi's family, are not registered with the U.N.

"My wife gave her eyes for her country. But nobody helped us," Nabi said. "Not even our own government."

On Monday, hundreds of Afghans living in India protested outside the U.N. refugee agency's office in New Delhi, ramping up demands they be recognized as refugees.

But for these two Afghan families, the Taliban blitz toward Kabul left them feeling isolated and further from home than ever.

"I haven't slept properly for weeks," said Farhad, the painter. "All I think of is my country."

His son Hassan is angry at his country's politicians — and the U.S.

"America has failed us," he said.

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This story corrects that Hashmi was five months pregnant at time of attack, not two months.

## Students' lack of routine vaccines muddies start of school

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — The vaccinations that U.S. schoolchildren are required to get to hold terrible diseases like polio, measles, tetanus and whooping cough in check are way behind schedule this year, threatening further complications to a school year already marred by COVID-19.

The lag was caused by pandemic-related disruptions last year to routine doctor's visits, summer and sports camps at which kids usually get their immunizations.

Now, pediatricians and educators are scrambling to ensure that backlogs don't keep kids from school or leave them vulnerable to contagious diseases.

"It's a big deal," said Richard Long, executive director of the Learning First Alliance, a partnership of education organizations that has mounted a public outreach campaign. "We're going to have kids getting seriously sick this fall, and the sad part is, for the most part, it's preventable."

The number of non-flu vaccines ordered and administered through the federal Vaccines for Children program, which covers about half of Americans under 18 and serves as a barometer of national trends, plummeted after former President Donald Trump declared a national emergency in March 2020, a review by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed.

A subsequent review of 10 jurisdictions, released in June, showed that, despite administered doses again approaching pre-pandemic levels last fall, they "did not increase to the level that would have been necessary to catch up children who did not receive routine vaccinations on time."

A full reckoning for schools is still weeks off, when grace periods that allow unvaccinated children to temporarily attend school begin to lapse around the country.

But the latest COVID-19 surge linked to the delta variant has added new hurdles — including swamped doctor's offices and clinics, and even potential shortages of medicine vials, syringes and needles — to the swirl of confusion and fatigue already facing those working to tackle the backlog, health and pharmaceutical experts said.

Dr. Melinda Wharton, director of the CDC's Immunization Services Division, said political rhetoric and misinformation around COVID-19 vaccines also aren't helping.

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"In a lot of communities, we polarize vaccines: Either you believe in vaccines or you don't believe in vaccines. And we're lumping a whole lot of perspectives and issues into an artificial dichotomy," she said. "That does worry me a great deal."

Dr. Sara "Sally" Goza, immediate past president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, said her practice in Fayetteville, Georgia, was inundated with families needing to get caught up on their shots. That caused a backlog of patients headed into the first day of school in early August.

"Actually, we've even had patients of other pediatricians calling us," she said, "because I guess they've been told that we're somehow magically able to work people in and get to them when their doctors aren't able to get them in."

And some parents remain complacent, experts said — either because they're vaccine skeptics or because they're exhausted by the pandemic and come from a generation unfamiliar with the ravages of diseases like polio.

"You just have our general population saying, 'I'm tired of thinking about medical issues. I want to be on vacation, I want to be outside, I want to go to the shore, whatever it is,'" said Wharton. "So getting a non-COVID vaccine doesn't seem like the highest priority for people."

When the Pennsylvania Department of Health reminded parents last week to add their children's routine vaccinations to back-to-school checklists, the comments section conflated into debate over COVID-19 vaccines and mask mandates.

Even those committed to getting the shots sounded tired. "This is getting ridiculous with you people," remarked one parent. "Kind of hard when you can't get an appointment until AFTER school starts!" wrote another.

State education and health departments have joined local districts' efforts to increase information-sharing about vaccines and opportunities for children to get their shots, and governors — including Maryland Republican Larry Hogan and Kansas Democrat Laura Kelly — have elevated this month as National Immunization Awareness Month as a way to bolster compliance.

The Learning First Alliance's Power to Protect vaccination campaign, backed by the National PTA and teachers unions, has provided information to principals, teachers, school nurses and support staff like bus drivers and janitors on which shots students of different ages require, and where to get them.

"Nudge and encourage is really the role here," the group advised in a June tweet shared by the American Federation of Teachers and others.

## Leaked footage shows grim conditions in Iran's Evin prison

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The guard in a control room at Iran's notorious Evin prison springs to attention as one by one, monitors in front of him suddenly blink off and display something very different from the surveillance footage he had been watching.

"Cyberattack," the monitors flash. Other guards gather around, holding up their mobile phones and filming, or making urgent calls. "General protest until the freedom of political prisoners" reads another line on the screens.

An online account, purportedly by an entity describing itself as a group of hackers, shared footage of the incident, as well as parts of other surveillance video it seized, with The Associated Press. The alleged hackers said the release of the footage was an effort to show the grim conditions at the prison, known for holding political prisoners and those with ties abroad who are often used as bargaining chips in negotiations with the West.

In one part of the footage, a man smashes a bathroom mirror to try to cut open his arm. Prisoners — and even guards — beat each other in scenes captured by surveillance cameras. Inmates sleeping in single rooms with bunk beds stacked three high against the walls, wrapping themselves in blankets to stay warm.

"We want the world to hear our voice for freedom of all political prisoners," read a message from the online account to the AP in Dubai.

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Iran, which has faced criticism from the United Nations special rapporteur over its prison conditions, did not immediately respond to a request for comment sent to its U.N. mission in New York. Iranian state media in the country have not acknowledged the incident at Evin.

However, several embarrassing hacking incidents have struck Iran amid ongoing tensions over its accelerated nuclear program and as talks with the West over reviving the atomic accord between Tehran and world powers remain on hold.

Four former prisoners at Evin, as well as an Iranian human rights activist abroad, have told the AP that the videos resemble areas from the facility in northern Tehran. Some of the scenes also matched photographs of the facility previously taken by journalists, as well as images of the prison as seen in satellite photos accessed by the AP.

The footage also shows rows of sewing machines that prisoners use, a solitary confinement cell with a squat toilet and exterior areas of the prison. There are images of the prison's open-air exercise yard, prisoners' bathrooms and offices within the facility.

Much of the footage bears timestamps from 2020 and this year. Several videos without the stamp show guards wearing facemasks, signaling they came amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Though there is no sound in the videos, they speak to the grim world faced by prisoners at the facility. One sequence shows what appears to be an emaciated man dumped from a car in the parking lot, then dragged through the prison. Another shows a cleric walking down the stairs and passing by the man, without stopping.

Guards in another video are seen beating a man in a prisoner's uniform. One guard sucker-punches a prisoner in a holding cell. Guards also fight among themselves, as do the prisoners. Many are crammed into single-room cells. No one wears a facemask.

The account that shared the videos with the AP calls itself "The Justice of Ali," a reference to the Prophet Muhammad's son-in-law who is revered by Shiites. It also mocks Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

It claimed to have "hundreds" of gigabytes of data from what it described as a hack conducted several months ago. It did not answer questions about who was involved in the leak.

The account linked the timing of its leak to the recent election of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, a hard-line acolyte of Khamenei involved in the execution of thousands in 1988 at the end of the Iran-Iraq War.

"The Evin prison is a stain on Raisi's black turban and white beard," the message on the screens in the prison control room also read.

Iran, long sanctioned by the West, faces difficulties in getting up-to-date hardware and software, often relying on Chinese-manufactured electronics or older systems. The control room system seen in the video, for instance, appeared to be running Windows 7, for which Microsoft no longer provides patches. That would make it easier for a potential hacker to target. Pirated versions of Windows and other software are common across Iran.

In recent months, Iran's railroad system was targeted by an apparent cyberattack. Other self-described hacker groups have published details about Iranians alleging hacking on behalf of the theocracy. Meanwhile the most-famous cyberattack — the Stuxnet virus that destroyed Iranian centrifuges at the height of Western fears over Tehran's program — is widely suspected to have been an American and Israeli creation.

Evin prison was built in 1971 under Iran's Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. It housed political prisoners then and later, after the 1979 Islamic Revolution swept the shah from power.

While in theory under the control of Iran's prison system, Evin also has specialized units for political prisoners and those with Western ties, run by the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, which answers only to Khamenei. The facility is the target of both U.S. and European Union sanctions.

After Iran cracked down on protesters following the disputed 2009 re-election of hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, many of the arrested protesters ended up in Evin. Lawmakers later pushed for reforms at Evin, following reports of abuses at the prison — which led to the installation of the closed-circuit cameras.

Problems continued, however. Reports by U.N. Special Rapporteur Javid Rehman repeatedly named Evin prison as a site of abuses of prisoners. Rehman warned in January that Iran's entire prison system

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faced "long-standing overcrowding and hygiene deficiencies" and "insurmountable obstacles for responding to COVID-19."

"Prisoners of conscience and political prisoners have contracted COVID-19 or experienced symptoms, with many denied testing or treatment or suffering unnecessary delays in receiving test results and treatment," he wrote.

Follow Jon Gambrell on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/jongambrellAP](http://www.twitter.com/jongambrellAP).

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Aug. 24, the 236th day of 2021. There are 129 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On August 24, 1814, during the War of 1812, British forces invaded Washington, D.C., setting fire to the Capitol (which was still under construction) and the White House, as well as other public buildings.

On this date:

In A.D. 79, long-dormant Mount Vesuvius erupted, burying the Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum in volcanic ash; an estimated 20,000 people died.

In 1932, Amelia Earhart embarked on a 19-hour flight from Los Angeles to Newark, New Jersey, making her the first woman to fly solo, non-stop, from coast to coast.

In 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty came into force.

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Communist Control Act, outlawing the Communist Party in the United States.

In 1968, France became the world's fifth thermonuclear power as it exploded a hydrogen bomb in the South Pacific.

In 1981, Mark David Chapman was sentenced in New York to 20 years to life in prison for murdering John Lennon. (Chapman remains imprisoned.)

In 1989, Baseball Commissioner A. Bartlett Giamatti (juh-MAH'-tee) banned Pete Rose from the game for betting on his own team, the Cincinnati Reds.

In 1992, Hurricane Andrew smashed into Florida, causing \$30 billion in damage; 43 U.S. deaths were blamed on the storm.

In 2001, Tom Green, a Mormon fundamentalist with five wives and 30 children, was sentenced by a court in Provo, Utah, to five years in prison for his conviction on four counts of bigamy and one count of failure to pay child support.

In 2003, the Justice Department reported the U.S. crime rate in 2002 was the lowest since studies began in 1973.

In 2008, on the final day of the Beijing Games, Kobe Bryant hit two 3-pointers in a big fourth quarter to help the United States defeat Spain 118-107 and win the men's basketball gold medal for the first time since 2000.

In 2019, police in Aurora, Colorado, responding to a report of a suspicious person, used a chokehold to subdue Elijah McClain, a 23-year-old Black man; he suffered cardiac arrest on the way to the hospital and was later declared brain dead and taken off life support. (Three officers were placed on leave but returned to the force after prosecutors found insufficient evidence to support charging them.)

Ten years ago: A defiant Moammar Gadhafi vowed from hiding to fight on "until victory or martyrdom" and called on residents of the Libyan capital and loyal tribesmen across his North African nation to free Tripoli from the "devils and traitors" who had overrun it. Steve Jobs resigned as CEO of Apple Inc.; he was succeeded by Tim Cook.

Five years ago: A 6.2 magnitude earthquake reduced three central Italian towns to rubble and killed nearly 300 people. Astronaut Jeffrey Williams, commander of the International Space Station, marked a U.S. record-breaking 521st day in orbit, a number accumulated over four flights. (Upon his return to earth

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13 days later, Williams had logged a grand total of 534 days in space).

One year ago: Republicans formally nominated President Donald Trump for a second term on the opening day of a scaled-down convention; during a visit to the convention city of Charlotte, North Carolina, Trump told delegates that "the only way they can take this election away from us is if this is a rigged election." Anger over the shooting of a Black man, Jacob Blake, by police spilled into the streets of Kenosha, Wisconsin for a second night. Authorities in Portland, Oregon, said protesters repeatedly set fire to a police union headquarters building and were repelled by officers spraying tear gas. The World Health Organization said using plasma from the recovered to treat COVID-19 was still considered an "experimental" therapy; the statement came a day after President Donald Trump announced an emergency authorization of the treatment. University of Hong Kong scientists claimed to have the first evidence of someone being reinfected with the virus that causes COVID-19. Citing "significant errors" in jury selection, California's Supreme Court overturned the death sentence for Scott Peterson but let his murder conviction stand in the killing of his pregnant wife.

Today's Birthdays: Composer-musician Mason Williams is 83. R&B singer Marshall Thompson (The Chilites) is 79. Actor Anne Archer is 74. Actor Joe Regalbuto is 72. Actor Kevin Dunn is 66. Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee is 66. Actor-writer Stephen Fry is 64. Actor Steve Guttenberg is 63. Baseball Hall of Famer Cal Ripken Jr. is 61. Actor Jared Harris is 60. Talk show host Craig Kilborn is 59. CBS News correspondent Major Garrett is 59. Rock singer John Bush is 58. Actor Marlee Matlin is 56. Basketball Hall of Famer Reggie Miller is 56. Broadcast journalist David Gregory is 51. Movie director Ava DuVernay is 49. Actor-comedian Dave Chappelle is 48. Actor James D'Arcy is 48. Actor Carmine Giovinazzo (jee-oh-vihn-AH'-zoh) is 48. Actor Alex O'Loughlin is 45. Actor Beth Riesgraf is 43. Actor Chad Michael Murray is 40. Singer Mika is 38. Actor Blake Berris is 37. Actor Rupert Grint ("Harry Potter" films) is 33.