

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Community Events

**Friday, September 3, 2021**

NO SCHOOL

Football at Webster Area, 7 p.m.

**Saturday, September 4, 2021**

Soccer - Tea Area at Groton Area. Girls game at 1 p.m. followed by the boys game.

**Monday, September 6, 2021**

NO SCHOOL - LABOR DAY

**Tonight on GDILIVE.COM**

**Football action: Groton Area at Webster  
Game time 7 p.m. - Pre-game: 6:45 p.m.**



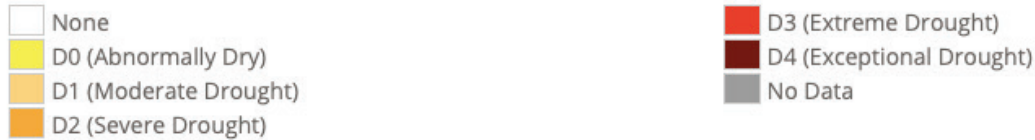
**OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

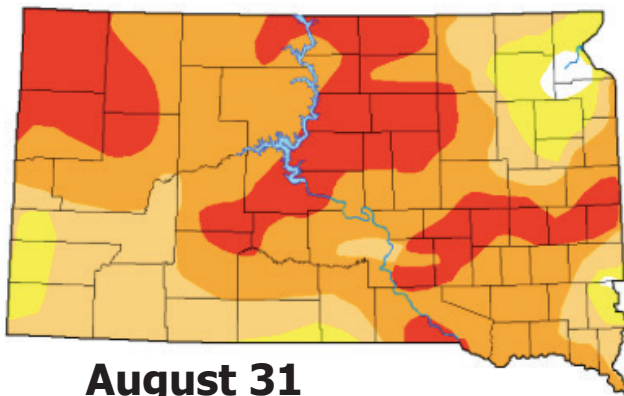
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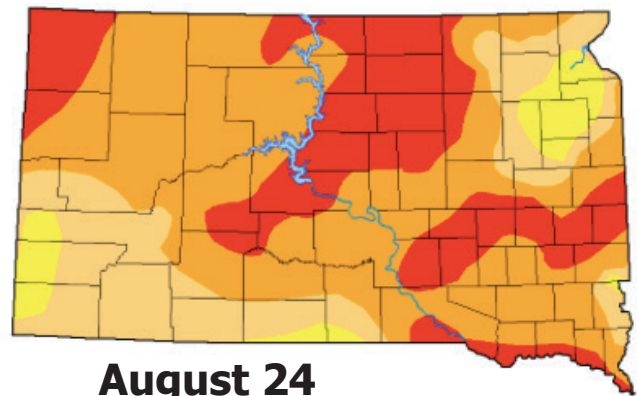
## Drought Classification



## Drought Monitor



August 31



August 24

### High Plains

On this week's map, areas of the region—including eastern portions of the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Kansas—saw widespread improvements in drought-stricken areas experiencing Exceptional Drought (D4), Extreme Drought (D3), Severe Drought (D2), and Moderate Drought (D1). The improvements were made in response to heavy rainfall during the past week (ranging from 2 to 5 inches) and minor improvements to soil moisture levels in some areas. Conversely, western portions of the Dakotas have continued to experience rainfall and soil moisture deficits which have severely impacted crops as well as pasture and rangeland conditions. According to the latest (August 29) USDA North Dakota Crop Progress and Condition report, pasture and range conditions across the state were rated 61% very poor and 24% poor, while stock water supplies were rated 58% very short and 31% short. According to the most recent (August 29) USDA South Dakota Crop Progress and Condition report, pasture and range conditions across the state were rated 48% very poor and 36% poor, while corn condition was rated 16% very poor and 29% poor. In terms of NOAA NCEI's climatological rankings, North Dakota observed its 11th driest (-3.11-inch anomaly) May-July period as well as its 3rd driest (-7.40-inch anomaly) August-July period on record. Similarly, South Dakota had its driest (-3.17-inch anomaly) May-July on record as well as its 7th driest (-5.45-inch anomaly) August-July period on record.

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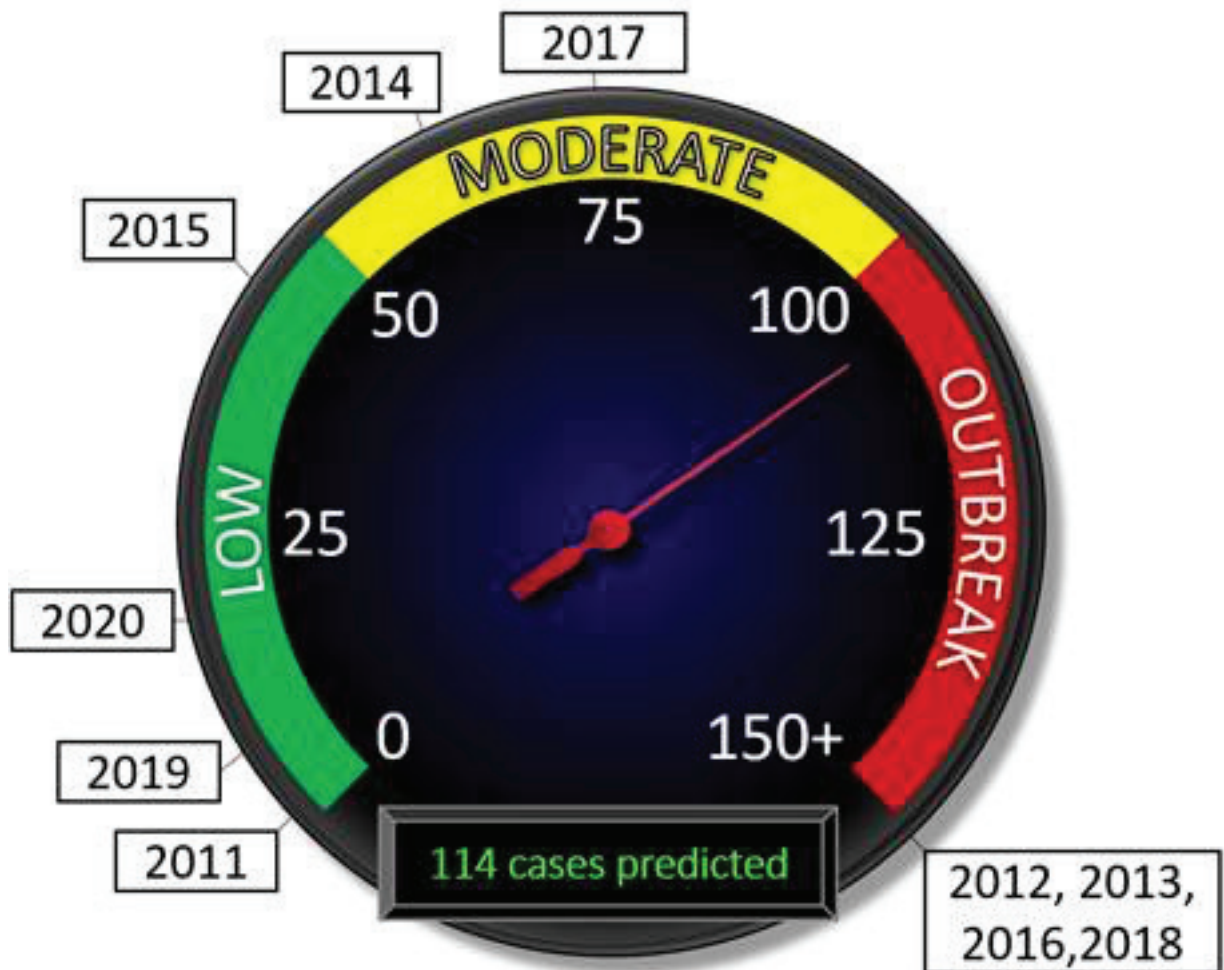
## Weekly West Nile Update

SD WNV (as of September 1): 17 human cases reported (Brown, Davison, Day, Dewey, Douglas, Kingsbury, Lake, Minnehaha, Moody, Potter, Roberts, Tripp, Union, Walworth, Yankton) and 1 death

8 counties with positive mosquito pools (Beadle, Brookings, Brown, Codington, Hand, Hughes, Lincoln, Minnehaha)

US WNV (as of August 24): 102 cases (AL, AZ, AR, CA, CO, GA, ID, IL, IA, KS, LA, MD, MO, NE, NJ, NY, ND, OH, PA, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT) and 6 deaths

WNV Prediction Model – Total Number of Cases Projected for 2021, South Dakota (as of August 30)



## Is it an airplane, star or flying saucer?

South Dakota is known as flyover country.

This term about aircraft passing over a place applies not only to commercial flights, but to unidentified flying objects.

An unidentified flying object is any perceived aerial phenomenon that cannot immediately be identified or explained. Unidentified lights and flying objects have been reported in the skies for much of human history.

The National Unidentified Flying Object Reporting Center lists about 350 reported sightings of objects described as resembling dinner plates, orbs, saucers, glowing objects, fire balls, Ferris wheels, globes and more in the skies over the Mount Rushmore state. Most of the listings are from 1947 on.

The most recent sighting posted on the NUFORC home page occurred on June 21, 2021, at Sturgis. It was reported that extremely fast light streaked five times in the same small portion of the night sky, followed by a dimmer light that traveled slower before disappearing suddenly. The light did not leave a trail, like a shooting star would.

A much earlier sighting was recorded by Annie Tallent, a member of the Gordon Party which illegally entered the Black Hills in 1874. The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 had closed the Black Hills to white exploration and settlement.

The Gordon Party arrived in the Custer area early in the winter of 1874-1875 and began building a fortress called the Gordon Stockade. Tallent wrote:

"About noon, on a clear, cold day, an awful rushing, roaring sound was heard above and to the north of us. It was almost directly over our camp. Everyone immediately looked in that direction and saw an object rushing through the air from east to west, not more than one half mile above the tree tops, and seemingly not more than three quarter of a mile distant from us.

"It seemed almost white and looked at least if it might be 30 or 40 feet diameter, although its size could not be ascertained with any degree of accuracy. As it seemed surrounded with steam or smoke, it did not appear to be falling but continued in a horizontal course. Three or four seconds after having passed out of our sight to the west, a report was heard that fairly shook the Hills, while its track clouds of smoke were left that could be seen for 20 minutes after.

"It was the grandest sight I had ever witnessed ... There was one thing that was very evident, immediately after this sighting, the weather began to grow colder, and continued to increase in intensity each day for about three weeks."

The military expelled the entire party from the Black Hills in March 1875, but Tallent and her family later returned to the Black Hills. She gained fame as the first white woman in the Black Hills.

"The Flying Saucer Reader" edited by Jay David contains an Ellsworth Air Force Base UFO incident. The Air Defense Command radar station at Ellsworth Air Force Base received a report of an extremely bright light low on the horizon northeast of Black Hawk on Aug. 12, 1953. The object's presence was confirmed by radar. An F-84 was dispatched to intercept the object. The pilot located the UFO, but it always maintained a distance of about three miles from the jet. The F-84 returned to Ellsworth, with the UFO following about 10-15 miles behind. The unusual activity was no longer a secret by this time, and other pilots at Ellsworth wanted to intercept the object. Another F-84 was soon airborne. The pilot saw lights of the unidentified aircraft, but again, the UFO stayed about three miles away. The pilot broke off the intercept. The UFO went off the radar. A fast-moving, bright

SOUTH DAKOTA



HISTORY & HERITAGE

### Another Mysterious Object Observed

WINFRED (AP) — Another report of a mysterious object in the sky was made Saturday by Mrs. Robert Wassanaar, Winfred.

Mrs. Wassanaar said she and her two sons were coming from Madison about 5 p.m. Friday when one of the boys spotted a strange light. She said the large, round, reddish-orange object seemed to be suspended in the sky over Winfred and then moved north, then south and finally disappeared.

Mrs. Wassanaar said the object seemed to light up the entire sky.

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bluish-white light was soon spotted west of Fargo, N.D.

From September until the end of 1956, strange objects and fireballs were reported in Rapid City, Redfield, Mobridge, McLaughlin, Lemmon, Aberdeen, Pierre, Mitchell, Martin and Hot Springs. In Onida, two men told of seeing a red light hovering "like a duck" northeast of town. Two Webster High School boys reported seeing a strange object giving off "an unearthly, flashing red light." A South Dakota Highway patrolman and a dispatcher for the state radio system traveling about 25 miles east of Pierre on S.D. Highway 34 topped a hill and saw an object below them in a valley. As they neared it, the object rose and withdrew to a distance of a mile or more from them and hovered there.

The question might not be, "Do you believe UFOs exist?" but "Why don't you believe in UFOs?"

This moment in South Dakota history is provided by the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation, the nonprofit fundraising partner of the South Dakota State Historical Society at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. Find us on the web at [www.sdhsf.org](http://www.sdhsf.org). Contact us at [info@sdhsf.org](mailto:info@sdhsf.org) to submit a story idea

-30-

## Northern State Takes No. 2 Minnesota State to Overtime

Mankato, Minn. – Despite a hard-fought, well-played game in the 2021 opener the Northern State University football team fell to No. 2 Minnesota State in overtime. The Wolves led the Mavericks 27-17 heading into the fourth, however a 17-7 MSU run and touchdown with under a minute to play in the final quarter forced the inevitable overtime period.

### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 34, MSU 40

Records: NSU 0-1, MSU 1-0

Attendance: 4369

### HOW IT HAPPENED

- Northern tallied seven points in the first, ten in the second and third, and seven in the fourth, out-scoring Minnesota State 10-0 in the third quarter
- The Mavericks quickly opened the game with a touchdown at 12:05 on the clock, however that was answered even quicker by the Wolves
- Hunter Trautman connected with Jacob Streit for the first receiving touchdown of 2021, a 7-yard reception with 10:22 on the clock
- NSU took their first lead of the game on the opening drive of the second, another passing touchdown by Trautman; but this time it was a 2-yard completion to Dewaylon Ingram
- Just over a minute expired on the clock, before the Mavericks knotted up the game with a 71-yard passing touchdown from Hayden Ekern to Jalen Sample
- Minnesota State grabbed the lead with just 3:40 left in the half on an 18-yard field goal by Luke Williams
- Payton Eue was not to be out-done, tying the game on a career long 50-yard field goal with 1:34 to play in the second
- The Wolves tallied back-to-back scores in the third, kicked off by a 16-yard receiving touchdown for Dakota Larson (Trautman)
- Eue notched his second made field goal with 3:09 remaining in the third, a 23-yard attempt which gave the Wolves the 27-17 lead
- Minnesota State chipped away with a rushing score to open the fourth, however Larson and Trautman extended the Wolves lead with a 65-yard touchdown at 12:55
- The Mavericks went on to rattle off ten more points in the final five minutes of the fourth, including a game tying touchdown with 38 seconds remaining
- Northern opened the overtime period with the ball, however was unable to break things open

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on the scoreboard, coming up short on a 61-yard field goal attempt

- MSU sealed their first win of the season on a 16-yard touchdown run
- While the Mavericks out-rushed the Wolves, 247-52, Northern tallied 331 passing yards to Minnesota State's 295
- NSU went 9-of-19 on third down conversions and scored on each of the four times they entered the red-zone
- Defensively, they held the Mavericks to 6-of-19 on third downs and tallied five sacks for a total loss of 27 yards
- Three Wolves tallied double figure tackles, with Brennan Kutterer and Chance Olson each notching an interception

## NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

- Hunter Tratuman: 21-of-42, 4 touchdowns, 331 yards passing
- Dakota Larson: 168 yards receiving, 24 yards per reception, 2 touchdowns, 65-yard long
- Vance Barnes: 83 yards receiving, 41.5 yards per reception, 56 return yards
- Hunter Hansen: 14 tackles (8 solo, 6 assisted), 1 forced fumble
- Brennan Kutterer: 11 tackles (6 solo, 5 assisted), 1 interception
- Chance Olson: 10 tackles (6 solo, 4 assisted), 1 fumble recovery, 1 interception
- Adam Heining: 3 tackles, 2.0 sacks (loss of 7 yards)
- Payton Eue: 2 made field goals, 50-yard long (career best), 4-of-4 PAT, 62.0 yards per kickoff, 36.6 yards per punt

## BEYOND THE BOX SCORE

- The last time the Wolves finished a contest within single digits of the Mavericks was in the 1971 Gypsy Days victory (16-14)
  - o 2021 marks the 50-year anniversary of the contest

## UP NEXT

Northern returns to Aberdeen next Saturday for their 2021 home opener and the inaugural game from Dacotah Bank Stadium. Kick-off is set for 6 p.m. on Saturday, September 11 versus Southwest Minnesota State. Game day information, including parking, tickets, tailgating, and facility entrances will be released on [nsuwolves.com](http://nsuwolves.com) in the coming days.



## Birds and hunters on the decline in SD

Licensed pheasant hunters in SD

Year	Non-resident	Resident	Total
2007	103,048	77,788	180,836
2011	95,077	69,120	164,197
2019	63,801	47,403	111,204
2020*	62,289	59,042	121,331

Pheasant population and harvest

Year	Estimated pheasants	Pheasants harvested
2007	11.9 million	2.1 million
2011	6.6 million	1.6 million
2019	_____	829,000
2020	_____	1.1 million



Source: South Dakota GFP

Notes: 2007 was recent peak year for license sales and bird counts; state ended pheasant population estimates in 2018; 2020 was COVID-19 pandemic year with 28 extra hunting days

## Data reveal long decline in pheasants and hunting industry

**Bart Pfankuch**

**South Dakota News Watch**

Pheasant hunting remains big business in South Dakota, but both the number of birds available to hunt and the hunters who buy licenses to shoot them have both fallen significantly over the past decade.

In terms of license revenues, direct spending and spinoff spending, and the annual fall season makes up a significant portion of the state's overall \$1.3 billion outdoors industry.

In a state report using data from 2016, pheasant hunting accounted for \$287 million in direct spending in the state that year, 60% of that, or \$175 million, from non-resident hunters.

Over the past three decades, the year 2007 stands out as a peak year for estimated pheasant population, number of licensed hunters and birds harvested, according to GFP data. That year, the estimated pheasant population was 11.9 million. About 2.1 million birds were harvested and more than 180,000 licenses were sold (roughly 103,000 non-resident and 78,000 resident.)

But over the past decade, state data have shown a steady decline in bird populations and licensed hunters, and the state's reputation as the pheasant-hunting capital of America has taken a hit.

In 2010, the state licensed 173,000 hunters who took 1.65 million pheasants from an estimated statewide population of 9.8 million birds.

In 2019, about 111,000 licensed hunters harvested 829,500 birds.

In 2018, the state ended its annual roadside pheasant count that resulted in population estimates; that year, the count showed a population of 7.1 million birds.

The largest and most worrisome decline has been in the number of non-resident hunters, who purchased

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38% fewer licenses in 2019 compared with 2010 in a trend state officials are eager to reverse.

South Dakota has seen its pheasant population fall steadily in recent years, suffering lower brood counts resulting mainly from poor weather and reduced habitat for the birds.

A main provider of wildlife habitat in the state is the federal Conservation Reserve Program, which pays an annual fee to landowners, mostly farmers, who agree to halt production or development of part of their land to protect soil and water and create wildlife habitat.

South Dakota had nearly 1.8 million acres protected under CRP in 1994. Twenty years later, in 2014, CRP acreage in the state had fallen to 930,000; it has since rebounded to about 1.1 million acres in 2019.

State wildlife and tourism officials for years have promoted the state's pheasant-hunting industry to hunters, particularly non-residents who want easy success when hunting the birds that can be elusive in other states.

South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks Secretary Kevin Robling said the state puts a high priority on managing and growing the pheasant population and added that continued strength of the hunting industry is critical to supporting those efforts.

"Hunting is the greatest form of conservation in a sense ... because every licensed dollar goes back into the management of game species and all species, actually," Robling said in a recent interview with News Watch. "The user-pay, user-benefit system makes hunting the number one form of wildlife management."

State officials remain bullish on the industry, using the "2021 Ringneck Outlook," subtitled "Hunt the greatest in South Dakota," to promote the 2020 season as "spectacular" and "incredible" and assuring hunters the 2021 season from Oct. 16 to Jan. 31 will be even better.

South Dakota did see a slight jump in hunters and birds taken during the pandemic-influenced 2020 hunting season, when indoor activities were curtailed.

The state has taken recent steps to try to boost the pheasant population and lure more hunters in to the field.

Last year, the state increased the length of its pheasant hunting season from 79 days to 107 days, and is maintaining the longer season again this year and promoting the extra days as a bonus for prospective hunters.

State officials say the controversial Nest Predator Bounty Program, in which adults and children are paid to trap and kill animals that prey on pheasant and duck nests, is one way to boost bird populations. The program has paid out about \$1.2 million in bounties to trappers who have killed about 134,000 raccoons, skunks, opossums, red foxes and badgers since the program began in 2019.

Even though the state has no scientific data to support the claim, it promotes the predator-bounty program on the "ringneck outlook" webpage by claiming that "local duck and pheasant nest success has been positively influenced."



## South Dakota State University Raven Precision Agriculture Center Grand Opening Planned September 11

Brookings, S.D. - Grand opening ceremonies for the new South Dakota State University Raven Precision Agriculture Center will take place on the SDSU campus in Brookings on Saturday, Sept. 11, at 2:00 p.m. The event will be held on the east side of the center located at the corner of Medary Avenue and North Campus Drive. The public ceremony will include speakers at 2:00 p.m. and tours of the 122,694 sq. ft. facility at 2:30 p.m. Following the grand opening event, SDSU will host the Precision Agriculture Bowl football game vs. Lindenwood at 6:00 p.m.

"We are thrilled to be welcoming our students and members of the public to celebrate the opening of this state-of-the-art facility. We appreciate the support of the many South Dakota stakeholders who helped to make this new hub of teaching, research and outreach possible," says John Killefer, South Dakota Corn Endowed Dean of the College of

Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences. "The learning and leading taking place in this new building will be happening in an innovation ecosystem supported by collaboration across several disciplines in the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences, and the Jerome J. Lohr College of Engineering."

In 2016, SDSU became the first land-grant university in the country to offer both a bachelor's degree and minor in precision agriculture. SDSU introduced a minor in precision agriculture in 2015. As of May 2021, 36 students have graduated with a degree in precision agriculture. Currently, 82 students are enrolled in the precision agriculture major, and 57 students have declared precision agriculture as a minor for the Fall 2021 semester. Additionally, the building hosts just under 500 students studying agricultural and biosystems engineering, agricultural systems technology, agronomy and agricultural science for hands-on laboratory and classroom experiences.

"The precision agriculture degree keeps students at the cutting edge of the intersection of agronomics, high-speed sensor technology, data management and advanced machinery development," Killefer says. "The new Raven Precision Agriculture Center features spaces to house modern precision farm equipment, 15 teaching labs, 12 research labs and 22 collaborative spaces. Scientists from a variety of departments and agricultural industry partners can collaborate in research, education and outreach activities. The ability to participate in experiential learning with both peers and industry mentors will prepare our students for lifelong careers that support economically and environmentally sustainable agriculture."

The \$46.1 million Raven Precision Agriculture Center building project has been supported by South Dakota stakeholder groups, industry partners and legislative leaders.

SDState's Precision Agriculture Bowl, Dairy Drive and 2020 Hall of Fame football game will begin at 6:00 p.m. Tickets for the football game can be purchased through the Jackrabbit Ticket Office by calling (605) 688-5422 or visiting the gojacks.com website.

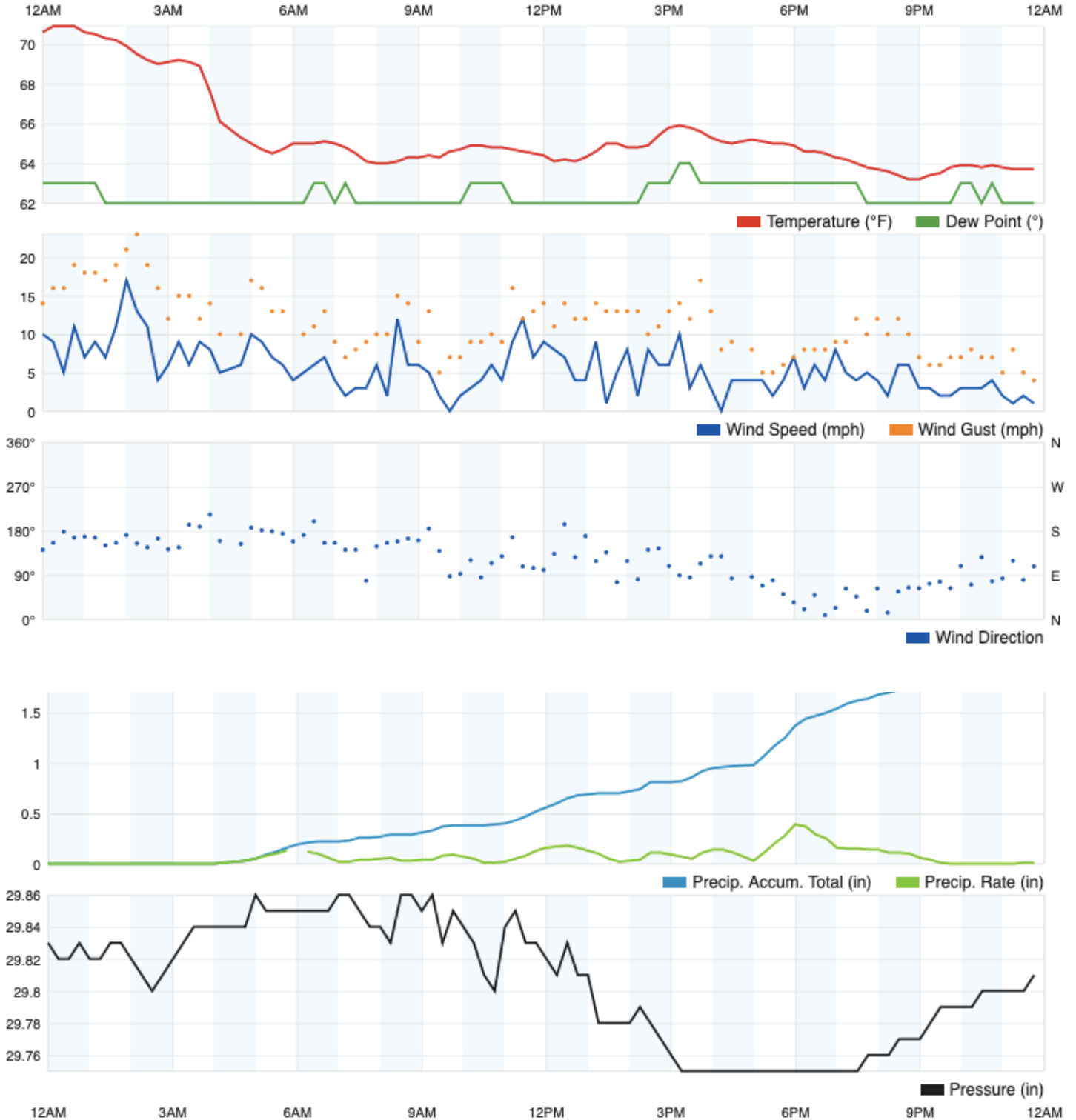


**SDSU will be hosting a grand opening and ribbon cutting event for the Raven Precision Agriculture Center at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 11. The research and collaboration taking place in the new facility helps give SDSU students a competitive advantage as they enter the workforce.**

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
				
Patchy Fog then Mostly Sunny	Chance T-storms	Becoming Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny
High: 75 °F	Low: 54 °F	High: 76 °F	Low: 51 °F	High: 77 °F

 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION



## Pleasant Labor Day Weekend

**Today**

HI: 70 to 75°



**Saturday**

HI: 72 to 78°



**Sunday**

HI: 74 to 84°



**Labor Day**

HI: 80 to 90°



Cloudy and cool today with showers & storms possible mainly across central SD this afternoon and evening, but plenty of sunshine & warming temps for Labor Day weekend.

Cloudy and cool today with showers and storms possible mainly across central SD this afternoon and evening, but plenty of sunshine and warming temperatures are expected for all of the Labor Day weekend.

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## Today in Weather History

September 3, 1974: An early freeze occurred across Minnesota and Wisconsin as temperatures fell into the upper 20s to the lower 30s. The cold was the earliest freeze on record in some parts of the state ending the growing season. The most significant damage was to the soybean and corn crop. Damage estimates were more than \$100 million.

September 3, 1999: Training thunderstorms resulted in extensive flash flooding in a 30 to 40-mile wide band from Fort Pierre in southeast Stanley County to Hecla in northeast Brown County. Rainfall amounts in this corridor ranged from 3 to 7 inches. As a result, the communities of Blunt in Hughes County and Onida in Sully County were severely flooded. Most of the homes and businesses were inundated throughout Blunt and Onida causing severe damage. Only a few houses in these communities were spared from receiving water in their basements. Most homes also experienced sewer backup. The sewer systems in both Onida and Blunt were flooded and shut down. Many people had to go to temporary shelters as a result of the flooding. Aberdeen and Fort Pierre had a lot of street flooding resulting in road closures and detours. Also, several basements in Aberdeen and Fort Pierre had the sewer backup. The torrential rains flooded many township and county roads along with several state and U.S. highways. Sections of Highways 14, 20, 83, and 1806 along with many other roads in central and northeast South Dakota had to be closed due to the flooding. Many of the township and county roads had massive amounts of gravel washed away. Some bridges received minor damage with some culverts also lost. A few pets and livestock were also lost as a result of the flooding. Many acres of crops were flooded throughout the area. Some rainfall amounts included 3 inches at Fort Pierre, 4 inches at Hecla and in the Aberdeen Area, 5 inches at the Sand Lake Wildlife Refuge and Blunt, 6 inches at Seneca, 7 inches 10 miles southeast of Gettysburg and at Onida.

1821: Known as the 1821 Norfolk Long Island Hurricane, this storm ripped up the Mid-Atlantic and North-east coast September 3 and 4 – coinciding with Labor Day (before the holiday was established).

1834: A strong hurricane made landfall near Georgetown, South Carolina. On this date in 1834, a strong hurricane made landfall near Georgetown, SC. Maybe a major hurricane, but I never found enough good proof.

1930: A Category 4 hurricane devastates the Dominican Republic on this day. This storm killed more than 8,000 individuals, which is it the fifth deadliest Atlantic hurricane on record.

1970: During the early evening hours, amid a severe hailstorm at Coffeyville, Kansas, a stone 17.5 inches in circumference and nearly two pounds in weight was recovered. Average stone size from the storm was five inches in diameter, with another stone reportedly eight inches in diameter. This hailstone is currently the third-largest hailstone in the U.S. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research.

1979: Hurricane David made landfall in south Florida as a Category 2 storm. It caused 15 deaths in the US. Hurricane David was a Category 5 over the Dominican Republic where over 2,000 people died.

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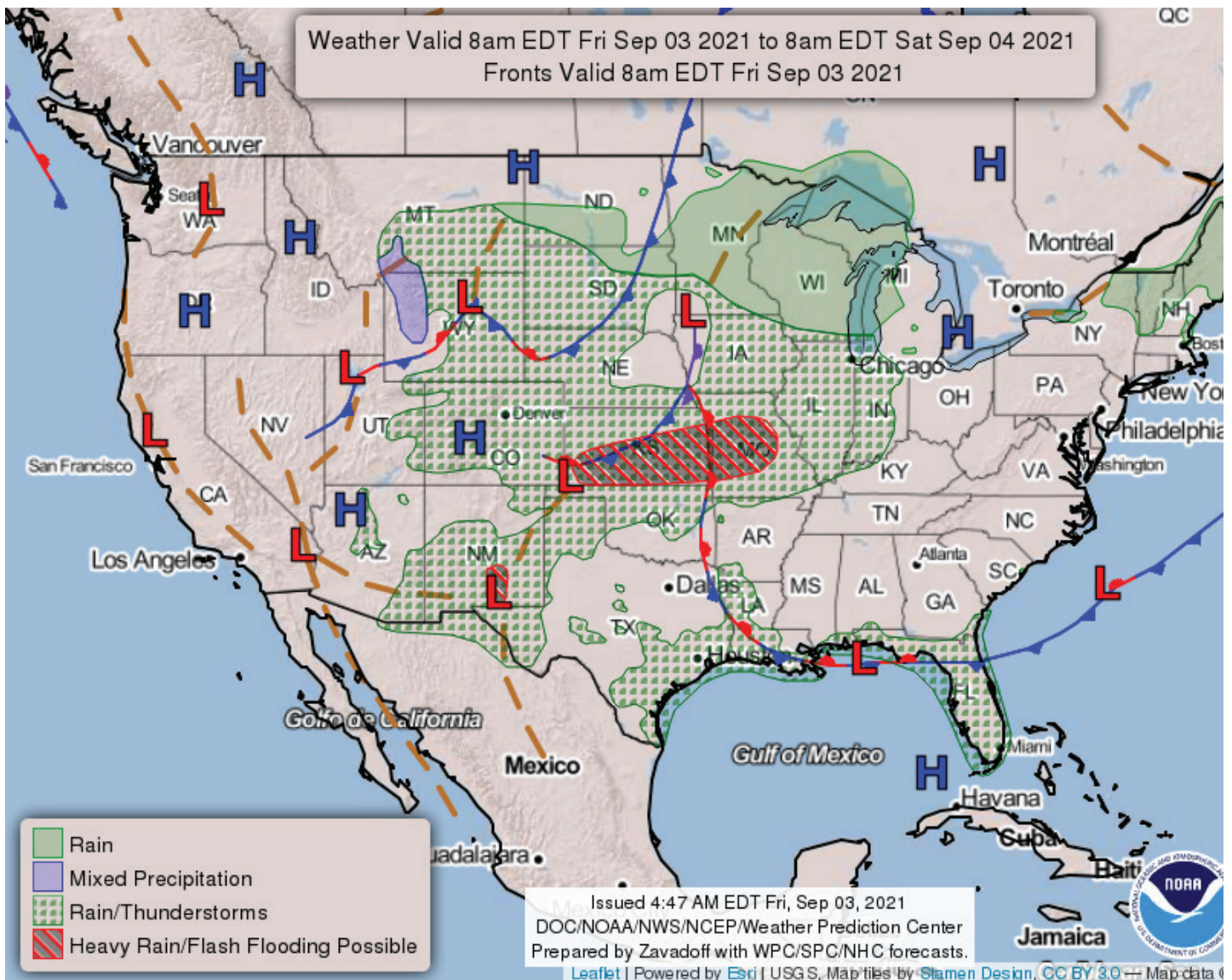
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 71 °F at 12:15 AM**  
**Low Temp: 63 °F at 8:41 PM**  
**Wind: 23 mph at 2:15 AM**  
**Precip: 1.76**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 102° in 1897**  
**Record Low: 57° in 1909**  
**Average High: 79°F**  
**Average Low: 52°F**  
**Average Precip in Sept.: 0.21**  
**Precip to date in Sept.: 1.76**  
**Average Precip to date: 16.55**  
**Precip Year to Date: 14.90**  
**Sunset Tonight: 8:07 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:56 a.m.**



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## OUR FAITHFUL GOD

Ed was late for church and slipped quietly into his regular place for Sunday morning worship. He listened to the new pastor as he prayed: "We have left undone those things we ought to have done, and we have done those things we ought not to have done." After a moment of silence, the pastor continued, "You know, Lord, I believe I've found my kind of people. I belong here." Without making a sound, Ed said, "Me too!"

No one escapes failure but our Lord. Whatever He said He would do, He did. Whatever He has promised, He has or will fulfill - in the past, present and future.

The Bible contains about 5,000 promises. As the One who created the universe, all of its laws and living beings that are under His control and command, no one or no thing can stop Him from keeping His promises. "Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave," said Solomon.

His compassion for His children never fails. His Son experienced suffering and humiliation that is beyond us and endured them with grace and glory. So, He can be sympathetic with us in the deepest, darkest moments of our lives. As Jeremiah the prophet reminded us "His compassion never fails."

Equally important and impressive is His faithfulness. He is not strong one day and weak the next, nor attentive one moment and indifferent the next. When He created us He did so with the knowledge that He would be faithful to us. Said the Psalmist, "I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness!"

Prayer: We thank You, Father, that we can trust You to honor Your Word and Your words. In them we have salvation, hope and eternal life. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Psalm 89:33 but I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness.

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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  
**Cancelled** 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

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News from the  Associated Press

## Thursday's Scores

By The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Aberdeen Roncalli def. Redfield, 25-13, 25-21, 25-15  
Avon def. Andes Central/Dakota Christian, 25-14, 25-10, 25-12  
Bridgewater-Emery def. Wessington Springs, 25-3, 25-13, 25-10  
Britton-Hecla def. Tiospa Zina Tribal, 25-12, 25-12, 25-12  
Canton def. Irene-Wakonda, 25-22, 25-15, 25-7  
Castlewood def. Deubrook, 25-27, 26-24, 25-22, 25-22  
Chamberlain def. Wagner, 25-10, 25-16, 25-12  
Colman-Egan def. DeSmet, 0-25, 25-0, 25-21, 27-25  
Corsica/Stickney def. Centerville, 25-15, 25-18, 25-19  
Dakota Valley def. Elk Point-Jefferson, 22-25, 25-17, 25-12, 25-11  
Estelline/Hendricks def. Wilmot, 25-8, 25-23, 25-22  
Faulkton def. North Central Co-Op, 25-8, 25-8, 25-13  
Flandreau def. Hamlin, 25-20, 26-24, 25-22  
Freeman def. Howard, 25-21, 25-17, 25-22  
Garretson def. Baltic, 25-10, 25-9, 25-11  
Gayville-Volin def. Alcester-Hudson, 25-11, 25-16, 25-17  
Great Plains Lutheran def. Tri-State, 25-19, 25-11, 25-13  
Gregory def. Lyman, 25-18, 25-17, 25-19  
Harding County def. Lemmon, 25-21, 25-19, 19-25, 25-19  
Harrisburg def. Tea Area, 25-9, 25-15, 25-11  
Herreid/Selby Area def. McLaughlin, 25-13, 18-25, 25-15, 25-16  
Highmore-Harrold def. Lower Brule, 25-13, 25-6, 25-9  
Huron def. Aberdeen Central, 25-22, 25-16, 25-21  
Ipswich def. Waubay/Summit, 25-23, 25-11, 25-21  
Kimball/White Lake def. Burke, 25-17, 25-20, 26-24  
Lennox def. Tri-Valley, 19-25, 24-26, 25-20, 27-25, 15-10  
Madison def. West Central, 25-16, 25-19, 25-17  
Menno def. Freeman Academy/Marion, 25-14, 25-13, 25-14  
Milbank def. Sisseton, 25-7, 25-19, 25-15  
Miller def. Sully Buttes, 25-11, 25-19, 25-19  
Mitchell Christian def. Dell Rapids St. Mary, 25-11, 25-5, 25-19  
Mobridge-Pollock def. Potter County, 17-25, 25-22, 20-25, 25-12, 15-10  
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton def. Bon Homme, 25-14, 25-18, 25-16  
Northwestern def. Langford, 25-11, 25-13, 25-13  
Parker def. McCook Central/Montrose, 25-23, 25-21, 15-25, 14-25, 15-13  
Philip def. Kadoka Area, 25-23, 25-23, 18-25, 25-19  
Platte-Geddes def. Colome, 25-7, 25-16, 25-20  
Rapid City Christian def. Sturgis Brown, 25-20, 25-18, 25-22  
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket def. Ethan, 25-18, 21-25, 25-20, 25-19  
Scotland def. Canistota, 25-19, 15-25, 18-25, 25-13, 15-13  
Sioux Falls Christian def. Dell Rapids, 25-21, 25-17, 25-13  
Sioux Falls Lincoln def. Sioux Falls Roosevelt, 25-23, 25-20, 24-26, 16-25, 15-13  
Sioux Falls Washington def. Mitchell, 25-18, 25-12, 25-18



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St. Thomas More def. Hot Springs, 23-25, 25-15, 27-25, 25-13  
Timber Lake def. Bison, 25-17, 25-16, 25-22  
Vermillion def. South Sioux City, Neb., 25-16, 25-15, 25-17  
Wall def. Crazy Horse, 25-6, 25-4, 25-1  
Warner def. Leola/Frederick, 25-10, 25-17, 25-10  
Watertown def. Brookings, 25-11, 19-25, 23-25, 25-14, 15-5  
Webster def. Deuel, 22-25, 25-17, 27-25, 15-25, 15-6  
White River def. New Underwood, 20-25, 25-16, 25-20, 25-12  
Winner def. Valentine, Neb., 25-20, 25-14, 25-23  
Yankton def. Beresford, 25-13, 25-14, 25-16  
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=  
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte vs. Crow Creek, ppd.

Some high school volleyball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

## Thursday's Scores

By The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

Elkton-Lake Benton 12, Arlington/Lake Preston 0

Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 44, Corsica/Stickney 8

POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=

Chester vs. Viborg-Hurley, ppd.

Some high school football scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

## Bureau of Indian Education issues vaccine mandate

By FELICIA FONSECA Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — The federal agency that oversees schools that educate some Native Americans in nearly two dozen states issued an employee vaccine mandate Thursday.

The mandate covers more than 2,800 faculty and staff at 53 schools and dormitories operated directly by the U.S. Bureau of Education in states including Arizona, New Mexico and the Dakotas.

More than 180 schools operate under the agency's umbrella, but about two-thirds are run by tribes under contract with the federal government or through grants, including most on the Hopi reservation and neighboring Navajo Nation.

Hopi Vice Chairman Clark Tenakhongva said school officials can decide on their own whether to require vaccines.

"It's a person's right," he said.

The Bureau of Indian Education, which is part of the Interior Department, joins a growing number of government agencies that are requiring vaccinations or regular COVID-19 testing.

Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez issued an executive order that requires all tribal employees under his watch to be fully vaccinated by Sept. 29 or regularly test negative for the coronavirus. Tribal spokesman Jared Touchin said that extends to employees of the Department of Diné Education.

Nez hasn't acted on legislation recently passed by the Navajo Nation Council to mandate vaccines for all tribal employees. The tribe has maintained a mask mandate throughout the pandemic.

Interior Secretary Deb Haaland said bureau employees must be vaccinated no later than Oct. 15 and provide proof. Those who don't comply could be fired or lose their contract, the Interior Department said.

"The department recognizes that education plays a critical role in promoting equity in learning and health, particularly for Indigenous communities that have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19," the department said.

The schools will consider individual requests for exemptions but could require those who aren't vaccinated to follow safety measures established by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, undergo regular COVID-19 testing and prove they've tested negative before they return in-person to schools or dormitories.

The Bureau of Indian Education schools are operating under a mix of virtual and in-person settings that factor in the circumstances in surrounding communities, and input from tribal and health officials, said Interior Department spokesman Tyler Cherry. He said some schools have had confirmed COVID-19 cases but didn't elaborate.

## **GOP-led states see Texas law as model to restrict abortions**

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Republican states that have passed increasingly tough abortion restrictions only to see them blocked by the federal courts have a new template in an unusually written Texas law that represents the most far-reaching curb on abortions in nearly half a century.

On Thursday, Republican lawmakers in at least half a dozen states said they planned to introduce bills using the Texas law as a model, hoping it provides a pathway to enacting the kind of abortion crackdown they have sought for years.

In Mississippi, Republican state Sen. Chris McDaniel said he would "absolutely" consider filing legislation to match the Texas law after a sharply divided U.S. Supreme Court let it stand.

"I think most conservative states in the South will look at this inaction by the court and will see that as perhaps a chance to move on that issue," he said.

The Texas law, which took effect Wednesday, prohibits abortions once medical professionals can detect cardiac activity, usually around six weeks and before many women know they're pregnant. While a dozen states have tried to enact bans early in pregnancy, those laws have been blocked by courts.

Texas may have found an end-run around the federal courts by enacting an unusual enforcement scheme that authorizes private citizens to file lawsuits in state court against abortion providers and anyone involved in aiding an abortion, including someone who drives a woman to a clinic. The law includes a minimum award of \$10,000 for a successful lawsuit, but does not have government officials criminally enforce the law.

In addition to Mississippi, GOP lawmakers and abortion opponents in at least five other Republican-controlled states — Arkansas, Florida, Indiana, North Dakota and South Dakota — said they were considering pushing bills similar to the Texas law and its citizen-enforcement provision.

"Even though you may have pro-life legislators, you do not always have pro-life bureaucrats who are willing to do enforcement inspections," said Indiana state Sen. Liz Brown, a Republican who has been the sponsor of several anti-abortion bills adopted in recent years.

Republicans for years have turned to statehouses in conservative states to find new ways to erode abortion rights enshrined by the high court's 1973 Roe v. Wade decision. The Supreme Court — at least for now — has cleared a path forward for them.

"We're excited, and we really do think that the heartbeat bill strategy is working," said Blaine Conzatti, president of the Idaho Family Policy Center, which opposes abortions.

Idaho passed a law this year with similar restrictions to Texas, but it will only go into effect if a U.S. appeals court upholds another state's law, a condition that has not been met.

Arkansas state Sen. Jason Rapert on Thursday tweeted that he planned to file legislation mirroring Texas' law when lawmakers reconvene this fall. The Republican lawmaker sponsored a 2013 "heartbeat" abortion ban that was later struck down by federal courts and another outright ban enacted this year that a federal judge has blocked.

Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson, a Republican, said the state should wait until the more stringent anti-abortion Arkansas law receives a final judgment.

Hutchinson called the court's ruling on Texas' law a "procedural victory" for abortion opponents, but said it doesn't reflect the court's view on whether Roe v. Wade should be reversed. Overturning that decision

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is abortion opponents' foremost goal.

In Tennessee, Stacy Dunn, the president of Tennessee Right to Life, said she is hopeful the Supreme Court's decision to allow the Texas law to go in effect means the high court will rule to reverse Roe. Ten states, including Tennessee, have laws that would effectively outlaw most abortions should Roe v. Wade be overturned.

"This Texas law could be a ray of light at the end of a very long and dark tunnel, and our state is ready," Dunn said in a statement.

Democrats also anticipated the Supreme Court's new conservative majority overturning Roe, although they fear a ruling striking it down would leave old state laws outlawing abortions in effect.

"Reproductive freedom in our state is built on case law," said New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy, a Democrat, as he pushed for state lawmakers to enact a bill that would enshrine access to abortions.

"All of that case law is in turn built on the Supreme Court's decision on Roe v. Wade. If the foundation of that series of case laws is impacted, impaired, taken away, the entire reality in our state falls like a house of cards, which is why we need to, as soon as possible, put this protection into statute."

In New Mexico, Democratic state Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero of Albuquerque said she was angered by the Texas law because it might lead to underground abortion procedures that endanger the lives of women.

Roybal Caballero, a "Catholic for choice" in her words, wants New Mexico to provide safe passage to anyone seeking medical care, including abortion procedures that she believes should be a matter of personal choice. A clinic in Albuquerque is one of only a few independent facilities in the country that perform abortions close to the third trimester without conditions.

"We don't want to go back to the 1960s and 1970s underground days of illegal abortions," she said. "It's our decision. And if it's going to be our decision, it should be a safe and healthy outcome."

## Otter Tail Power to sell stake in North Dakota coal plant

FERGUS FALLS, Minn. (AP) — A utility company in western Minnesota plans to end its investment in a coal-fired plant it operates in North Dakota as part of its push to add more sources of renewable energy.

Otter Tail Power Co., based in Fergus Falls, plans to sell its 35% stake in the Coyote Station Power Plant in Beulah, North Dakota by 2028, according to documents filed Wednesday with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission.

The utility said "more flexible and economical resource options are available" and it is concerned that its obligation to the plant will become too costly for customers.

Otter Tail serves about 137,000 homes and businesses in western Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota. The plan, which would need to be approved by utility regulators in all three states, calls for Otter Tail to continue operating the Coyote Station plant.

Otter Tail is looking to add dual fuel capability at its Astoria Station plant in South Dakota, which is fueled in part by natural gas from North Dakota's Williston Basin. The company also wants to add 150 megawatts of solar power at a location yet to be determined.

## South Dakota House's call on AG impeachment may take months

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota House speaker has received a hard drive containing all of the findings of the investigation into the state attorney general's car crash that killed a pedestrian last year, but it could take months before the chamber decides whether to try to impeach the state's top law enforcement official.

Prosecutors spent months weighing what charges to bring against Attorney General Jason Ravensborg after it received the findings from investigators, and House Speaker Spencer Gosch, a fellow Republican, has thus far shown no sign that he's in any hurry to review them.

Gosch said Thursday that his staff in Pierre received the hard drive late Wednesday and that he hadn't had a chance to see what it contains. He'll have to sort through files that contain nearly 1,300 photos,

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cellphone data extraction reports, roughly 10 hours of video and audio of interviews, more than 1,500 pages of investigative reports and a crime scene map that requires special software to view.

"We're still evaluating what the process is going to look like," he said, adding that lawmakers would "allow an ample amount of time and an ample amount of due process."

Republican Gov. Kristi Noem has called for Ravensborg to resign, including before he pleaded no contest to two misdemeanor traffic offenses in the crash that killed pedestrian Joseph Boever. And it was Noem who had the investigation findings sent to Gosch along with a letter from Secretary of Public Safety Craig Price in which he said Ravensborg should have been charged with manslaughter.

However, it isn't clear how much of an appetite for a lengthy political trial there will be in a Legislature that has never tried to impeach an official as powerful as an attorney general. The Legislature is scheduled to convene in January, and any action outside of the session would require either broad support or an order from the governor.

"It's so difficult to know how long it would take to sort through all that evidence," said Republican state Rep. Jon Hansen, who is a member of the legislative leadership.

A move to push impeachment charges through the Republican-dominated state House in February lost momentum after a judge ordered state officials not to release information about the crash. Gosch reasoned at the time that the order broadly applied to the Legislature, and the House passed a nonbinding resolution saying it might evaluate whether to bring impeachment charges once the criminal case concluded.

In pleading no contest to the misdemeanors last week, Ravensborg avoided jail time but was sentenced to fines totaling over \$4,500 for making an illegal lane change and using a cellphone while driving. Investigators said his car veered onto the shoulder of the rural highway where Boever was walking late on Sept. 12 and found that Ravensborg had been on his cellphone about a minute before the crash.

Ravnsborg has tried to move past the episode, insisting he committed no serious crime and can still perform his job as the state's top law enforcement official.

Lawmakers now have an opportunity to see the evidence for themselves. But just how the investigation files are reviewed — and what is released to the public — will be decided by legislative leaders.

Republican state Rep. Will Mortensen, the freshman lawmaker who introduced the articles of impeachment in February because Boever was one of his constituents, said he couldn't guess when rank-and-file lawmakers would get a chance to dig through the investigation materials. He hopes each of the House's 70 members House will get a copy of the files.

He, along with several other Republicans and Democrats, have kept up calls for Ravensborg to step down.

State Rep. Jamie Smith, the House Democratic leader, said, "I believe there's no confidence in our attorney general from most law enforcement agencies and that makes it very difficult to do the job he's supposed to do."

## Jayhawks face South Dakota in Leipold's first game as coach

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Sports Writer

LAWRENCE, Kan. (AP) — The Missouri Valley Conference has had so much success against schools from Power Five leagues over the years that Lance Leipold flat refused to play its teams when he was the head coach at Buffalo.

He didn't have a say in who Kansas would play in his first game leading the Jayhawks.

The schedule was made long before Leipold was hired this spring to replace Les Miles, who resigned under pressure amid sexual harassment allegations dating to his time at LSU. And right there on Friday night is South Dakota, a program that beat Minnesota in 2010, Bowling Green in 2017 and took Kansas State to the wire three years ago.

"It's an excellent football conference. Very competitive," Leipold said, "and my respect for that whole league is immense."

The Valley has six teams ranked in the Top 25 of the Football Championship Subdivision, and four of those are among the nation's top eight teams. That includes Northern Iowa, which faces seventh-ranked

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Iowa State this weekend.

The Coyotes aren't among those ranked teams. And that might make them even more dangerous. Nobody knows quite what to expect of them.

"We have a blend of some very seasoned players and a lot of younger players that are hungry to play but have practiced a lot," said South Dakota coach Bob Nielson, whose team had half of its eight-game schedule canceled due to COVID-19 last season. "Even though they might be freshmen by classification, they're in position to contribute to this team."

Leipold and Nielson both trace their roots to Division III football.

Leipold spent most of his career at Wisconsin-Whitewater, first as an assistant coach early in his career, then as a wildly successful head coach who went 109-6 with six national championships in eight years. He moved onto Buffalo, rebuilding the downtrodden Bulls, before he was hired by new athletic director Travis Goff to turn the same trick at Kansas.

Nielson spent a couple years at Ripon before leading Wartburg and Wisconsin-Eau Claire to three D-3 playoff appearances in eight seasons. He has a couple national titles on his resume, too, from his Division II days at Minnesota-Duluth.

In other words, the level of football doesn't mean a whole lot to Leipold or Nielsen. Perhaps that's another reason Leipold never wanted to play those pesky teams from the Missouri Valley.

**MORE ON JAYHAWKS AND THE VALLEY**

Kansas hasn't had a whole lot of success against the Valley in recent years. Turner Gill's team lost to North Dakota State in a 6-3 snoozer to open the 2010 season, and David Beaty's bunch lost to South Dakota State to open the 2015 season.

**EXPERIENCE COUNTS, SORT OF**

The Jayhawks return their leading passer (Jalon Daniels), their top rusher (Velton Gardner), their leading receiver (Kwamie Lassiter II), their No. 1 tackler (Kenny Logan Jr.) and their top scorer (Jacob Borcila) from last season. But the progress made by Leipold in improving the roster is evident in the fact that none of them are sure bets to repeat the feat.

Daniels has been dueling North Texas transfer Jason Bean to start at quarterback. Velton will be pushed by Daniel Hishaw Jr. and freshmen Devin Neal and Amauri Pesek-Hickson. Buffalo transfer Trevor Wilson figures to be a top receiver.

**EXPERIENCE COUNTS, PART 2**

The Jayhawks played 27 true freshmen last season, which tied for the highest number in the country. And there are 69 freshmen, redshirt freshmen or sophomores on the roster this year, which means well over half of the roster were playing high school football two years ago or less. That includes a handful who could start against the Coyotes.

**ON THE FLIP SIDE**

South Dakota has 21 returning starters, even if they played just four games last season. That includes quarterback Carson Camp, the Valley's second-leading passer as a freshman last season, and Brady Schutt, the nation's top punter.

**BUFFALO FLAVOR**

Leipold brought along Bulls offensive coordinator Andy Kotelnicki, defensive coordinator Brian Borland, offensive line coach Scott Fuchs, quarterbacks coach Jim Zebrowski and linebackers coach Chris Simpson. Kotelnicki's offense led the nation in rushing last season while Borland's defense was No. 1 in the Mid-American Conference in yards per game.

Six players also followed Leipold and Co. to Lawrence. Several are expected to play the opener against the Coyotes.

## **Police: Infant left behind by suspected drunken driver**

**SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP)** — A mother left her infant behind after crashing into several vehicle while driving in downtown Sioux Falls and fleeing the scene with three other children, police said.

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According to police spokesman Sam Clemens, the 38-year-old Sioux Falls woman was arrested not long after fleeing from her disabled SUV earlier this week. Clemens says she had hit three vehicles, a crosswalk signal and a flower pot before fleeing with three of her children; ages 1, 3 and 6, the Argus Leader reported.

Police said she left her 2-week-old daughter behind in the vehicle Monday evening.

She was arrested on probable charges of DUI, abuse or cruelty to a minor, vehicular battery, felony hit-and-run and reckless driving.

A 25-year-old Brandon woman in one of the vehicles that was struck sustained minor injuries, Clemens said.

## Ida's toll grows with deaths of nursing home residents

By REBECCA SANTANA, MELINDA DESLATTE and JANET McCONNAUGHEY Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Louisiana officials launched an investigation into the deaths of four nursing home residents who had been evacuated to a warehouse ahead of Hurricane Ida, as state residents struggling in the wake of the storm sought financial relief and other help amid small signs of recovery.

The nursing home residents who died were among hundreds of people from seven nursing homes taken to the warehouse in Independence, where conditions became unhealthy and unsafe after the hurricane struck on Sunday, state health officials said. A coroner classified three of the deaths as storm-related.

Health officials received reports of people lying on mattresses on the floor, not being fed or changed and not being socially distanced to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, which is currently ravaging the state, Louisiana Department of Health spokesperson Aly Neel said. When a large team of state health inspectors showed up on Tuesday to investigate the warehouse, the owner of the nursing homes demanded that they leave immediately, Neel said.

Neel identified the owner as Bob Dean. Dean did not immediately respond Thursday to a telephone message left by The Associated Press at a number listed for him.

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards promised a full investigation into whether the owner "failed to keep residents safe and whether he intentionally obstructed efforts to check in on them and determine what the conditions were in the shelter." And he vowed "aggressive legal action" if warranted.

Meanwhile, President Joe Biden was scheduled to visit Louisiana on Friday to survey the damage after promising full federal support to Gulf Coast states and the Northeast, where the remnants of Ida dumped record-breaking rain and killed at least 46 people from Maryland to Connecticut.

At least 13 deaths were blamed on the storm in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, including the three nursing home residents and two 19-year-old utility employees who were electrocuted Tuesday as they were restoring power near Birmingham, Alabama. Authorities blamed several other deaths on carbon monoxide poisoning.

About 900,000 people in Louisiana, including much of New Orleans, remained without power and tens of thousands had no water in the midst of a sultry stretch of summer. Efforts continued to drain flooded communities, and lines for gas stretched for blocks in many places from New Orleans to Baton Rouge.

Edwards said more than 220,000 people have already registered for FEMA assistance and 22,000 have applied for a federal program to place tarps on damaged roofs. About 72,000 "blue roofs" — tarps to protect homes with damaged roofs — may be needed across Louisiana, federal officials said.

"I know that people are anxious and tired," Edwards said Thursday. "I know they're hot. And the tempers can flare when they're waiting in those long gas lines. I'm asking people to be patient."

But there were also glimmers of hope. Commercial flights resumed in New Orleans and power returned to parts of the business district Thursday, four days after Hurricane Ida slammed into the Gulf Coast with 150 mph (230 kph) winds that tied it for the fifth-strongest hurricane ever to strike the mainland U.S.

Louisiana officials also reported a big drop late Thursday in the number of customers with no running water: 185,000, compared to more than 600,000 the day before.

Some of New Orleans' hospitals have seen their regular power supply restored, said Dr. Jennifer Avegno, director of the New Orleans Health Department. A senior center has been converted to a place for resi-

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dents to receive limited health care, she added at a Thursday briefing.

Declining numbers of COVID-19 patients and restoration of power at additional sites helped Louisiana's largest hospital system — Ochsner Health — recover, CEO Warner Thomas said during an online news conference. The Ochsner system's COVID-19 patient count fell to 663 from 990 about a week ago, Thomas said. That coincides with the state's overall declining case numbers.

Power should be restored to most customers around Baton Rouge area by Sept. 8. after workers finish assessing damage, Entergy Louisiana President Philip May said Thursday. Damage assessments are not as far along in the harder-hit regions, so Entergy said it has no timetable for getting service to those areas, which include New Orleans.

Biden ordered the release of extra fuel from the nation's Strategic Petroleum Reserve to ensure a steady supply. He said he would also provide utilities with satellite images to help restore power.

## Cleanup and mourning continue after Ida soaks Northeast US

By The Associated Press undefined

The cleanup — and mourning — continued Friday as the Northeast U.S. recovered from record-breaking rainfall from the remnants of Hurricane Ida.

At least 46 people in five states died as storm water cascaded into people's homes and engulfed automobiles, overwhelming urban drainage systems never meant to handle so much rain in such a short time.

The toll was highest in New Jersey, where 23 people perished in heavy rains late Wednesday and early Thursday. A majority were people who drowned after their vehicles were caught in flash floods, some dying in their submerged cars, some getting swept away after exiting into fast-moving water.

Floodwaters and a falling tree also took lives in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Connecticut and New York. In New York City, 11 people died when they were unable to escape rising water in basement apartments.

Authorities said the work of searching for possible victims and identifying the dead wasn't over.

Work also continued to haul away ruined cars, clean mud and debris from streets and restore service on bedraggled transportation systems. Parts of New York City's subway system remained offline late Thursday night as workers repaired flood damage.

Leaders in some states also pledged to examine whether anything could be done to prevent a catastrophe like this from happening again.

New Jersey and New York have both spent billions of dollars improving flood defenses after Superstorm Sandy hit the region in 2012, but much of that work was focused on the coasts and tidal floodplains.

President Joe Biden late Thursday approved disaster declarations for both states. The federal action was issued to mobilize agencies to provide assistance to areas hardest-hit by the storm.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said Thursday the region needed to turn its attention to storm systems unprepared to handle a future of more frequent inland flash flooding due to global climate change.

"One thing I want to make clear: we're not treating this as if it's not going to happen again for 500 years," she said.

Ida came ashore in Louisiana on Sunday tied as the fifth-strongest storm to ever hit the U.S. mainland, then moved north and east dumping torrential rain all week.

Forecasters had warned of potentially dangerous hazardous flooding, but the ferocity of the storm caught the nation's most densely populated metropolitan corridor by surprise.

One person died in Maryland and at least five in Pennsylvania, where some neighborhoods alongside the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia remained partly underwater. A Connecticut state police sergeant died after his cruiser was swept away. In one New York City basement apartment, a 2-year-old boy died along with his parents when they couldn't escape rising water.

The National Weather Service said the storm also spawned at least 10 tornadoes, the most serious of which destroyed homes in Mullica Hill, New Jersey, south of Philadelphia.

**With no tourist handouts, hungry Bali monkeys raid homes**

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By FIRDIA LISNAWATI and NINIEK KARMINI Associated Press

SANGEH, Indonesia (AP) — Deprived of their preferred food source — the bananas, peanuts and other goodies brought in by tourists now kept away by the coronavirus — hungry monkeys on the resort island of Bali have taken to raiding villagers' homes in their search for something tasty.

Villagers in Sangeh say the gray long-tailed macaques have been venturing out from a sanctuary about 500 meters (yards) away to hang out on their roofs and await the right time to swoop down and snatch a snack.

Worried that the sporadic sorties will escalate into an all-out monkey assault on the village, residents have been taking fruit, peanuts and other food to the Sangeh Monkey Forest to try to placate the primates.

"We are afraid that the hungry monkeys will turn wild and vicious," villager Saskara Gustu Alit said.

About 600 of the macaques live in the forest sanctuary, swinging from the tall nutmeg trees and leaping about the famous Pura Bukit Sari temple, and are considered sacred.

In normal times the protected jungle area in the southeast of the Indonesian island is popular among local residents for wedding photos, as well as among international visitors. The relatively tame monkeys can be easily coaxed to sit on a shoulder or lap for a peanut or two.

Ordinarily, tourism is the main source of income for Bali's 4 million residents, who welcomed more than 5 million foreign visitors annually before the pandemic.

The Sangeh Monkey Forest typically had about 6,000 visitors a month, but as the pandemic spread last year and international travel dropped off dramatically, that number dropped to about 500.

Since July, when Indonesia banned all foreign travelers to the island and shut the sanctuary to local residents as well, there has been nobody.

Not only has that meant nobody bringing in extra food for the monkeys, the sanctuary has also lost out on its admission fees and is running low on money to purchase food for them, said operations manager Made Mohon.

The donations from villagers have helped, but they are also feeling the economic pinch and are gradually giving less and less, he said.

"This prolonged pandemic is beyond our expectations," Made Mohon said, "Food for monkeys has become a problem."

Food costs run about 850,000 rupiah (\$60) a day, Made Mohon said, for 200 kilograms (440 pounds) of cassava, the monkeys' staple food, and 10 kilograms (22 pounds) of bananas.

The macaque is an omnivore and can eat a variety of animals and plants found in the jungle, but those in the Sangeh Monkey Forest have had enough contact with humans over the years that they seem to prefer other things.

And they're not afraid to take matters into their own hands, Gustu Alit said.

Frequently, monkeys wander into the village and sit on roofs, occasionally removing tiles and dropping them to the ground. When villagers put out daily religious offerings of food on their terraces, the monkeys jump down and make off with them.

"A few days ago I attended a traditional ceremony at a temple near the Sangeh forest," Gustu Alit said. "When I parked my car and took out two plastic bags containing food and flowers as offerings, two monkeys suddenly appeared and grabbed it all and ran into the forest very fast."

Normally, the monkeys spend all day interacting with visitors — stealing sunglasses and water bottles, pulling at clothes, jumping on shoulders — and Gustu Alit theorizes that more than just being hungry, they're bored.

"That's why I have urged villagers here to come to the forest to play with the monkeys and offer them food," he said. "I think they need to interact with humans as often as possible so that they do not go wild."

## **New Zealand police kill 'terrorist' after he stabs 6 people**

By NICK PERRY Associated Press



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WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — New Zealand authorities were so worried about an extremist inspired by the Islamic State group they were following him around-the-clock and were able to shoot and kill him within 60 seconds of him unleashing a frenzied knife attack that wounded six people Friday at an Auckland supermarket.

Three of the shoppers were taken to Auckland hospitals in critical condition, police said. Another was in serious condition, while two more were in moderate condition.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the incident was a terror attack. She said the man was a Sri Lankan national who was inspired by the Islamic State group and was well known to the nation's security agencies.

Ardern said she had been personally briefed on the man in the past but there had been no legal reason for him to be detained.

"Had he done something that would have allowed us to put him into prison, he would have been in prison," Ardern said.

The attack unfolded at about 2:40 p.m. at a Countdown supermarket in New Zealand's largest city.

Police Commissioner Andrew Coster said a police surveillance team and a specialist tactics group had followed the man from his home in the suburb of Glen Eden to the supermarket in New Lynn.

But while they had grave ongoing concerns about the man, they had no particular reason to think he was planning an attack on Friday, Coster said. The man appeared to be going into the store to do his grocery shopping.

"He entered the store, as he had done before. He obtained a knife from within the store," Coster said. "Surveillance teams were as close as they possibly could be to monitor his activity."

Witnesses said the man shouted "Allahu akbar" — meaning God is great — and started stabbing random shoppers, sending people running and screaming.

Coster said that when the commotion started, two police from the special tactics group rushed over. He said the man charged at the officers with the knife and so they shot and killed him.

One bystander video taken from inside the supermarket records the sound of 10 shots being fired in rapid succession.

Coster said there would be questions about whether police could have reacted even quicker. He said that the man was very aware of the constant surveillance and they needed to be some distance from him for it to be effective.

Ardern said the attack was violent and senseless, and she was sorry it had happened.

"What happened today was despicable. It was hateful. It was wrong," Ardern said. "It was carried out by an individual. Not a faith, not a culture, not an ethnicity. But an individual person who is gripped by ideology that is not supported here by anyone or any community."

Ardern said the man had first moved to New Zealand in 2011 and had been monitored by security agencies since 2016. She said authorities are confident he acted alone in the attack.

Ardern said legal constraints imposed by New Zealand courts prevented her from discussing everything that she wanted to about the case, but she was hoping to have those constraints lifted soon.

Some shoppers in the supermarket tried to help those who had been wounded by grabbing towels and diapers and whatever else they could find from the shelves.

"To everyone who was there and who witnessed such a horrific event, I can't imagine how they will be feeling in the aftermath," Ardern said. "But thank you for coming to the aid of those who needed you when they needed you."

Auckland is currently in a strict lockdown as it battles an outbreak of the coronavirus. Most businesses are shut and people are generally allowed to leave their homes only to buy groceries, for medical needs or to exercise.

Extremist ideology is rare in New Zealand and Ardern said that only a tiny number of people would be subject to such intense surveillance.

In 2019, a white supremacist gunned down worshippers at two Christchurch mosques, killing 51 people and injuring dozens more. After pleading guilty last year, Brenton Tarrant was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. The killings sparked changes to gun laws in New Zealand, which has now

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banned the deadliest types of semi-automatic weapons.

Among those to condemn the attack on Friday were members of the Al Noor mosque in Christchurch, which was at the center of the mosque attacks two years ago.

"We stand with the victims of the horrible incident," said Gamal Fouda, the imam of Al Noor. "We feel strongly the pain of terrorism and there are no words that can convey our condemnation of such a horrible act."

## **Biden message to battered Gulf Coast: 'We are here for you'**

By JOSH BOAK and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is calling for greater public resolve to confront climate change and help the nation deal with the fierce storms, flooding and wildfires that have beset the country as he makes a sojourn to hurricane-battered Louisiana on Friday.

"My message to everyone affected is: We're all in this together," Biden said in a speech Thursday at the White House, where he addressed the multiple natural disasters that have unfolded this week. "The nation is here to help."

Trips to natural disaster scenes have long been a feature of the U.S. presidency. It's a moment to show compassion and deliver aid in ways that can shape the public's perception of White House leadership.

Biden was scheduled to meet with Louisiana's Democratic governor, John Bel Edwards, and other local officials and tour a neighborhood in LaPlace, a community between the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain that was inundated by storm surge flooding that left people trapped in attics. He also planned a flyover tour of hard-hit communities including Lafitte, Grand Isle, Port Fourchon and Lafourche Parish, where Parish President Archie Chaisson said 25% of the homes in his community of 100,000 people were gone or had catastrophic damage.

Past presidents have been defined in part by how they handled such crises. Donald Trump casually lobbed paper towels to people in Puerto Rico after a hurricane, generating scorn from critics but little damage to his political standing. Barack Obama hugged New Jersey Republican Gov. Chris Christie in 2012 after Superstorm Sandy, a brief respite from partisan tensions that had threatened the economy with a fiscal cliff. And George W. Bush fell out of public favor after a poor and unprepared response to Hurricane Katrina, which swamped New Orleans in 2006.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Ida, Biden is grappling with the persistent threat posed by climate change and the prospect that disaster zone visits may become a more regular feature of the presidency.

When Biden last visited Louisiana in May, to promote his infrastructure package, he spoke in the city of Lake Charles, where there was a glass tower visible from the podium that was still covered in plywood because a pair of hurricanes last year had blown out the windows.

Scientists say climate change increases the frequency of extreme weather events — such as large tropical storms, and the droughts and heatwaves that create conditions for vast wildfires. U.S. weather officials recently reported that July 2021 was the hottest month ever recorded in 142 years of record-keeping.

As for Friday's trip, Biden said his message to the Gulf Coast was: "We are here for you. And we're making sure the response and recovery is equitable so that those hit hardest get the resources they need and are not left behind."

Biden's nearly eight-month-old presidency has been shaped in part by perpetual crises. The president went to Texas in February after a cold winter storm caused its power grid to fail and he has repeatedly monitored the wildfires that have darkened skies in Western states.

Besides natural disasters, the president has had to contend with a multitude of other challenges. He is searching for ways to rescue the 100-200 Americans stuck in Afghanistan after the longest war in U.S. history ended only a matter of days ago. He is also confronting the delta variant of the coronavirus that has stuck the country in an autumn of uncertainty only months after Biden declared independence from the disease at a July 4 celebration on the White House lawn.

His call for resolve to help the country overcome the pandemic and forge a \$1 trillion infrastructure deal

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is now being applied to the perilous task of withstanding the aftershocks of climate change.

"The past few days of Hurricane Ida and the wildfires in the West and the unprecedented flash floods in New York and New Jersey is yet another reminder that these extreme storms and the climate crisis are here," he said Thursday. "We need to be much better prepared. We need to act."

Biden pledged robust federal help for states dealing with natural disasters. And he said he will further press Congress to pass his nearly \$1 trillion infrastructure bill to improve roads, bridges, the electric grid and sewer systems. The proposal intends to ensure that the vital networks connecting cities and states and the country as a whole can withstand the flooding, whirlwinds and damage caused by increasingly dangerous weather.

Ida was the fifth-most powerful storm to strike the U.S. when it hit Louisiana on Sunday with maximum winds of 150 mph (240 kph), likely causing tens of billions of dollars in flood, wind and other damage, including to the electrical grid. The storm's remnants dropped devastating rainfall across parts of Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey on Wednesday, causing significant disruption to major population centers.

The storm has killed at least 45 people in the Northeastern U.S. and at least 13 in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

Edwards said he was looking forward to Biden's visit to the hurricane-ravaged state.

"I don't think there's any substitute for actually being on the ground, speaking with the local officials and seeing with your own eyes the utter devastation that the state of Louisiana has sustained because of Hurricane Ida," Edwards said Thursday at a briefing with reporters in Tangipahoa Parish, one of the many southeastern parishes with widespread damage from the storm.

Edwards said he'll give the president a "long list" of requests for federal assistance.

## 'We came here crying': Tigray forces also accused of abuses

DEBARK, Ethiopia (AP) — As they bring war to other parts of Ethiopia, resurgent Tigray fighters face growing allegations that they are retaliating for the abuses their people suffered back home.

In interviews with The Associated Press, more than a dozen witnesses offered the most widespread descriptions yet of Tigray forces striking communities and a religious site with artillery, killing civilians, looting health centers and schools and sending hundreds of thousands of people fleeing in the past two months.

In the town of Nefas Mewucha in the Amhara region, a hospital's medical equipment was smashed. The fighters looted medicines and other supplies, leaving more than a dozen patients to die.

"It is a lie that they are not targeting civilians and infrastructures," hospital manager Birhanu Mulu told the AP. He said his team had to transfer some 400 patients elsewhere for care. "Everyone can come and witness the destruction that they caused."

The war that began last November was confined at first to Ethiopia's sealed-off northern Tigray region. Accounts of atrocities often emerged long after they occurred: Tigrayans described gang-rapes, massacres and forced starvation by federal forces and their allies from Amhara and neighboring Eritrea.

Thousands of people died, though the opaque nature of the war -- most communications and transport links have been severed -- means no one knows the real toll.

The Tigray forces retook much of their home region in a stunning turn in June, and now the fighting has spilled into Amhara. Angered by the attacks on their communities and families, the fighters are being accused of targeting civilians from the other side.

The United States, which for months has been outspoken about the abuses against Tigrayans, this week turned sharp criticism on the Tigray forces.

"In Amhara now, we now know that the (Tigray forces have) ... looted the warehouses, they've looted trucks and they have caused a great deal of destruction in all the villages they have visited," the head of the U.S. Agency for Economic Development, Sean Jones, told the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation.

He called the Tigray fighters "very aggressive." USAID, which feeds millions throughout Ethiopia, has seen Tigray forces looting and emptying some of its warehouses, he said.

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While the U.S., United Nations and others urge all sides to stop the fighting and sit down to talks, those on the ground believe there's no peace to come. Many Ethiopians outside Tigray support the federal government's war effort, and as Tigray forces advance, families heed recruiting drives and send loved ones for military training. Ethiopia's government says "millions" have answered the call.

"Our children are living in terror. We are here to stop this," said Mekdess Muluneh Asayehegn, a new Amhara militia recruit. Propping a gun on a full plastic sack, she lay on the ground and practiced sighting.

But the consequences of the call to war are already coming home.

"As we came here, there were lots of dead bodies (of defense forces and civilians) along the way," said Khadija Firdu, who fled the advancing Tigray forces to a muddy camp for displaced people in Debark. "Even as we entered Debark, we stepped on a dead body. We thought it was the trunk of a tree. It was dark. We came here crying."

It is not clear how many people in Amhara have been killed; claims by the warring sides cannot be verified immediately. Each has accused the other of lying or carrying out atrocities against supporters.

Shaken, the survivors are left to count bodies.

In the town of Debre Tabor, Getasew Anteneh said he watched as Tigray forces shelled and destroyed a home, killing six people.

Getasew helped carry away the dead. "I believe it was a deliberate revenge attack, and civilians are suffering."

In recent interviews with the AP, the spokesman for the Tigray forces Getachew Reda said they are avoiding civilian casualties. "They shouldn't be scared," he said last month. "Wherever we go in Amhara, people are extending a very warm welcome."

He did not respond to the AP about the new witness accounts, but tweeted in response to USAID that "we cannot vouch for every unacceptable behavior of off-grid fighters in such matters."

The Tigray forces say their offensive is an attempt to break the months-long blockade of their region of some 6 million people, as an estimated 400,000 face famine conditions in the world's worst hunger crisis in a decade. The situation "is set to worsen dramatically," the U.N. said Thursday.

The fighters also say they are pressuring Ethiopia's government to stop the war and the ethnic targeting that has seen thousands of Tigrayans detained, evicted or harassed while the prime minister, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, has used words like "cancer" and "weeds" to describe the Tigray fighters.

Ethnic Amhara, more than half a million now displaced, say innocent people have been killed as Tigray forces move in.

"I've witnessed with my own eyes when the (Tigray forces) killed one person during our journey," said Mesfin Tadesse, who fled his home in Kobo town in July. "His sister was pleading with them when they killed him for no reason."

Zewditu Tikuye, who also fled Kobo, said her 57-year-old husband was killed by Tigray fighters when he tried to stay behind to protect their home and cows. "He wasn't armed," she said. Now she shelters with her six children in a small house with 10 other people.

Others seek shelter in schools, sleeping in classrooms as newcomers drenched from the rainy season arrive. They squat in muddy clearings, waiting for plastic plates of the spongy flatbread injera to be handed out for the latest meal.

And as earlier in Tigray, people in Amhara now watch in horror as the war damages religious sites in one of the world's most ancient Christian civilizations.

On Monday, the fourth-century Checheho monastery was hit by artillery fire and partially collapsed.

"This is very brutal," said Mergeta Abraraw Meles, who works there as a cashier. He believes it was intentionally targeted by the Tigray forces. They had come peacefully, he said, but then lashed out after facing battlefield losses.

In the rubble of the monastery was a young boy, dead.

**Three men guided millions through horror of Sept. 11, 2001**

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By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — “Turn on your television.”

Those words were repeated in millions of homes on Sept. 11, 2001. Friends and relatives took to the telephone: Something awful was happening. You have to see.

Before social media and with online news in its infancy, the story of the day when terrorists killed nearly 3,000 people unfolded primarily on television. Even some people inside New York’s World Trade Center made the phone call. They felt a shudder, could smell smoke. Could someone watch the news and find out what was happening?

Most Americans were guided through the unimaginable by one of three men: Tom Brokaw of NBC News, Peter Jennings of ABC and Dan Rather of CBS.

“They were the closest thing that America had to national leaders on 9/11,” says Garrett Graff, author of “The Only Plane in the Sky,” an oral history of the attack. “They were the moral authority for the country on that first day, fulfilling a very historical role of basically counseling the country through this tragedy at a moment its political leadership was largely silent and largely absent from the conversation.”

The news media has changed in the ensuing 20 years, and some experts believe the same story would feel even more chaotic and terrifying if it broke today.

But on that day, when America faced the worst of humanity, it had three newsmen at the peak of their powers.

Brokaw, Rather and Jennings were the kings of broadcast news on Sept. 11, 2001. Competitive drive and ego had led them to that place. Each had anchored his network’s evening newscasts for roughly two decades at that point. Each had extensive reporting experience before that — Brokaw and Rather at the White House during Watergate, Jennings primarily as a foreign correspondent.

While they weren’t the only journalists on the air — CNN’s Aaron Brown memorably narrated the scene from a New York rooftop, for example — ABC, CBS or NBC were the first choices for news.

Unlike today, when a TV studio is likely to be stuffed with people when a big story breaks, back then it was pretty clear who was in charge.

“The three of us were known because we had taken the country through other catastrophes and big events,” Brokaw recalled this summer. “The country didn’t have to, if you will, dial around to see who knew what.”

Each man was in New York that morning. They rushed to their respective studios within an hour of the first plane hitting the World Trade Center at 8:46 a.m.

Was it a terrible accident? The second plane bursting into the towers with a ball of flame, and scary reports from the Pentagon, answered that question but left many more.

Initial network reports were handled by journalists of considerable reputation: Katie Couric, Matt Lauer, Bryant Gumbel, Charles Gibson, Diane Sawyer. Yet there was an unmistakable sense that the first string had arrived when Brokaw, Jennings and Rather took over.

“It was clear that it was an attack on America,” says Marcy McGinnis, who was in charge of breaking news at CBS that day. “You want the most experienced person in that chair because they bring so much. They bring all of their life experience, they bring all of their anchoring experience.”

It’s hard to convey the confusion and anxiety they stepped into. At point Brokaw wondered aloud whether damage to the towers would be so severe they would have to be taken down. Yet viewers could see that, moments earlier, most of one tower had already collapsed.

Things were happening too quickly to keep up.

“The country needed some sort of stability, some sort of ground,” says David Westin, ABC News president at the time. “Where are we? What’s going on? How bad can this get? It needed some sense of, ‘There’s some things we do know and some things we don’t know. But this is how we go forward from here.’”

Those are usually duties handled by politicians who take to the airwaves at the first sign of a wildfire, hurricane, pandemic or some other disaster. Yet government leaders were kept out of sight for much of Sept. 11 until it was clear the attack was over.

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Until late afternoon, President George W. Bush stayed in the air on Air Force One; then-primitive communications captured TV signals only intermittently, allowing the president to watch broadcast TV only when the plane flew over big cities.

The president's absence accentuated the importance of the television anchors and, in fact, led to anger by some members of the Bush administration toward Jennings that lingers to this day. Egged on by Rush Limbaugh, they felt Jennings slighted Bush in the way that he pointed out that the president was out of sight for several hours during the crisis. Westin said Jennings was misinterpreted.

On that day, each anchor exhibited particular strengths.

Brokaw, who had just authored "The Greatest Generation," a book about those who fought World War II, was instantly able to put the event into context: We were witnessing history, he explained, and not just news.

He called it the biggest attack on U.S. soil since the War of 1812, said the profile of Manhattan had changed forever, that day-to-day life would not be the same. "This has been a declaration of war on the United States," he told viewers.

Looking back, Brokaw says he felt it was his primary job to give viewers more than what they could see for themselves onscreen.

"Throughout my career, I was constantly trying to think, 'What's the big picture here?'" he says. "I think that was especially true that day."

Rather would tap his foot on the brakes, reminding those watching to distinguish between fact and speculation. Before Twitter and Facebook existed, he cautioned that rumors would "spread like mildew in a damp basement."

When he took over CBS coverage, he told viewers that "the word of the day is steady, steady. Yes, there have been some terrible things happening but until and unless we know the facts, it's very difficult to draw many conclusions."

He reminded people that "the whole city is not in smoke and flames, not by a long shot."

Sometimes his caution got the better of him, as he repeatedly referenced unconfirmed reports that the first tower had fallen. By then, viewers could see that for themselves.

"Emotions and tensions were high that day," Rather told The Associated Press recently. "In order to cut through the noise, to help calm the panic, you have to be clear, concise and transparent. People will know exactly where they stand and can assess for themselves."

Surprisingly few false reports slipped through in those early hours, most prominently that a car bomb had exploded at the State Department in Washington. One group falsely claimed responsibility for the attack. Speculation was kept largely in check, though in the shadow of the World Trade Center attack eight years earlier, Osama bin Laden's name quickly came up.

Jennings was the consummate anchorman. He skillfully weaved all of the elements — eyewitness accounts, expert analysis, fast-breaking bulletins and what viewers saw with their own eyes — into a compelling narrative.

"That's what he was born to do," says Kayce Freed Jennings, widow of the ABC anchorman, who died of lung cancer in August 2005. "He was in a zone. He was a great communicator and, perhaps, great communication was the most important thing he could offer that day."

Each of the anchors, trained in the old school, kept emotions in check. The exception was Jennings, whose eyes were moist when the camera returned to him following a report by ABC's Lisa Stark.

He revealed that he had just checked in with his children, who were deeply stressed. "So if you're a parent and you've got a kid in some other part of the country, call 'em up," he advised.

"There was more of a formality even 20 years ago than there is today, where there is no limit to how personal anchors will get sometimes," MSNBC's Brian Williams says now. "For Peter to do that kind of instantly included all of us."

At first, talk of casualties was kept at a minimum. No one knew. That changed when the second tower

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imploded, still the morning's most breathtaking moment. The anchors prepared viewers for the worst.

"There are no words to describe this," Rather said then. "It's a time to watch, absorb and think. What we had hoped and prayed would not happen, could not happen, has happened. New York's World Trade Center, in effect, has been destroyed. The loss of life will be high."

It's going to be horrendous, Brokaw told viewers. The damage is beyond what we can say.

"We're all human," Brokaw said this summer, "even those of us who are journalists who spend our lives trying to put things into context and add to the viewers' understanding. We have to be both empathetic and help the viewer through what they are seeing."

That night, after more than a dozen hours on the air, Brokaw returned to an empty apartment, his wife and family out of town and unable to get back. He poured himself a drink and took a phone call with the news that a family friend had died, unrelated to the attacks.

For 40 minutes, he sat on the edge of his bed and cried.

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Brokaw stepped down from "NBC Nightly News" after the 2004 election. Now 81 and ailing, he keeps busy writing books but seldom appears on television. Rather left CBS News after the fallout from a 2004 story about Bush's National Guard service. Now 89, he's an energetic tweeter about politics and the media.

New anchors are in their old roles at ABC (David Muir), CBS (Norah O'Donnell) and NBC (Lester Holt).

If a Sept. 11-styled attack was to happen in today's media world, where would people turn for news? The cable news networks are better established now as a place to go for breaking news, yet they're also much more driven by opinion. How many people would instantly want their news seen through an ideological prism?

Many would likely go to social media first, Graff said. Television anchors are already acutely aware, during breaking news, that many people watching them are also monitoring Twitter feeds.

"I have a hunch that we would spend a lot of our time knocking down misinformation on social media," Williams says.

Besides opinion and speculation, the Internet would be home to more reporters, amateur or otherwise. First word that something was wrong might not have come from a plane hitting the World Trade Center, but in a tweet from someone saying their plane had been hijacked.

Recreated scenes of passengers rushing the cockpit of United Airlines Flight 93 to confront hijackers before the plane crashed in Pennsylvania became a part of Sept. 11 lore. Today, someone might post pictures of the real thing on Instagram.

The world would surely see in graphic detail the horror of what was going on in the World Trade Center — the mangled bodies, uncontrollable fires and decisions about whether to jump or burn.

Television news had gatekeepers making editorial decisions on Sept. 11 — most prominently, the decision not to show pictures of people leaping or falling to their deaths. Networks eventually halted reruns of planes striking the towers, worried that traumatized children would think the same tragedy was happening again and again.

On social media, there are no such guardrails.

"It would defy censorship," says David Friend, author of "Watching the World Change: The Stories Behind the Images of 9/11." "As panic-inducing as it was and as tragic an experience it was historically in this country, had the current technology been around in 2001, I think you would have had something far more heart-wrenching."

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The passage of time and David Westin's current job — he's now an anchor on Bloomberg Television — have given him perspective on what Peter Jennings did on Sept. 11, 2001. He believes Jennings was the best television news anchor ever and, as terrible as the day was, it was his crowning achievement.

"All three were prepared on that day," says Russ Mitchell, an anchor for WKYC-TV in Cleveland. Two decades ago, he was a stand-in for Rather if he needed help on Sept. 11. "All of their careers had led up to that point."

There's one other thing the men appeared to have in common.

Freed Jennings said she doesn't believe her husband ever looked at tapes of his performance that day. "That wasn't his way," she said. Brokaw said he hasn't, mostly because he's afraid he'd spot a mistake that would eat at him. Rather hasn't either, and his reason is simplest.

Living through the day once was enough.

## Young Africans struggle with jobs, education amid pandemic

By FARAI MUTSAKA and ANDREW MELDRUM Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — The future looked promising for Tinashe Mapuranga, an intern at a leading bank in Zimbabwe who appeared set to get a staff position as soon as he completed his college degree. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Amid the lockdowns, the 24-year-old was one of the first to be laid off and has no idea when he'll be able to get his degree because of frequent school closures.

"It has really affected me a lot in my studies. I have no money to buy data and I don't have a personal laptop to study online and keep up like what others are doing," said Mapuranga, who lives with his mother in Chitungwiza, a sprawling working-class area southeast of Harare, the capital.

"I was supposed to finish in November or December 2021, but as of now, we haven't completed much of the work," he said. "Truly speaking, I am not sure when I will finish the degree. I can't wait to graduate and find a job and do something tangible in life."

Mapuranga spends most of his time at home, tending a tiny vegetable garden that is the family's main source of food. His mother ekes out a living traveling to South Africa to sell things like stone carvings and brooms on the streets, a trade also badly hit by the pandemic.

"We've been trying to hustle to get some money," he said. "I tried to do a small business selling cooking gas but the authorities chased us away from the streets. My father passed away. My mother is into informal business, but it's also down with these lockdowns. Things are not well right now. It's tough."

Mapuranga's situation might look dire, but he says he's concerned about some of his unemployed peers who have fallen into alcohol, drugs and prostitution.

"Many youths have lost hope," he said.

Across Africa, many others like Mapuranga are battling the economic downturn caused by COVID-19, losing jobs and seeing their education disrupted, a survey of people aged 18-24 in 15 countries has found.

The pandemic increased the already-high level of unemployment among the group, according to preliminary findings of the second annual Africa Youth Survey.

Nearly 20% of the 4,500 respondents said they became unemployed because of the pandemic and 37% were forced to stop or pause their education. Another 8% saw their pay docked, 18% had to move back home and 10% said they had to care for family members, according to the survey, which was commissioned by the Johannesburg-based Ichikowitz Family Foundation, whose founder, Ivor Ichikowitz, runs Paramount Group, an aerospace, security and military contractor.

Of the 1.3 billion people in Africa's 54 countries, an estimated 250 million are aged 18-24. The study was conducted in major urban and trading centers in Angola, Congo, the Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda and Zambia. The researchers for PSB Insights, a global polling company, were nationals of each country where the survey took place and went door-to-door for in-depth, face-to-face interviews.

People surveyed said the pandemic caused substantial disruptions to their schooling, emphasizing the need for more computers and internet access in Africa for online education.

Bola Badejo, 29, saw her salary at the broadcast station where she worked in Abuja, Nigeria, cut in half, and she complained that she could not make it on the equivalent of \$146 a month.

"I was already poor and I was working just for the sake of doing the job," she said. Then, in April 202, she was laid off.

"I fell into depression because the whole thing was really sad. I felt I had nowhere to go," Badejo said.



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After seven months without a job, she started a home cleaning business, and that has boosted her outlook, she said.

Badejo is typical of many who have found different ways to support themselves.

In 2020, about 40% of those surveyed expressed optimism about the future. The pandemic dented that confidence, lowering it to 31%, according to the survey.

Uganda has had two lockdowns since April 2020, the second of which was relaxed in July. But businesses involving close human interaction — bars, gyms and nightclubs — remain closed by presidential order, leaving many young people without work.

Ronald Maathe, a 25-year-old janitor at a gym outside Uganda's capital of Kampala, shook his head sorrowfully when saying that his monthly salary is now the equivalent of \$43. That's half of what he used to earn before the pandemic

"After I pay the rent, I am left with almost nothing," he said. "The half salary doesn't do anything."

His face lights up when describing how he makes ends meet by selling passion fruit — or grenadillas — that he buys from farmers near the border with Congo. He makes a small profit on every sack of fruit he sells in Kampala.

"My business is still small. But I have a dream," he said. "If I can get someone to hold my hand, and give me a loan to expand my business, that's what I want. I am not waiting for the government to help me."

## Excitement meets worry as European kids head back to school

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — English educator Richard Sheriff watched this week as a group of energetic 11-year-olds entered their new secondary school for the first time — finding their classrooms, eating in the cafeteria, racing around the halls.

The familiar rituals of a school sparking back to life were especially poignant after a year and a half of disruption driven by the coronavirus pandemic, said Sheriff, head of the Red Kite Learning Trust, a group of primary and secondary schools in the Yorkshire region. But in addition to the usual excitement, he had a new feeling this year: "Trepidation."

The start of a new school year in many northern hemisphere nations comes as the highly infectious delta variant continues to drive a surge in coronavirus cases — especially among children, many of whom are not yet eligible for vaccination.

Still, many governments including Britain's are determined to get children back into classrooms after 18 stop-start months of lockdowns, remote learning and abandoned exams. U.K. schools, have closed for three-month stretches twice since early 2020, and major year-end exams have been canceled two years running, throwing university admissions into chaos.

While most European countries are retaining some restrictions for schools, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative government is pushing this year for something approximating pre-pandemic normality. It has removed social distancing and mask-wearing orders and no longer requires pupils to be grouped into "bubbles" to limit the spread of the virus.

Instead, the government says students should be tested regularly, and schools will be given guidance on improving ventilation.

Politicians and the group of scientists that advises the government have acknowledged it's a gamble. The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies said in August that "it is highly likely that exponential increases will be seen in school-attending age groups after schools open."

A separate independent group of scientists that is often critical of the British government's pandemic response went further, calling the plan "reckless."

But Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said testing would help root out cases, and defended the government's strategy as striking a "sensible balance."

Britain, which lifted almost all pandemic restrictions on business and socializing in July, has among the highest coronavirus rates in Europe, with upwards of 30,000 new confirmed infections each day. Hospital-

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izations and deaths remain far lower than during previous surges, thanks to an inoculation campaign that has seen nearly 80% of people over 16 fully vaccinated. But Britain is still averaging about 100 coronavirus deaths every day.

Unlike the U.K., Italy and Spain are maintaining social distancing and masks for students and staff. Italy also requires teachers to show proof of vaccination or a recent negative coronavirus test, as do Turkey and Greece.

In France, where students headed back to school Thursday, face coverings must be worn by pupils 6 and up, and whole primary school classes will be sent home if one child tests positive.

In the Balkan nations that are among Europe's poorest, meanwhile, low vaccination rates and surging outbreaks have made it difficult to get kids back to class after a year and a half.

In Kosovo, where the weekly average of new cases rose more than tenfold between July and August, the start of the school year has been delayed by two weeks until Sept. 13. Neighboring Albania also postponed school, and the government has ordered mandatory vaccinations for teachers. Only a third of Albania's population, and less than 20% of people in Kosovo, have been fully vaccinated.

Even in countries with high inoculation rates, warning bells are sounding in areas where schools have already returned. Scotland has seen cases soar to the highest level yet in the pandemic since schools reopened in mid-August. Israel, where school resumed Wednesday, is restricting students in areas with the highest infection rates to online learning for now.

In Germany's North Rhine-Westphalia, 30,000 students and almost 300 teachers in the state of 18 million are in quarantine, two weeks after school started. Infection rates in young people between 5 and 19 are by far the highest of any age group.

The United States may give hints of what lies ahead. American students returned to classrooms over the last month in many places just as the delta variant started to hammer the country, triggering dozens of outbreaks in schools. In some states, children now make up the largest proportion of new COVID-19 infections.

Many schools have shut down entirely or reverted to online learning because so many children and staff got sick or had close contact with those infected. In the state of Georgia, many school superintendents said they experienced more cases and quarantines in the first few weeks of class than during all of last year.

The start of school year has also led to fierce battles between parents and administrators over mask requirements that have devolved into violence at times.

European countries appear less polarized, but tensions around masks and vaccines are rippling in countries including Poland, where school leaders are bracing for pushback from parents.

"I cannot imagine a 7-year-old wearing a mask anywhere at school, even for five minutes," said Alina Nowak, the mother of a student at a primary school in southern Warsaw. "They are stressed out enough as it is, returning after the lockdown."

Teachers' unions in several countries have opposed mandatory vaccinations for school staff. In Italy, protests against the government's "green pass" system of vaccine passports have been marred by violence, including an attack in which a reporter for the national daily La Repubblica was punched repeatedly in the face.

Many countries with high vaccine rates are banking on immunization to serve as a bulwark between infection and illness — especially in Britain since there are few other restrictions. Most U.K. teachers have been vaccinated, though it's not mandatory. Sheriff says only two of his schools' 1,400 staff have declined to get the vaccine.

But most schoolchildren remain unprotected. Britain is currently offering shots to those aged 16 and up.

In the meantime, some schools are sticking to tougher measures than the government advised.

Pepe DiTasio is keeping masks in hallways and communal areas of Wales High School near Rotherham in northern England where he is the principal.

"We felt we'd start cautiously and keep masks rather than have to move back into that situation should there be a spike," he said.

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"My prediction is that we'll see more masks be worn in the next month. I mean, I hope not," he said. "But I think experience would tell us that they will."

## Afghan media brace for what's next under Taliban rule

By AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Afghanistan's most popular private television network has voluntarily replaced its risqué Turkish soap operas and music shows with tamer programs tailored to the country's new Taliban rulers, who have issued vague directives that media must not contradict Islamic laws or harm the national interest.

Still, independent Afghan news stations are keeping female presenters on the air and testing the limits of media freedom under the group, whose militants have killed journalists in the past but have promised an open, inclusive system since coming to power in August.

As the world watches intently for clues on how the Taliban will govern, their treatment of the media will be a key indicator, along with their policies toward women. When they ruled Afghanistan between 1996-2001, they enforced a harsh interpretation of Islam, barring girls and women from schools and public life, and brutally suppressing dissent.

Since then, Afghanistan has seen a proliferation of media outlets, and women made some strides within the restrictions of the deeply conservative society.

In a first sign the Taliban are trying to soften their extremist reputation, one of its officials unexpectedly walked into the studios of the privately owned Tolo News just two days after taking control of Kabul in mid-August. He sat down for an interview with the female anchor, Behishta Arghand.

The 22-year-old anchor told The Associated Press that she was nervous when she saw him enter the studio, but his behavior and how he answered questions helped put her at ease a bit.

"I just said to myself this is a good time to show for all the world, Afghan women don't want to go back. They want... to go forward," she said.

Arghand fled the country after the interview, unwilling to take any chances about the Taliban's promises of greater openness. She is temporarily in a compound in Qatar for Afghan refugees.

She is among hundreds of journalists — many seen as the best in their field — who left the country after the Taliban takeover, part of an exodus of more than 100,000 Afghans.

Yet her interview with the Taliban official marked a notable shift from the militants' first time in power when women had to cover themselves from head to toe and were stoned to death in public for adultery and other alleged offenses.

This time, the Taliban shared video of girls going to school in the provinces. They also have held news conferences after taking control of Kabul, fielding questions from local and international media.

Saad Mohseni, the CEO and chairman of Moby Group, which owns Tolo News, said he believes the Taliban are tolerating the media because they understand they have to win hearts and minds, convince the political establishment to play a role and consolidate their rule.

"The media is important to them, but what they do to the media in a month or two months' time remains to be seen," he said from Dubai, where Moby Group has an office.

Although the U.S. and its allies failed to create a stable democracy in Afghanistan, they did succeed in creating a thriving press, said Steven Butler, Asia program coordinator for the Committee to Protect Journalists. The U.S. government spent huge sums of money on the project as the foundation of democracy, he noted on CPJ's website.

Initial U.S. grants helped launch Tolo, which began as a radio station in 2003 and rapidly expanded to television. The Pashto- and Dari-language broadcaster employs 500 people and is the most-viewed private network in Afghanistan.

Known for its news and entertainment programming, Tolo decided on its own to remove music shows and soap operas from the airwaves because "we didn't think that they'd be acceptable to the new regime," Mohseni said. The romance dramas have been replaced by a Turkish TV series set in the Ottoman era,

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with more modestly dressed actresses.

Afghanistan's state broadcaster RTA pulled its female presenters off the air until further notice. The independent female-run Zan TV has ceased showing new programming.

The privately run Ariana news channel, however, has kept its female anchors on the air. Tolo had a female host on its breakfast show Thursday and the network has one female news anchor and several female reporters.

Since taking control, there have been reports of Taliban beating and threatening journalists. In one known case, the German broadcaster Deutsche Welle said Taliban militants going door to door in a hunt for one of its journalists shot and killed a member of his family and seriously injured another.

"We have to make sure that Afghan journalism stays alive because people will need it," said Bilal Sarwary, a longtime journalist in Afghanistan whose work has appeared on the BBC, among others.

Although he also has left Afghanistan with his family, he said a generation of citizen journalists are more empowered than ever.

"If we can't go (back), it does not mean we will give up on Afghanistan. We will work on Afghanistan from wherever we are. ... Global connectivity is the new normal," Sarwary said.

Meanwhile, the Taliban are allowing journalists to enter Afghanistan from Pakistan and allowing media outlets to continue operating in Kabul, albeit under ominous guidelines. They have stipulated that news reports must not contradict Islamic values and should not challenge the national interest.

Such vague rules are typical for authoritarian states across the Middle East and Central Asia, where they have been used to silence and prosecute journalists. In order to operate, local media may have to practice self-censorship to avoid repercussions.

Afghanistan has long been dangerous for journalists. CPJ says 53 journalists have been killed in Afghanistan since 2001 and 33 of them since 2018.

In July, a Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer from Reuters was killed covering clashes between the Taliban and Afghan security forces. In 2014, an Agence France-Presse journalist, his wife and two children were among nine people killed by Taliban gunmen while dining at a hotel in Kabul.

Nearly two years later in 2016, a Taliban suicide bomber targeted Tolo employees on a bus, killing seven of them and wounding at least 25 people. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack, calling Tolo a tool of decadent Western influence.

Mohseni said he was concerned when the Taliban overran Kabul and that he remains "not necessarily positive."

"But I'm just thinking: Well, let's just wait and see. Let's see how restrictive they will be," he said. "There's no doubt they'll be restrictive. The question is how restrictive."

## Idaho hospitals nearly buckling in relentless COVID surge

By REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — The intensive care rooms at St. Luke's Boise Medical Center are full, each a blinking jungle of tubes, wires and mechanical breathing machines. The patients nestled inside are a lot alike: All unvaccinated, mostly middle-aged, paralyzed and sedated, reliant on life support and locked in a silent struggle against COVID-19.

But watch for a moment, and glimpses of who they were before the coronavirus become clear.

Artfully inked tattoos cover the tanned forearm of a man in his 30s. An expectant mother's slightly swollen belly is briefly revealed as a nurse adjusts her position. The young woman is five months pregnant and hooked to a breathing machine.

Down the hall, another pregnant woman, just 24 and hooked to a ventilator, is lying prone — on top of her developing fetus — to get more air into her ravaged lungs.

Idaho hit a grim COVID-19 trifecta this week, reaching record numbers of emergency room visits, hospitalizations and ICU patients. Medical experts say the deeply conservative state will likely see 30,000 new infections a week by mid-September.

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With a critical shortage of hospital beds and staff and one of the nation's lowest vaccination rates, Idaho health providers are growing desperate and preparing to follow crisis standards of care, which call for giving scarce resources to patients most likely to survive.

St. Luke's Boise Medical Center invited The Associated Press into its restricted ICUs this week in hopes that sharing the dire reality would prompt people to change their behavior.

"There is so much loss here, and so much of it is preventable. I'm not just talking about loss of life. Ultimately, it's like loss of hope," said Dr. Jim Souza, chief medical officer. "When the vaccines came out in December, those of us in health care were like, 'Oh, my God, it's like the cavalry coming over the hill. ... To see now what's playing out? It's all so needless."

Inside the ICUs, Kristen Connelly and fellow nurses frequently gather to turn over each patient, careful to avoid disconnecting the tangle of tubes and wires keeping them alive. With breathing tubes, feeding tubes and half a dozen hanging bags of medications intended to halt a cascade of organ damage, turning a patient is a dangerous but necessary endeavor that happens twice a day.

When Idaho's hospitals were nearly overwhelmed with coronavirus patients last winter, Connelly wasn't fazed, believing she could make a difference. Now, instead of focusing on one patient at a time, she cares for multiple. Many colleagues have quit, burned out by the relentless demands of the pandemic.

"At this point, I'm overwhelmed. I don't have much left," the 26-year ICU nursing veteran said Tuesday. Connelly's own life is in triage mode as she tries to maintain her last reservoirs of energy. She doesn't eat at home anymore and has cut out all activities except for walking her dog. Her normally deep sense of compassion — which Connelly considers a critical job skill — has been shadowed by a seething anger she can't shake.

"We had a mother-daughter team in the hospital last week, and the mother died and the daughter was still here," Connelly said. "In that moment, I had a reprieve from the anger, because I got to be just overwhelmed with sadness."

"It's devastating," she said. "Where we are right now is avoidable — we didn't have to go here."

All of the ICU coronavirus patients were generally healthy people who simply didn't get vaccinated, Dr. Bill Dittrich said. Idaho could enact crisis care standards in days, leaving him to make gut-wrenching decisions about who gets life-saving treatment.

"I don't think anybody will ever be ready to have the kinds of conversations and make the kinds of decisions that we're concerned we're going to have to be making in the next several weeks. I'm really terrified," Dittrich said.

Most of the ICU patients fell prey to con artists before they fell ill with the virus, said Souza, the chief medical officer. He points to a patient who first tried the anti-parasite drug ivermectin. U.S. health officials have warned it should not be used to treat COVID-19. The man, in his 50s, refused standard medical treatments until he became so sick he needed to be hospitalized.

"What we're left with is organ supportive therapy. Misinformation is hurting people and killing people," Souza said.

What the science is clear on? Vaccines, he said. "We don't have any vaccinated patients here."

In deep-red Idaho, however, vaccinations, masks and nearly anything related to the coronavirus marks a de facto borderline between more traditional Republicans and the far-right.

Republican Gov. Brad Little urged residents this week to show love for their neighbors by getting vaccinated and announced he was using federal programs and mobilizing the Idaho National Guard to bring in hundreds of additional health care workers. In response, Lt. Gov. Janice McGeachin called the statement "shameful."

McGeachin, who is running against Little in the Republican gubernatorial primary and has tried to bar schools and cities from enacting mask rules, said people should make their "own health choices."

The rift exists at the local level, too. Ada County commissioners voted to nominate a local pathologist to a regional public health board who has referred to COVID-19 vaccines as "needle rape" and the "clot shot." Dr. Ryan Cole's appointment still depends on votes by other county leaders.

Even families who have witnessed the trauma of COVID-19 firsthand are on opposite sides.

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Lisa Owens' 48-year-old stepbrother, Jeff Owens, has been in the Boise hospital's ICU since early August. "My kids call him the 'Candy Man' because he always brings candy when he comes," Lisa Owens said. "He really is this kind, loving, jovial person, and I wish with all my heart that he'd gotten vaccinated."

She's vaccinated, along with about half of her extended family. But Jeff Owens, their aunt and uncle, Jeff's daughter and a few others are not. Her stepbrother likely caught COVID-19 from the aunt and uncle, Lisa Owens said. The aunt was hospitalized — she developed blood clots from the virus — but has since recovered.

If anything, those experiences entrenched other relatives in their anti-vaccination beliefs, Owens said. "Sure, they see Jeff in the hospital, but they also see his aunt and uncle, and they're OK. The last update we had is even if he does recover, he's looking at eight months of rehab," she said. "If he pulls through, I'm going to march him into the nearest vaccine clinic myself."

Owens fears her stepbrother may be taken off life support if someone with a better chance of survival needs the bed.

"I don't even want to think about it. ... I mean, he's been in there for a month. If it comes to crisis standards of care, they're going to say he's not showing enough improvement, because he's not," she said, fighting back tears. "I hope he pulls through it."

## Ida: Narrow escapes, deadly delays and a husband's sacrifice

By The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — Tales of selflessness and heroism — and of deadly delays and heartbreaking missed opportunities — are emerging after the remnants of Hurricane Ida pummeled the Northeast with record-breaking rain that flooded roads and houses, killing dozens.

Earlier, Ida laid waste to parts of Louisiana and Mississippi after blowing ashore as one of the strongest hurricanes to hit the U.S.

Here are some of the stories of the victims — and of those who narrowly escaped:

QUAKERTOWN, Pa.

As their vehicle filled with floodwater in the far northern suburbs of Philadelphia late Wednesday, Donald Bauer helped his wife Katherine climb through a busted back windshield.

"My father started pushing my mom out, and telling her to go and go and go," said the couple's son, Darby Bauer. "All she remembers from being pushed out of the car was him touching her one last time, shouting at her to go."

Katherine Bauer clung to a tree and watched the rising waters carry their Mazda SUV out of sight. She was rescued about an hour later.

Donald Bauer's body was found the next morning. He was still in the vehicle.

The couple had attended their daughter's college volleyball game and were trying to return to their Perkiomenville home in the worsening storm when their Mazda died and began to float.

Darby Bauer said his father, a 65-year-old retired school bus driver, "100%" saved his mother's life.

"Without his help, I don't think she would've gotten out of the car," he said.

Donald Bauer "had one of the biggest hearts we knew," his son said. "He was selfless down to his last act." — Michael Rubinkam, Associated Press

ELIZABETH, N.J.

Four people died in this small, industrial city when the swollen Elizabeth River swept through an apartment complex, trapping people in their homes. But there were also lifesaving rescues.

Greg Turner's 87-year-old mother called him from the flooded building complex at 8 p.m. Wednesday to tell him water was "shooting into the apartment." He tried to race over from his home in another part of town, but floodwaters blocked his path.

Turner hailed firefighters in the street, who told him, "We're swamped, but we'll try to get you over there."

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Meanwhile, the water kept rising.

By the time rescuers reached Turner's mother a little before midnight, the water was up to her neck. To reach her, they had to cut a hole through the floor of the apartment above hers and pull her through the ceiling.

"She was standing in a sink" to keep above the rising water, Turner said. "At 87 years old."

"She lost everything," Turner said. "I'm going over to the bank to get some money to buy her some shoes, some clothes, some underwear. We've got to go get her medicine, everything."

— David Porter, Associated Press

## NEW YORK

Pinned in the door of her boyfriend's sub-basement apartment in Queens, Darlene Hsu struggled to keep her head above water and screamed for help.

Friends, neighbors and building staff dialed 911 for 40 minutes, but couldn't get through, said her ex-husband, Dennis Hsu. He said Darlene's boyfriend — the superintendent of the building — ultimately called a friend on the police force for help, and emergency responders arrived about 40 minutes after that. By then, it was too late.

Dennis Hsu said he's angry about the delays — angry the 911 system failed, and angry at people who ignored storm warnings and required rescue from flooded roadways, which diverted emergency resources.

"What are you guys doing on the highway? You're putting other people's lives at risk," he said.

Darlene Hsu had worked for a property management company and enjoyed sunbathing, swimming, arts and crafts and playing with children.

Hsu described his former wife as a "very kind and lovable person."

— Susan Haigh, Associated Press

## LAFITTE, La.

Nora Indovina was desperate to find someone to evacuate her mother before Hurricane Ida came ashore — and thought she had succeeded.

"Last time we talked, I told her to get her stuff together because they're coming to get you," Indovina said. "I guess they couldn't get to her."

Emily Boffone, 55, became trapped in her Lafitte home and died in the floodwaters. Her two beloved dogs survived the storm.

Boffone had worked for the Jefferson Parish sheriff's office, first in tax collection and later at booking intake, before retiring five years ago.

She had decided to ride out Ida because her neighbor was also staying, and she thought he could help her in an emergency, Indovina said. But the water rose so fast on Sunday that the neighbor wasn't able to get to her.

On Friday and Saturday, Indovina had been calling officials, trying to find someone who could help her evacuate. "I told them she was on oxygen, so she wouldn't be OK if the power goes out. They said they would get her out," said Indovina, speaking by phone from the car as she and her family made their way from Missouri to Louisiana.

"She was the best mom in the entire world," she said.

— Travis Loller, Associated Press

## NEW YORK

The storm was raging, and Knrishah "Nick" Ramskriet, who lived in a basement apartment in Queens, called a friend to say he and his family were leaving.

He wasn't heard from again.

"We thought he was OK. But my son called him the next morning and couldn't reach him," said his friend's mother, Ahilia Arjun.

Later came the heartbreaking news: Nick and his mother never made it out of their flooded apartment.

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He had ambitions of going to school to learn plumbing or some other trade, or maybe to become an engineer, Arjun said.

"Nick was like a son to me," she said.

— Bobby Caina Calvin, Associated Press

## Kim orders tougher virus steps after N. Korea shuns vaccines

By HYUNG-JIN KIM and KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un ordered officials to wage a tougher epidemic prevention campaign in "our style" after he turned down some foreign COVID-19 vaccines offered via the U.N.-backed immunization program.

During a Politburo meeting Thursday, Kim said officials must "bear in mind that tightening epidemic prevention is the task of paramount importance which must not be loosened even a moment," the official Korean Central News Agency reported Friday.

While stressing the need for material and technical means of virus prevention and increasing health workers' qualifications, Kim also called for "further rounding off our style epidemic prevention system," KCNA said.

Kim previously called for North Koreans to brace for prolonged COVID-19 restrictions, indicating the nation's borders would stay closed despite worsening economic and food conditions. Since the start of the pandemic, North Korea has used tough quarantines and border closures to prevent outbreaks, though its claim to be entirely virus-free is widely doubted.

On Tuesday, UNICEF, which procures and delivers vaccines on behalf of the COVAX distribution program, said North Korea proposed its allotment of about 3 million Sinovac shots be sent to severely affected countries instead. North Korea was also slated to receive AstraZeneca shots through COVAX, but their delivery has been delayed.

According to UNICEF, North Korea's health ministry still said it would continue to communicate with COVAX over future vaccines.

Some experts believe North Korea may want other vaccines, while questioning the effectiveness of Sinovac and the rare blood clots seen in some recipients of the AstraZeneca vaccine.

The previously allocated 1.9 million AstraZeneca doses would be enough to vaccinate 950,000 people — only about 7.3% of the North's 26 million people — meaning North Korea would still need much more quantities of vaccine to inoculate its population.

Leif-Eric Easley, a professor of international studies at Seoul's Ewha Womans University, said North Korea is likely angling to receive more effective jabs from COVAX and then strategically allocate them domestically.

"Pyongyang appears to have issues with COVAX involving legal responsibility and distribution reporting requirements. So it might procure vaccines from China to deliver to border regions and soldiers while allocating COVAX shots to less sensitive populations," Easley said.

"The Kim regime likely wants the most safe and effective vaccine for the elite, but administering Pfizer would require upgraded cold chain capability in Pyongyang and at least discreet discussions with the United States. The Johnson & Johnson option could also be useful to North Korea given that vaccine's portability and one-shot regimen," he said.

In a recent U.N. report on the North's human rights situation, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres asked North Korea to "take all necessary measures, including through international cooperation and assistance, to provide access to COVID-19 vaccines for all persons, without discrimination."

He also asked North Korea to form a plan to enable diplomats and aid workers to return to the North and revive humanitarian aid distribution systems as soon as possible in conjunction with its COVID-19 vaccine rollout.

After their meeting in Seoul last month, Sung Kim, the top U.S. diplomat on North Korea affairs, and his South Korean counterpart Noh Kyu-duk told reporters that they discussed humanitarian cooperation with North Korea in providing anti-virus resources, sanitation and safe water.



## Gift for El Salvador mudslide victims comes at steep price

By ALBERTO ARCE Associated Press

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (AP) — Eulalia García was stunned when she opened an envelope to find an invitation from none other than the president of El Salvador, Nayib Bukele. It promised a bus would take her family the following day to receive a surprise Christmas gift.

Garcia had survived a mudslide that killed four in her extended family and destroyed their humble home on the slopes of the San Salvador volcano. "It will be a good way to end the year after all we've been through," Garcia told her husband, Ramon Sanchez.

A neighbor in Los Angelitos, Inés Flamenco, was so grateful for her invitation that she spent three days' earnings on a gift for the president -- a bouquet of red, white and pink roses that would turn into a beautiful photo opportunity for Bukele.

"I wanted to tell him how happy I was," she recalled.

But the Christmas joy would be short-lived. Flamenco and many other guests of the president would soon discover their gifts came with a steep price tag.

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

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The 2020 Atlantic hurricane season, one of the worst ever for Central America, wiped out homes and crops and displaced more than half a million people. Honduras and Guatemala were hardest hit by back-to-back hurricanes, and their governments' failure to respond fueled soaring migration to the United States.

Even where one government in the region did act, its response was marred by politics, disrespect for the rule of law and a tendency to embrace simple answers to complicated problems.

In El Salvador, a populist president saw opportunity where tragedy struck. After the tropical storm in October, Bukele moved quickly to demonstrate that he could deliver to hundreds of families from Los Angelitos and another community, Nueva Israel, with a program that surely would be appreciated by his countrymen.

There was a problem, though. Bukele forgot to ask the people what they needed to recover. While some appreciated his help, others said they were left out and still others criticized his program, saying it was typical of the way the president governs -- using public funds for political propaganda.

"He acts fast. He does not consult, does not plan and does not listen to anyone," said Francisco Altschul, a former ambassador of El Salvador to the United States.

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On the night of Oct. 29, it rained so hard on the tin roof of their house that Ramon Sanchez fell into a hypnotic "sleep of death," as he called it.

Heaps of broken trees and rocky soil created a dam high on the volcano during the torrent. The accumulation of groundwater throughout the winter, plus days of pounding rain, caused the dam to break and the landslide that devoured Los Angelitos.

Around 10:40 that night, Sánchez was awakened by what felt like an explosion. "A rock had hit a tree behind my house, the walls shook and water started coming in everywhere."

Sanchez and García grabbed their two children and got out, fighting the water. A creek to the left and a road to the right were flooded. They reached high ground nearby and, in minutes, a monstrous ball of earth, logs and water that had traveled nearly four kilometers (2 1/2 miles) down the volcano's slope came to a halt behind them.

Sanchez's mother, brother and two nephews who were sleeping in an adobe house next to theirs were buried alive.

They were among 11 people who died as 78 houses were demolished.

"It was over as quickly as it began," Sánchez said.

Nearby, Inés Flamenco, 73, awoke to see her kitchen gone and her goats bleating for help. "If I tried

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to get closer and got a foot in the current, I would be pulled go away and die with them," she recalled. She started running only to encounter the mangled body of a neighbor dragged to death by mud and stones. She breaks into tears every time she remembers him.

After the deluge, everything seemed to happen fast, like in a movie. Contrary to what usually happens in Central America, solutions arrived, along with cameras recording everything for the Bukele administration's social media feed.

Within an hour of the mudslide, Defense Minister Rene Merino appeared on the scene and tagged President Bukele in Twitter to let him know that he had taken personal command of the search and rescue operation. Hundreds of soldiers and trusted inmates from a nearby prison started digging for survivors and bodies.

At dawn, Interior Minister Mario Durán joined the effort with drones and cameras. When he spoke to the media, he had smudges of dirt on his face -- proof that the populist government was in the thick of it.

Almost as quickly, Adolfo Barrios, mayor of Nejapa and a member of the opposition Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, arrived with his own camera and interrupted Durán. "I just want to pose some questions to the minister," he said.

He couldn't even finish his first question when the general director of the police, Mauricio Arriaza Chicas, politely but firmly told him to leave. He organized his own press conference to say he, too, would divert money from the city budget to help the families.

Funerals and burials were held and shelters were set up in schools for the newly homeless. Within 48 hours, Housing Minister Michelle Sol arrived with a promise: The government would give homeless families houses. And while they waited, she gave them money to rent houses.

Less than a month after the deluge, almost every family had moved to rental locations where, another month later, they received the invitation to meet with the president.

The trip to receive their surprise gift was 15 minutes and a world away. When the bus left the main road, they were surrounded by trucks and cranes. García said, "I think the gift is a house."

Her husband, a man of few words still traumatized by what had happened weeks before, replied, "How can they give us a house?"

They could. And they did.

The mudslide survivors crossed a security barrier and entered Ciudad Marsella, a huge private residential development under construction, then saw a succession of gleaming new houses on a street so clean and perfect that it didn't seem real. With mouths agape, they were taken off the bus and asked to form a line.

"It was very fast. A guide came up to us, checked our names and took us straight to the door of a house, gave us the keys, said it was ours and told us to wait because the president was on his way," Garcia said.

Each family was given a check for \$25,300 to buy their house and documents were exchanged. With the houses came a long list of conditions that they signed without reading them. And suddenly, these homeless families -- small-scale farmers, shopkeepers, gas deliverymen -- were part of a middle-class community.

In record time, 50 days after the storm, the government had delivered its gifts. Survivors from Los Angelitos and Nueva Israel, another neighborhood flooded in the capital in June 2020, received 272 furnished houses in a private development, with access to play spaces for children, a swimming pool, outdoor cinema, medical visits, psychological support, food bags, \$250-a-month checks until August and a temporary exemption from paying the expenses for security and common premises.

President Bukele arrived with cameras for a short speech, hugs and pictures. At a podium, he lambasted Congress for failing to approve an emergency declaration that would have allowed him to use government funds without legislative oversight.

Instead, he had earmarked \$5 million that he said was "saved" from the construction of a hospital in the capital to spend on a privately owned, already built residential community with available houses. There was no public bidding, just his decision to give the victims money to buy houses in Ciudad Marsella.

He knew the decision he had taken was considered unconstitutional by many, but Bukele said, "rain cannot be unconstitutional."

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García was grateful: "We lived in adobe in a ravine. When were we going to be able to buy a house? Never."

Then the problems began to emerge.

After hugging and giving the bouquet of roses to Bukele, Inés Flamenco remembered that she had to go back to Los Angelitos to tend her animals. She milks the five cows and some goats that survived the mudslide and sells that milk to make a living. She realized that the bus ride would cost \$3 round trip.

"I panicked. I barely make \$5 a day."

Security guards at the gated community couldn't understand why she had to leave in the wee hours to get to her animals. And she felt they treated people like her differently than the middle-class residents who had bought their own homes.

"Darker, with no vehicles, walking in and out, wearing humble clothes, we feel abused by guards who follow and question us all the time," she said.

Naively perhaps, she asked if she could bring her animals to the residence and let them graze in the common areas. They looked at her as if she was crazy.

"I didn't know who to talk to," she said. So, she went to the mayor. "How am I going to live?" she asked him.

On Jan. 15, he called another press conference, this time to criticize the president's actions, surrounded by a dozen people who were ready to give the houses back to the government.

Flamenco was the first person to speak. "The house is beautiful, but I feel depressed, it is not for me. I want to ask the government if they could look for a place in the countryside," she said.

Others continued with similar complaints. In Ciudad Marsella, it is prohibited to keep animals, and that means no chickens and no eggs to eat or sell. In any case, they weren't allowed to set up small stores to sell their farm goods. They also cannot plant trees for shade and fruit to eat.

Unemployed, displaced, earning \$3 a day, they said they wouldn't be able to afford utility payments of about \$70 per month when the government-subsidized period ends.

And there is no agricultural employment near Ciudad Marsella for laborers who earn \$200 a month when they find consistent work.

"The minister called me immediately, outraged, asking me why I was so ungrateful with a government that had given me so much, and had agreed to be used in an opposition political show," Flamenco said in tears.

"They took me to a place without asking and then accused me of being ungrateful for a gift that I didn't ask for."

García and Sánchez do not plan to give up their houses, but share the concerns of those who do. "We have no income, we have no idea how we are going to survive, the government will have to give us solutions," García said.

Sánchez's grandmother, Victoria Crisóstoma, added, "We are not allowed to cook with wood and we have to pay for gas. I cannot afford it. We are not allowed to grind corn so I cannot make my own tortillas and I have to buy them. I have no income."

As of July, at least 28 families had decided to return the houses. Like Flamenco, most of them went back to Los Angelitos.

"I am defeated. I'm afraid of dying here as soon as it starts raining again," Flamenco said.

For now, popular support is going Bukele's way. He is getting credit for providing housing to the victims of mudslides as his counterparts in Honduras and Guatemala have yet to do.

After trying to stop the president's plans since the first night of the tragedy, the opposition mayor of Nejapa, lost local elections in a political landslide to the candidate of Nuevas Ideas -- Bukele's party.

But the problems continue.

The Orellana family is among the residents of Los Angelitos who did not receive an invitation from the

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president and feel no one is listening. Their shack of wood pallets and aluminum sheeting held up in the tropical storm, so they await the next hurricane season with fear.

"They say we are not in danger," said Lourdes Orellana, 27. "How do they know how high the water will rise the next time it rains?"

Cecilia Flores' ailing mother got a house in Ciudad Marsella because she held the title to their family house even though it was not completely destroyed.

But her mother, who did not want to be identified for fear of reprisals, could not live alone in the new house because of her health, and it was not large enough for all 11 family members. If Flores was to move in with her mother, she'd have to leave her children behind with the others. She'd also have to leave her business selling lunches to workers at a nearby factory -- her only source of income.

They thought of renting out the new house to live off the income and fix up the old house, but it turned out they weren't allowed to do that in the new neighborhood.

"What is this property that cannot be sold or rented? Either it is ours or not," Flores said.

So they abandoned the gift house, which now sits empty, and returned to the adobe house where they survived the tragedy. But now the house in Los Angelitos has been seriously damaged by government when it cleared land after the mudslide. There are cracks running along the walls and the floor is sinking.

"There were options for land nearby and tailored to our needs," Flores said, "but instead of sitting down to listen and think about the options, Bukele looked for a quick photo op and created a bigger problem for people who already had a lot of problems."

## First flames, then fees: Tahoe evacuees report price-gouging

By SAM METZ and SCOTT SONNER Associated Press/Report for America

STATELINE, Nev. (AP) — As fearful Lake Tahoe residents packed up belongings and fled a raging wildfire burning toward the California-Nevada border, some encountered an unexpected obstacle: price gouging.

A rideshare company quoted a fee of more than \$1,500 to be transported from the smoke-choked ski resort at Heavenly Valley to the safety of Reno-Tahoe International Airport, about eight times the going rate. A Nevada hotel-casino outside the evacuation order zone advertised a two-night stay for \$1,090.72, almost four times the midweek rate offered a day earlier.

Reports of price-gouging routinely emerge during natural disasters and won newfound attention early in the pandemic, when some businesses tried to capitalize on panic amid demand for toilet paper and hand sanitizer.

While there is no federal law that bans it during emergencies, at least a dozen statehouses have addressed price-gouging since last year, including Nevada and California, where Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a bill banning the practice last September.

Unlike California though, a Nevada price-gouging prohibition signed by Gov. Steve Sisolak in June doesn't take effect until October. Its start date limits officials from policing the issue and taking action beyond promising to monitor it.

"We hope that good merchants are not going to partake in price gouging," Sisolak said Tuesday in Carson City, where ash particles from the Caldor Fire rained from the sky. "They're going to partake in trying to make their goods available to the widest group of people they possibly can."

Officials in both states publicly warned businesses in the shadow of the massive blaze against price-gouging, with California Attorney General Rob Bonta, his Nevada counterpart Aaron Ford and U.S. Rep. Mark Amodei asking consumers to report incidents to their offices.

Ford's office said Wednesday it hadn't received any specific complaints. Bonta's said the information was confidential.

The Caldor Fire spanned more than 328 square miles (850 square kilometers) and was 25% contained Thursday. On Monday, flames raced so quickly toward the California resort city of South Lake Tahoe that officials ordered a mass evacuation of all 22,000 residents. People across the state line in Douglas County were ordered to leave a day later.

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The Montbleu Resort, Casino and Spa — a towering 438-room Nevada hotel just blocks from the California line — began offering discounts for evacuees, \$60 rates for firefighters and first responders, and free lodging for its employees.

For everyone else, it hiked room prices Tuesday from \$120 to \$450 per night before taxes and fees.

Tim Tretton, the resort's vice president-general manager, said in a statement Wednesday it did so to deter tourists from traveling near the wildfire and to keep rooms available for evacuees. The company planned to pay back the difference to those who booked at the higher cost, he said.

"We did not and do not plan to collect on these rates, and have provided reimbursements or reductions as appropriate," Tretton said.

Leaving South Lake Tahoe also got pricier for some travelers.

A 60-mile (96-kilometer) Lyft XL ride from the resort town to Reno normally costs roughly \$200. On Tuesday, it rose nearly eightfold as people rushed to beat the flames.

A furious resident shared a screenshot of the rates on Twitter, showing \$1,535 for a minivan or SUV for a minimum of five passengers. SFGate reported the costs had dropped back to \$230 midday.

Lyft and Uber said in statements Wednesday that price jumps triggered automatic caps as demand soared around South Lake Tahoe amid emergency evacuations. Lyft said it was "reviewing and adjusting fares for certain riders who were impacted in the region."

"When ride requests outpace the number of drivers on the road, prime-time pricing — elevated fares designed to get more drivers to high-demand areas — is automatically enabled," the company said. "When we realized how the evacuation order was affecting Lyft prices, we immediately implemented a cap and ultimately suspended prime-time pricing."

Uber said fares in some places were capped Monday after it identified a public state of emergency. It enacted a second cap Tuesday.

Gas stations around evacuation zones did not appear to have raised prices significantly this week.

Puerto Rico, Washington, D.C., and 39 states have regulations limiting price gouging during emergencies, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Mississippi, parts of which have been battered by Hurricane Ida, strengthened penalties in its price gouging law in 2006, months after Hurricane Katrina left a wide swath of destruction and supply shortages caused long lines for gasoline during the first weeks after the storm.

North Carolina's attorney general filed a price-gouging lawsuit last week against a gas station that hiked prices for mid-grade and premium gas to \$9.99 per gallon after a ransomware attack forced the Colonial Pipeline — the United States' largest fuel delivery system — to shut down.

Nevada's anti-price gouging law passed in May on a party-line vote, with Democrats in favor and Republicans opposed. The law will ban price-gouging in areas where the governor has declared a state of emergency.

California law generally prohibits businesses from raising prices by more than 10% following a state or local emergency declaration.

"If you see price gouging — or if you've been a victim of it — I encourage you to immediately file a complaint with my office online at [oag.ca.gov/report](https://oag.ca.gov/report), or contact your local police department or sheriff's office," Bonta said.

## Calmer winds aid California fire fight but hot weekend looms

By SAM METZ and JANIE HAR Associated Press

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, Calif. (AP) — Fire crews took advantage of decreasing winds to battle a California wildfire near popular Lake Tahoe and were even able to allow some people back to their homes but dry weather and a weekend warming trend meant the battle was far from over.

The Caldor Fire remained only a few miles from South Lake Tahoe, which was emptied of 22,000 residents days ago, along with casinos and shops across the state line in Nevada.

The wind-driven fire that began Aug. 14 had raged through densely forested, craggy areas and still

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threatened more than 30,000 homes, businesses and other buildings ranging from cabins to ski resorts.

But there was optimism and progress as winds eased on the fire's western flank while in the northeast, despite gusty ridgetop winds, firefighters with bulldozers and shovels were steadily hacking out fire lines or burning away vegetation to box in the flames before they reached Tahoe.

"In the valleys we're doing plenty of work," fire information officer Marco Rodriguez said. "The crews are working and they're doing controlled fires ... to try to make those containment lines a little bit stronger."

Residents who were forced to flee South Lake Tahoe earlier this week remained evacuated along with people across the state line in Douglas County, Nevada.

The resort can easily accommodate 100,000 people on a busy weekend but on Thursday, just before the Labor Day weekend, it was eerily empty.

Yet after days of flames threatening to engulf the resort at any moment, any respite was welcome.

"I feel like we are truly the luckiest community in the entire world right now. I'm so incredibly happy," said Mayor Tamara Wallace, who evacuated to Truckee, California.

"It's finally a chance to take a breath," said Clive Savacool, chief of South Lake Tahoe Fire Rescue. "It's a breath full of smoke. Nonetheless, I think we're all breathing a little bit easier and we feel like we're making some progress."

Russ Crupi, who two days ago was arranging sprinklers around his mobile home park in South Lake Tahoe just miles from the fire line, had turned off the water for now, feeling confident his neighborhood was no longer under threat. The nearby mountains, cloaked in smoke for most of the week, had become visible.

"I'm just happy they stopped it. It looked close," he said.

Farther west, evacuation orders were lifted or downgraded to warnings in several areas of El Dorado County.

Friday's forecast called for lighter winds but also extremely dry daytime weather, with a warming trend through the weekend as high pressure builds over the West, fire officials said.

The Caldor Fire spanned some 330 square miles (855 square kilometers) and was 27% contained. Its northeast tip was about 3 miles (5 kilometers) south of South Lake Tahoe.

More than 15,000 firefighters were battling dozens of California blazes that have destroyed at least 1,500 homes. One blaze, the Dixie Fire, was about 65 miles (105 kilometers) north of the Caldor Fire. It is the second-largest wildfire in state history at about 1,350 square miles (3,496 square kilometers) and is 55% contained.

California has experienced increasingly larger and deadlier wildfires in recent years as climate change has made the West much warmer and drier over the past 30 years. Scientists have said weather will continue to be more extreme and wildfires more frequent, destructive and unpredictable. No deaths have been reported so far this fire season.

## Seeing danger, some in GOP leery of Texas abortion law

By SARA BURNETT, SARAH RANKIN and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Almost instantly after most abortions were banned in Texas, Democrats were decrying the new law as unconstitutional, an assault on women's health that must be challenged. But the reaction from many Republicans on the other side hasn't been nearly as emphatic.

Though some in the GOP are celebrating the moment as a long-sought win for the anti-abortion rights movement, others are minimizing the meaning of the Supreme Court's Wednesday midnight decision that allowed the bill to take effect. A few are even slamming the court and the law.

Or dodging.

"I'm pro-life," said Republican Glenn Youngkin, a GOP candidate for governor in increasingly Democratic Virginia, where the only open governor's race in the nation is coming up in November. When pressed on the Texas law by a reporter, he quickly noted that he supports exceptions in cases of rape, incest and where the mother's life is in danger — exceptions notably not included in the new law.

The mixed reactions illustrate the political risks for the GOP as their anti-abortion allies begin actually

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achieving goals they have long sought. Americans are hardly of one mind on the issue, and loudly defending the nation's toughest curbs — in Virginia or political battlegrounds like Georgia, Arizona or Florida — in next year's midterm elections won't be hazard-free.

"It is going to be a very motivating issue for women who haven't typically been single-issue pro-choice voters," said Republican pollster Christine Matthews. That includes suburban women and independents in swing House districts and competitive governor's races who in past elections didn't believe *Roe v. Wade* was truly under threat, Matthews said.

The new Texas law represents the most significant threat yet to the Supreme Court's 1973 decision establishing the right to an abortion. Surveys suggest that ruling still has broad support — 69% of voters in last year's elections said *Roe v. Wade* should be left as is, compared with just 29% saying it should be overturned, according to AP VoteCast, a poll of the electorate.

Democrats and abortion-rights advocates, who have sometimes been frustrated by voters taking access for granted, vowed Thursday to use the moment to wake people up. They promised to go after not just GOP candidates and office holders who support the Texas measure and others like it but also corporations that support them. Some reignited calls to end Senate filibuster rules to give abortion access a better chance at passage in Congress.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi said the House would soon vote on codifying *Roe v. Wade* into law, though chances in the Senate are all but nil.

Virginia's Democratic gubernatorial nominee Terry McAuliffe already has been making abortion a key issue. He points to secretly recorded video in which Youngkin tells a woman posing as an abortion opponent that he supports defunding Planned Parenthood but can't talk about it publicly because "as a campaign topic, sadly, that in fact won't win my independent votes that I have to get."

On Thursday McAuliffe warned that if Youngkin wins and Republicans take over the state House "there's a good chance that we could see Virginia go the way of Texas."

The Texas law prohibits abortions once medical professionals can detect cardiac activity, usually around six weeks and often before women know they're pregnant. Rather than be enforced by government authorities, the law gives citizens the right to file civil suits and collect damages against anyone aiding an abortion.

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a Republican, tweeted that she wanted her office to compare her state's laws with the new Texas one "to make sure we have the strongest pro-life laws on the books in SD."

But such views were hardly universal in her party.

In South Carolina, Republican Gov. Henry McMaster this year signed a restriction requiring doctors to perform ultrasounds checking for cardiac activity and prohibiting abortion if it's found, unless the pregnancy was caused by rape or incest, or the mother's life was in danger.

Asked Thursday if he would support a Texas-style bill, such as one without exceptions for rape and incest, McMaster said he viewed South Carolina's law as "superior."

Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine called the Texas law "extreme and harmful."

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell downplayed the Supreme Court's action as "a highly technical decision."

Indeed, the conservative-majority court did not rule on the constitutionality of the Texas law. The justices instead refused to block its implementation and issued a brief statement saying the decision "in no way limits other procedurally proper challenges to the Texas law, including in Texas state courts."

The justices' role ensures that the court's makeup will be part of the revived political debate. Liberal lawmakers backed by advocates who helped power President Joe Biden to office want to expand the number of justices to rebalance power.

"Democrats can either abolish the filibuster and expand the court, or do nothing as millions of people's bodies, rights and lives are sacrificed for far-right minority rule," Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., wrote on Twitter.

While a majority of American support *Roe v. Wade*, abortion opponents have typically been more likely to let the issue determine their votes. According to AP VoteCast, just 3% of voters in the 2020 presidential

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election called abortion the single most important issue facing the country, but they leaned resoundingly toward Republican President Donald Trump, 89% to just 9% for Democrat Biden. In a separate question, 18% of voters called Supreme Court nominations “the single most important factor” in their presidential votes. Those voters leaned toward Biden by a relatively narrow margin, 53% to 46%.

A June poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that most Americans think abortion should be limited after the first trimester, but about 6 in 10 said it should usually be legal in the first three months of pregnancy. More than 8 in 10 said it should be legal in cases of rape or incest.

The poll found that younger adults are especially likely to support legal abortion. Sixty-three percent of those under age 45 said abortion should usually be legal, compared with 51% of those 45 and older. Still, even young adults support some limits on abortion based on the time of pregnancy, with majorities across all age groups saying most abortions should be illegal by the third trimester.

## Mutual aid groups give personalized help after Hurricane Ida

By HALELUYA HADERO and GLENN GAMBOA AP Business Writers

The day after Hurricane Ida struck Louisiana, Delaney Nolan spent hours biking around New Orleans, handing out money to people who needed to pay for supplies or for the hotel rooms where they’d taken shelter.

Once the cash ran out — banks were closed, and ATMs were empty or no longer running without electricity — Nolan Venmo’d people the money they needed. As site coordinator for the mutual aid group Southern Solidarity in Louisiana, she and her team also handed out free meals from restaurants that were cooking up their food stockpiles before they spoiled.

Nolan is among the faces of philanthropy that are tending to the immediate personal losses inflicted by the hurricane. Mutual aid networks like hers spring into action to supplement the more established relief services from federal and local governments, as well as larger charities.

The networks, in which community members pool resources and distribute donations to care for one another, seek to avoid the traditional charity model of giver and receiver. They grew in popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic as communities across the country faced dire needs. And now they are mobilizing in the wake of other disasters like Hurricane Ida.

“Mutual aid is the most effective help right now,” Nolan said. “It’s built on communications with a lot of neighbors and existing relationships, from personally knowing what people need.”

Established philanthropic groups are joining to support the mutual aid groups, too. Jasmine Araujo, the founder of Southern Solidarity, said that days after the hurricane hit, the organization GlobalGiving had called her and said there would be donations coming to her group quickly.

“Most of our funds, though, come from individual donors,” she said. “We don’t usually get a lot of grants from bigger groups right away.”

GlobalGiving launched its Hurricane Ida Relief Fund over the weekend to speed distribution of funds for those in need, said Donna Callejon, who leads the group’s disaster response effort.

“The funds come in, and we mobilize quickly,” said Callejon, adding that because GlobalGiving has worked in the area for years, it has a list of partners that have already been vetted to receive funds. “We have experience working in Louisiana with a lot of historically disenfranchised groups.”

Another Gulf is Possible, a collective of 11 organizers and artists based in Louisiana, Texas and Florida had stored up 30 kits of solar panels, batteries, lanterns, power banks, iPads and water filters in preparation for the storm. They are gearing up to distribute the items to community organizers in New Orleans and the predominantly Native American communities of Grand Bayou and Grand Bois. But reaching people in some areas has been difficult because of the power outages, said Bryan Parras, a member of the group.

“People need everything,” said Anne White Hat, a Louisiana resident who’s part of the group, which has been collecting masks, googles, and gloves to protect communities from mold or lead during clean-up efforts.

Mutual aid efforts “allow everyone, no matter their status, to contribute what they are able,” said Tanya



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Gulliver-Garcia, a director of the Washington-based Center for Disaster Philanthropy. "The pandemic showed us that even in a cash-dependent society, people and their 'stuff' are still a valuable resource."

Most of the nation's 800 formal mutual aid groups formed during the pandemic, according to the group Mutual Aid Hub. Community fridges, for example, have sprung up in many cities since last year, allowing anyone to donate and take food.

Members of Mutual Aid Disaster Relief, another group, have been circulating an online form where people sign up to help remove trees, share meals, host spaces for donation collections, provide counseling and perform other services for those impacted by Ida. About 90 new people have signed up to contribute in the past few days, a regional coordinator estimates.

Help has also come from grassroots rescue groups. In the aftermath of Hurricane Ida, Paul Maiddendorf, a volunteer disaster responder from Houston, traveled across hard-hit LaPlace, driving home to home in a high-water vehicle in an effort to rescue Louisianans from chest-deep floodwater.

Most of those rescued were in shock, Maiddendorf said, with some stationing themselves in their attics, fearful of rising waters and with nowhere to go. Many sought help from CrowdSource Rescue, a Houston-based disaster response group that connects people seeking help with trained volunteers. Along with Maiddendorf, it has aided dozens of other volunteers do rescues or wellness checks during the disaster response.

By the time Maiddendorf arrived at the homes, most of the floodwaters had receded. But some residents still feared leaving their attics. "A couple of the families, I literally coaxed down the attic as the waters receded," Maiddendorf said.

CrowdSource Rescue, which launched in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey in 2017, directs people seeking help to call 911 before contacting them. The group says it provides assistance when local officials are overwhelmed with requests. Matthew C. Marchetti, the group's executive director, says its average donation size is \$60. So far, Marchetti says he's confirmed that the volunteers have rescued 364 people from floodwaters using boats and high-water vehicles.

Volunteers connected with CrowdSource had been fielding requests for help since Ida made landfall, but the fierce winds had initially made it impossible for them to respond. Maiddendorf, of Houston, rode out the storm at a parking lot in Baton Rouge, before heading 56 miles (90 km) southwest to LaPlace, where he found many trapped by floodwaters. Requests for help also came in for Lafitte, another town that suffered major flood damage.

Despite coordination efforts amongst different rescue groups, Marchetti says there were overlaps in responses. Similar concerned pleas for help had flooded into Cajun Navy Relief, a group of Louisiana volunteers who help with search and rescue after hurricanes and floods.

Owen Belknap, a student at Louisiana Tech University who leads one of the rescue teams, said his team managed to rescue one person in Laffitte. Belknap and his friends, also volunteers with Cajun Navy, began helping with disasters three years ago when a tornado swept through their hometown of Ruston, Louisiana. They joined the Cajun Navy last year as Hurricane Laura pummeled southwest Louisiana, killing 27 people.

Once a business major, Belknap transitioned to studying nursing as he grew more passionate about rescue efforts. With a few more days before the school year begins, he has time, he said, to help cut knocked-down trees and distribute supplies to the affected communities.

Amid the devastation, institutional funders have also opened their pocketbooks. Among them, the family foundation of Arthur M. Blank, the co-founder of The Home Depot and owner of the Atlanta Falcons, has pledged \$500,000 each to a community foundation in New Orleans and The American Red Cross, whose volunteers are on the ground working on recovery efforts. Verizon's company foundation has said it's donating \$100,000 to the Baton Rouge-based Foundation for Louisiana to aid those impacted by Ida.

"My inbox is really full right now with queries from the funder community asking where to really pitch in," said Regine Webster, the vice president of Center for Disaster Philanthropy.

**Hiring might have slowed in August in face of delta variant**

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By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A stretch of robust hiring over the past few months may have slowed in August at a time when the delta variant's spread has discouraged some Americans from flying, shopping and eating out.

Economists have forecast that employers added 750,000 jobs in August, according to the data provider FactSet. That would represent a substantial gain, though below the roughly 940,000 jobs that were added in both June and July. Some analysts are more pessimistic, expecting job growth of 500,000 or less.

But even many of those economists expect any hiring slowdown to be brief. They note that employers are still struggling to fill jobs to meet strengthened consumer demand and have posted a record-high number of openings. The unemployment rate is projected to have dropped in August to 5.2% from 5.4% in July.

The government will issue the jobs report at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time Friday.

The latest figures should provide some clues about how strong hiring will be for the rest of the year. A few months ago, many economists, along with officials at the Federal Reserve and the White House, had looked forward to September and the ensuing months as a period when the job market would return to a consistently strong state from the brief but deep pandemic recession.

With vaccinations spreading, their hope was that as fears of viral infections waned, more people would be eager to take jobs. Schools and child care centers would reopen, enabling more parents, particularly women, to start looking for work. And with a \$300-a-week federal unemployment supplement set to expire next week, Fed Chair Jerome Powell and others speculated that more of the unemployed would be looking for work.

All those trends would help more businesses fill more positions and quell complaints from companies about chronic labor shortages.

Now, though, the spread of the virus' delta variant has called some of those expectations into question. With COVID cases having spiked in July and August, Americans have been buying fewer plane tickets and reducing hotel stays. Restaurant dining, after having fully recovered in late June, has declined to about 10% below pre-pandemic levels.

Some live shows, including the remaining concerts on country star Garth Brooks' tour, have been canceled. Businesses are delaying their returns to offices, threatening the survival of some downtown restaurants, coffee shops and dry cleaners.

Several academic studies have found that the elimination of the \$300-a-week federal jobless benefit in 25 states hasn't led to a significant increase in the number of Americans seeking work. That would suggest that companies will continue to struggle to find workers in the coming months at the wages they are willing to pay.

There are signs that plenty of companies are still looking to hire, particularly businesses that are not in public-facing service industries like restaurants and bars. The job listings website Indeed says the number of available jobs grew in August, led by such sectors as information technology and finance, in which many employees can work from home.

Walmart announced this week that it will hire 20,000 people to expand its supply chain and online shopping operations, including jobs for order fillers, drivers, and managers. Amazon said Wednesday that it is looking to fill 40,000 jobs in the U.S., mostly technology and hourly positions. And Fidelity Investments said Tuesday that it is adding 9,000 jobs, including in customer service and IT.

Many manufacturers, by contrast, are still struggling with persistent supply bottlenecks. A survey of purchasing managers found that factory output expanded last month even though many companies complained that shortages of semiconductors and other parts, along with shipping delays, were raising costs and limiting production.

The delta variant is causing absenteeism in many factories, the survey found, and factory hiring has slowed because of the inability of some manufacturers to find enough workers.

The supply shortages have also fed an inflation surge, with consumer prices having jumped in July by the most in three decades, according to the Fed's preferred measure. Rising inflation pressures have

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contributed, in turn, to a sharp drop in consumer confidence.

Yet consumers, on the whole, have amassed sizable stockpiles of savings, built up from stimulus checks, stock market gains and limited opportunities to spend money during the pandemic. Many economists expect those enlarged savings to fuel more spending in the months ahead.

## Experts call for rigorous audit to protect California recall

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY and KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

A group of election security experts on Thursday called for a rigorous audit of the upcoming recall election for California's governor after copies of systems used to run elections across the country were released publicly.

Their letter sent to the secretary of state's office urges the state to conduct a type of post-election audit that can help detect malicious attempts to interfere.

The statewide recall targeting Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom, set for Sept. 14, is the first election since copies of Dominion Voting Systems' election management system were distributed last month at an event organized by MyPillow CEO Mike Lindell, an ally of former President Donald Trump who has made unsubstantiated claims about last year's election. Election offices across 30 states use the Dominion system, including 40 counties in California.

Election security experts have said the breaches, from a county in Colorado and another in Michigan, pose a heightened risk to elections because the system is used for a number of administrative functions — from designing ballots and configuring voting machines to tallying results. In the letter, the experts said they do not have evidence that anyone plans to attempt a hack of the systems used in California and are not casting blame on Dominion.

"However, it is critical to recognize that the release of the Dominion software into the wild has increased the risk to the security of California elections to the point that emergency action is warranted," the experts wrote in their letter, which was shared with The Associated Press.

The eight experts signing the letter include computer scientists, election technology experts and cybersecurity researchers.

Jenna Dresner, a spokeswoman for Secretary of State Shirley Weber, said the 40 counties in California using Dominion employ a different version of the election management system that meets various state-specific requirements. She outlined numerous security measures in place to protect voting systems across the state. That includes regular testing for vulnerabilities, strict controls on who has access, physical security rules and pre-election testing to ensure that no part of the system has been modified.

"California has the strictest and most comprehensive voting system testing, use, and requirements in the country, and it was designed to withstand potential threats," Dresner said in a statement to the AP.

The security experts want California counties using Dominion's election management system to do what's known as a "risk-limiting audit," which essentially uses a statistical approach to ensure that the reported results match the actual votes cast. California also uses paper ballots, which makes it easier to verify results.

The letter said differences between the leaked Dominion software images and the versions used in California are relatively minor. The experts said thousands of people now have blueprints to the underpinnings of Dominion's election management system, including some who may have access to voting equipment.

"That increases the risk of undetected outcome-changing cyber-attacks on California counties that use Dominion equipment and the risk of accusations of fraud and election manipulation which, without rigorous post-election auditing, would be impossible to disprove," the letter states.

A majority of voters are expected to cast mail ballots during the recall, returning them through the U.S. Postal Service or by drop boxes in their counties.

California law already requires counties to hand-count ballots from a random sample of 1% of the precincts after an election. Although the state has conducted a pilot program with risk-limiting audits, Dresner said state law does not currently allow one for the recall election. It's not clear whether that could be changed with less than two weeks to go before the election.

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Among those signing the letter was Harri Hursti, a voting technology expert who was at the Lindell event in South Dakota. Hursti said he received three copies of the Dominion election management system — one an image of the system used in Antrim County, Michigan, and the other two from Mesa County, Colorado. In a sworn declaration filed in federal court in Georgia, Hursti said the copies were later made available for online download.

He said the release gives hackers a “practice environment” to seek vulnerabilities in the system and a road map to avoid defenses. All hackers would need is physical access to the systems because they aren’t supposed to be connected to the internet.

Philip B. Stark, a professor of statistics at the University of California, Berkeley, who also signed the letter, likened it to the difference between a bank robber having a blueprint of a vault and having an exact replica of the vault to practice attacks.

“That’s what this is,” he said. “They basically have an exact copy of the thing they’re trying to break into.”

Experts say attacks could create technical problems that can cause machines to malfunction, manipulate ballot design or even target results.

A Dominion representative said the company was aware of reports about the unauthorized release of the system images and had reported it to authorities. The company said federal cybersecurity officials don’t view the breach as significantly increasing the risk to elections.

But Stark said the sheer number of people who now have access to the information makes this breach especially serious. While it’s possible the information already was in the hands of the Russians or other adversaries, there had been considerable expense and legwork involved in getting it, he said. Now that’s not the case.

“What this has done on some level is democratized access to the information that would be needed to make a cyberattack on Dominion systems,” Stark said.

Compounding the threat is a finding by voting technology specialist J. Alex Halderman that even a voter has enough physical access to implant malware, Stark said.

“So if you have someone who can do the technical work of devising a cyberattack, then it could actually be deployed by a voter, by an insider, by a vendor, by whoever,” he said. “It’s just really multiplied the number of people who are in a position to do harm to our elections by a very large factor.”

Halderman, director of the University of Michigan’s Center for Computer Security and Society, made those observations after examining Dominion voting equipment used in Georgia as an expert witness in a long-running lawsuit challenging the use of those machines.

The release of the system images follows an effort by Republicans to examine voting equipment that began soon after the November election as Trump challenged the results and blamed his loss on widespread fraud, even though there has been no evidence of it.

## US hospitals hit with nurse staffing crisis amid COVID

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a nurse staffing crisis that is forcing many U.S. hospitals to pay top dollar to get the help they need to handle the crush of patients this summer.

The problem, health leaders say, is twofold: Nurses are quitting or retiring, exhausted or demoralized by the crisis. And many are leaving for lucrative temporary jobs with traveling-nurse agencies that can pay \$5,000 or more a week.

It’s gotten to the point where doctors are saying, “Maybe I should quit being a doctor and go be a nurse,” said Dr. Phillip Coule, chief medical officer at Georgia’s Augusta University Medical Center, which has on occasion seen 20 to 30 resignations in a week from nurses taking traveling jobs.

“And then we have to pay premium rates to get staff from another state to come to our state,” Coule said.

The average pay for a traveling nurse has soared from roughly \$1,000 to \$2,000 per week before the pandemic to \$3,000 to \$5,000 now, said Sophia Morris, a vice president at San Diego-based health care staffing firm Aya Healthcare. She said Aya has 48,000 openings for traveling nurses to fill.

At competitor Simplifi, President James Quick said the hospitals his company works with are seeing

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unprecedented levels of vacancies.

"Small to medium-sized hospitals generally have dozens of full-time openings, and the large health systems have hundreds of full-time openings," he said.

The explosion in pay has made it hard on hospitals without deep enough pockets.

Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly lamented recently that the state's hospitals risk being outbid for nurses by other states that pay a "fortune." She said Wednesday that several hospitals, including one in Topeka, had open beds but no nurses to staff them.

In Kansas City, Missouri, Truman Medical Centers has lost about 10 nurses to travel jobs in recent days and is looking for travelers to replace them, said CEO Charlie Shields.

He said it is hard to compete with the travel agencies, which are charging hospitals \$165 to \$170 an hour per nurse. He said the agencies take a big cut of that, but he estimated that nurses are still clearing \$70 to \$90 an hour, which is two to three times what the hospital pays its staff nurses.

"I think clearly people are taking advantage of the demand that is out there," Shields said. "I hate to use 'gouged' as a description, but we are clearly paying a premium and allowing people to have fairly high profit margins."

In Texas, more than 6,000 travel nurses have flooded the state to help with the surge through a state-supported program. But on the same day that 19 of them went to work at a hospital in the northern part of the state, 20 other nurses at the same place gave notice that they would be leaving for a traveling contract, said Carrie Kroll, a vice president at the Texas Hospital Association.

"The nurses who haven't left, who have stayed with their facilities, they are seeing these other people come in now who are making more money. It provides a tense working environment," Kroll said.

The pandemic was in its early stages when Kim Davis, 36, decided to quit her job at an Arkansas hospital and become a travel nurse. She said she has roughly doubled her income in the 14 months that she has been treating patients in intensive care units in Phoenix; San Bernardino, California; and Tampa, Florida.

"Since I've been traveling, I've paid off all my debt. I paid off about \$50,000 in student loans," she said.

Davis said many of her colleagues are following the same path.

"They're leaving to go travel because why would you do the same job for half the pay?" she said. "If they're going to risk their lives, they should be compensated."

Health leaders say nurses are bone-tired and frustrated from being asked to work overtime, from getting screamed at and second-guessed by members of the community, and from dealing with people who chose not to get vaccinated or wear a mask.

"Imagine going to work every day and working the hardest that you have worked and stepping out of work and what you see every day is denied in the public," said Julie Hoff, chief nurse executive at OU Health in Oklahoma. "The death that you see every day is not honored or recognized."

Meanwhile, hospitals are getting squeezed by the revolving door of departures and new hires from traveling agencies.

Coule cited a recent example in which his hospital in Georgia hired a respiratory therapist through an agency to replace a staff member who had decided to accept a traveling gig. The replacement came from the same hospital where his respiratory therapist had just gone to work.

"Essentially we swapped personnel but at double the cost," he said.

Patricia Pittman, director of the Fitzhugh Mullan Institute for Health Workforce Equity at George Washington University, said many nurses still harbor resentment toward their employers from the early stages of the pandemic, in part from being forced to work without adequate protective gear.

"The nurses say, 'Hey, if I am not going to be treated with respect, I might as well go be a travel nurse,'" she said. "That way I can go work in a hellhole for 13 weeks, but then I can take off a couple months or three months and go do whatever.""

## More than 45 dead after Ida's remnants blindsided Northeast

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN, DAVID PORTER and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

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NEW YORK (AP) — A stunned U.S. East Coast faced a rising death toll, surging rivers and tornado damage Thursday after the remnants of Hurricane Ida walloped the region with record-breaking rain, drowning more than 40 people in their homes and cars.

In a region that had been warned about potentially deadly flash flooding but hadn't braced for such a blow from the no-longer-hurricane, the storm killed at least 46 people from Maryland to Connecticut on Wednesday night and Thursday morning.

At least 23 people died in New Jersey, Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy said. At least 13 people were killed in New York City, police said, 11 of them in flooded basement apartments, which often serve as relatively affordable homes in one of the nation's most expensive housing markets. Suburban Westchester County reported three deaths.

Officials said at least five people died in Pennsylvania, including one killed by a falling tree and another who drowned in his car after helping his wife to escape. A Connecticut state police sergeant, Brian Mohl, perished after his cruiser was swept away. Another death was reported in Maryland.

Sophy Liu said she tried using towels and garbage bags to stop the water coming into her first-floor New York City apartment, but the flood rose to her chest in just a half hour. She roused her son from bed, put him in a life jacket and inflatable swimming ring and tried to flee, but the door stuck. She called two friends who helped her jar it loose.

"I was obviously scared, but I had to be strong for my son. I had to calm him down," she recalled Thursday as medical examiners removed three bodies from a home down her Queens street.

In another part of Queens, water rapidly filled Deborah Torres' first-floor apartment to her knees as her landlord frantically urged her neighbors below — among them a toddler — to get out, she said. But the water rushed in so strongly that she surmised they weren't able to open the door. The three residents died.

"I have no words," she said. "How can something like this happen?"

Ida's soggy remnants merged with a storm front and soaked the Interstate 95 corridor, meteorologists said. Similar weather has followed hurricanes before, but experts said it was slightly exacerbated by climate change — warmer air holds more rain — and urban settings, where expansive pavement prevents water from seeping into the ground.

The National Hurricane Center had warned since Tuesday of the potential for "significant and life-threatening flash flooding" and major river flooding in the mid-Atlantic region and New England.

Still, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio said the storm's strength took them by surprise.

"We did not know that between 8:50 and 9:50 p.m. last night, that the heavens would literally open up and bring Niagara Falls level of water to the streets of New York," said Hochul, a Democrat who became governor last week after former Gov. Andrew Cuomo resigned.

De Blasio, also a Democrat, said he'd gotten a forecast Wednesday of 3 to 6 inches (7.5 to 15 cm) of rain for the day. The city's Central Park ended up getting 3.15 inches in just one hour, surpassing the previous one-hour high of 1.94 inches (5 cm) during Tropical Storm Henri on Aug. 21.

Wednesday's storm ultimately dumped over 9 inches (23 cm) of rain in parts of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and nearly as much on New York City's Staten Island.

In Washington, President Joe Biden assured Northeast residents that federal first responders were on the ground to help clean up.

In New York, nearly 500 vehicles were abandoned on flooded highways, garbage bobbed in streaming streets and water cascaded into the city's subway tunnels, trapping at least 17 trains and disrupting service all day. Videos online showed riders standing on seats in swamped cars. All were safely evacuated, with police aiding 835 riders and scores of people elsewhere, including a 94-year-old man on a highway, Chief of Department Rodney Harrison said.

At one Queens development, neighbors unsuccessfully tried for an hour to save a 48-year-old woman after water broke through the glass patio door of her basement apartment, trapping her in 6 feet (2 meters) of water.

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"She was screaming, 'Help me, help me, help me!' We all came to her aid, trying to get her out," said the building's assistant superintendent, Jayson Jordan, but "the thrust of the water was so strong."

Residents said they have complained for years about flooding on another Queens street, where a woman and her 22-year-old son died in a basement apartment. Her husband and the couple's other son were spared only because they stepped out to move a car, next-door neighbor Lisa Singh said.

"No one should have to go this way. I feel like this was 100% avoidable," she said.

Police were still going door-to-door in flooded areas Thursday evening and didn't have a firm number of unaccounted-for people, Harrison said.

In Elizabeth, New Jersey, rain and river flooding in an apartment complex killed four people and forced 600 from their homes, Mayor J. Christian Bollwage said.

Greg Turner, who lives elsewhere in the northern New Jersey city, said his 87-year-old mother started calling 911 when water began rising in her apartment at 8 p.m. He and his brother couldn't get there because of the deluge.

As midnight approached, the water reached her neck, he said. Rescuers finally cut through the floor of the apartment above and pulled her to safety.

"She lost everything," Turner said as he headed to a bank for money to buy his mother clothes and shoes.

In New Jersey's Milford Borough, authorities said they found a man's body in a car buried up to its hood in dirt and rocks.

The National Weather Service said the ferocious storm also spawned at least 10 tornadoes from Maryland to Massachusetts, including a 150-mph (241 kph) twister that splintered homes and toppled silos in Mullica Hill, New Jersey, south of Philadelphia.

"It just came through and ripped," said resident Jeanine Zubrzycki, 33, who hid in her basement with her three children as their house shook and lights flickered.

"And then you could just hear people crying," said Zubrzycki, 33, whose home was damaged but livable.

Record flooding along the Schuylkill River in Pennsylvania inundated homes, highways and commercial buildings, even as meteorologists warned that rivers likely won't crest for a few more days. The riverside community of Manayunk remained largely under water.

The Schuylkill reached levels not seen in over 100 years in Philadelphia, where firefighters were still getting calls about minor building collapses and people stuck in flooded cars Thursday morning. The managers of a 941-unit apartment complex near the river ordered residents to evacuate, citing "deteriorating" conditions after water rushed into the parking garage and pool areas.

In suburban Bucks County, several firefighters had to be rescued after floodwaters pinned a rescue boat against a bridge pier, state emergency management director Randy Padfield said.

Others were unable to escape the floods, including Donald Bauer, who was driving home to Perkiomenville with his wife after attending their daughter's volleyball game at DeSales University, near Allentown.

Their SUV stalled in the water and floated into a house, breaking the back window, said Darby Bauer, who was on the phone with his parents when the engine died. Donald Bauer helped his wife, Katherine, escape out the broken window and urged her to go, their son said.

She clung to a tree and watched the rising waters carry the SUV out of sight, he said. She was rescued about an hour later and hospitalized.

Donald Bauer, a 65-year-old retired school bus driver, "had one of the biggest hearts we knew," his son said. "He was selfless down to his last act."

Authorities used boats to rescue people in places from North Kingstown, Rhode Island, to Frederick County, Maryland, where 10 children and a driver were pulled from a school bus.

On Sunday, Ida struck Louisiana as the fifth-strongest storm to ever hit the U.S. mainland, leaving 1 million people without power, maybe for weeks.

## Feds responding to reports of oil, chemical spills after Ida

By MICHAEL BIESECKER Associated Press

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WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal and state agencies say they are responding to reports of oil and chemical spills resulting from Hurricane Ida following the publication of aerial photos by The Associated Press.

Environmental Protection Agency spokesman Nick Conger said Thursday that a special aircraft carrying photographic and chemical detection equipment was dispatched from Texas to Louisiana to fly over the area hard hit by the Category 4 storm, including a Phillips 66 refinery along the Mississippi River where the AP first reported an apparent oil spill on Wednesday.

Coast Guard spokesman Petty Officer 3rd Class Gabriel Wisdom said Thursday that its aircraft has also flown over the refinery, as well as to the Gulf of Mexico. The AP published photos of a miles-long brownish-black slick in the waters south of Port Fourchon, Louisiana.

The AP first reported the possible spills Wednesday after reviewing aerial images of the disaster zone taken by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Ida made landfall Sunday, its eyewall carving through Louisiana with 150 mph winds and a storm surge so powerful it temporarily reversed the flow of the mighty Mississippi.

The NOAA photos showed a black and brown slick floating near a large rig with the name Enterprise Offshore Drilling painted on its helipad. The company, based in Houston, said Thursday that its Enterprise 205 rig was safely secured and evacuated prior to the storm's arrival and that it did not suffer any damage.

"Enterprise personnel arrived back at the facility on September 1 and confirmed the integrity of all systems and that no environmental discharges occurred from our facility," the company said in a statement.

Sandy Day, spokesperson for the U.S. Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, which regulates oil rigs, confirmed it had received a report Wednesday about which the oil spill the AP had published photos. But the location was inside state waters, rather than the federal jurisdiction farther offshore.

Patrick Courreges, spokesman for the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, said his agency had no way to physically investigate the spill.

"It's going to be awhile for us before we can make our way out there," Courreges said Thursday. "We don't have planes, helicopters or Gulf-seaworthy boats."

Aerial photos taken by an NOAA aircraft Tuesday also showed significant flooding to the massive Phillips 66 Alliance Refinery in Belle Chasse, Louisiana. In some sections of the refinery, a rainbow sheen and black streaks were visible on the water leading toward the river.

In statements issued Monday and Tuesday, Phillips 66 said "some water" was inside the refinery, but did not respond to questions about environmental hazards.

Only after the AP sent the company photos Wednesday showing extensive flooding and what appeared to be petroleum in the water, the company confirmed it had "discovered a sheen of unknown origin in some flooded areas of Alliance Refinery."

"At this time, the sheen appears to be secured and contained within refinery grounds," Phillips 66 spokesman Bernardo Fallas said Wednesday evening, three days after the hurricane blew through. "Clean-up crews are on site. The incident was reported to the appropriate regulatory agencies upon discovery."

Though Fallas characterized the spill as a "sheen of unknown origin," the report Phillips 66 made to Louisiana regulators Wednesday called it "heavy oil in floodwater," according to a state call log provided to the AP. The log also contained a call from an oyster harvester concerned that water contamination from the refinery was fouling environmentally sensitive beds downriver.

Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality spokesman Greg Langley said Wednesday that a state assessment team was sent to the refinery and observed an on-site oil spill being addressed with booms and absorbent pads. A levee meant to protect the plant had breached, allowing floodwaters to flow in during the storm and then back out as the surge receded.

Langley said there was no estimate available for how much oil might have spilled from the refinery.

Louisiana regulators were tracking about 100 reports of chemical and petroleum spills statewide as of Wednesday. The reports ranged from sunken boats leaking diesel to overturned fuel tanks and flooded oil pipelines, according to the call log. Several chemical manufacturers also reported venting or flaring off toxic chemicals due to losing electricity.



Stephanie Morris, spokesperson for the Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office, said that four days after Ida hit, state regulators were still in the very early stages of responding to the environmental hazards spawned by the storm. She said a state aircraft had been flying over the affected area, focusing more on identifying ongoing threats than quantifying what had already leaked into the water and air.

"We're in what we call the rapid assessment phase, because we are trying to assess it from the air," Morris said. "We're just getting a sense of what's out there and locations. We don't have a sense yet of what the sources of sheens might be or volumes."

## British national pleads guilty to role in terror beheadings

By MATTHEW BARAKAT Associated Press

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (AP) — A British national admitted Thursday evening in a federal courtroom near the nation's capital that he played a leadership role in an Islamic State scheme to torture, hold for ransom and eventually behead American hostages.

Alexanda Anon Kotey, 37, pleaded guilty to all eight counts against him at a plea hearing in U.S. District Court in Alexandria. The charges include hostage-taking resulting in death and providing material support to the Islamic State group from 2012 through 2015.

He admitted guilt in connection with the deaths of four American hostages — journalist James Foley, journalist Steven Sotloff and aid workers Peter Kassig and Kayla Mueller — as well as European and Japanese nationals who also were held captive.

Kotey is one of four Islamic State members who were dubbed "the Beatles" by their captives because of their British accents. He and another man, El Shafee Elsheikh, were brought to the U.S. last year to face charges after the U.S. assured Britain that neither man would face the death penalty.

Elsheikh is still scheduled to go on trial in January. A third Beatle, Mohammed Emwazi, also known as "Jihadi John," was killed in a 2015 drone strike. A fourth member is serving a prison sentence in Turkey.

The plea deal sets a mandatory minimum sentence of life without parole. After 15 years, though, he would be eligible to be transferred to the United Kingdom to face any possible charges there.

In the plea deal, he admits that life is an appropriate sentence in the United Kingdom as well. If he were to receive a sentence of less than life there, the deal requires that he serve the rest of his life sentence, either in the United Kingdom if that country will do so, or be transferred back to the U.S. to serve the life term.

The deal also requires him to cooperate with authorities and answer questions about his time in the Islamic State group. He would not, though, be required to testify at Elsheikh's trial.

The deal also requires him to meet with victims' families if they request it.

Kotey gave a somewhat detailed account of his time in Islamic State when U.S. District Judge T.S. Ellis asked him to explain in his own words what he had done.

He said he traveled to Syria to "engage in a military fight against the Syrian forces of Bashar Assad" and that he eventually pledged allegiance to Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

"I accept I will be perceived as a radical who holds extremist views," he said.

He acknowledged that he had participated in "capture-and-detain operations" to kidnap Foley and other Western hostages and that he led efforts to extract ransoms.

He described the acts of violence that were inflicted on the hostages as a necessary part of keeping them in line and persuading Western governments to pay ransom.

In the years after the hostages had been killed, he said he filled multiple roles within the Islamic State, including as a sniper and as director of a special forces training camp.

Prosecutor Dennis Fitzpatrick said at Thursday's hearing that Kotey, Elsheikh and Emwazi were all friends at a young age in London, where they became radicalized.

In a statement, Raj Parekh, acting U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, who is also a member of the prosecution team on the Kotey and Elsheikh cases, said the case has always been focused on the victims and their families.

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"Their resilience, courage, and perseverance have ensured that terror will never have the last word. The justice, fairness, and humanity that this defendant received in the United States stand in stark contrast to the cruelty, inhumanity, and indiscriminate violence touted by the terrorist organization he espoused," Parekh said.

Mueller also was raped by the Islamic State's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, according to the indictment. Al-Baghdadi was killed by U.S. forces in Syria in 2019.

Kotey and Elsheikh were captured in Syria in 2018 by the U.S.-supported Syrian Democratic Forces while trying to escape to Turkey.

Family members of all four victims attended Thursday's hearing and stood outside the courthouse afterward with prosecutors. They will have an opportunity to speak at Kotey's formal sentencing on March 4.

James Foley's mother, Diane, said she was grateful for the conviction and praised prosecutors for obtaining a detailed account of Kotey's culpability.

"This accountability is essential if our country wants to discourage hostage-taking," she said. Diane Foley also called on the U.S. government to prioritize the return of all Americans being held abroad.

## Florida governor appeals ruling on masks in schools

By CURT ANDERSON Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has appealed a judge's ruling that the governor exceeded his authority by ordering school boards not to impose strict mask requirements on students to combat the spread of the coronavirus.

The governor's lawyers took their case Thursday to the 1st District Court of Appeal in Tallahassee. DeSantis wants the appeals court to reverse last week's decision by Leon County Circuit Judge John C. Cooper, which essentially gave Florida's 67 school boards the power to impose a student mask mandate without parental consent. Cooper's ruling was automatically stayed by the appeal.

DeSantis, a Republican, said at a news conference earlier this week that he is confident the state will win on appeal by linking the mask mandate order to the Parents Bill of Rights law. That law, the governor said, reserves for parents the authority to oversee their children's education and health.

Cooper found, however, that the Bill of Rights law exempts government actions that are needed to protect public health and are reasonable and limited in scope — such as masking students to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in schools.

"It doesn't require that a mask mandate must include a parental opt-out at all," Cooper said in an oral ruling Friday.

DeSantis and state education officials have threatened to impose financial penalties on school boards that adopt a mask requirement without a provision allowing parents to opt out.

So far, they have moved to withhold salaries for school board members in Alachua and Broward counties. Those are two of the 13 school boards representing over half of Florida's 2.8 million students that have voted for mask mandates in defiance of the governor's order.

"Ultimately, we are just trying to stand with the parents," DeSantis said. "We think it's important that they are given the ability to opt out."

In his ruling last week, Cooper agreed with a group of parents who claimed in a lawsuit that DeSantis' order is unconstitutional and cannot be enforced. The issue has triggered intense and divisive school board meetings around the state, pitting parents who say masks are essential for children's safety against those who call orders to wear them government overreach.

DeSantis has dismissed the recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that people wear masks. In particular, he contends that masks are less essential for young people and carry some risks of their own for children.

But Cooper said the state's medical experts who testified during the trial that masking is ineffective in preventing COVID-19's spread are in a distinct minority among doctors and scientists. He also said that while DeSantis frequently states that a Brown University study concluded masks are ineffective, the study's

authors wrote that no such conclusion should be drawn.

## **EXPLAINER: Resistance leader's death deepens Kashmir strife**

By SHEIKH SAALIQ and KRUTIKA PATHI Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — The death of a top separatist leader in disputed Kashmir and the ensuing crackdown on public movement and communications by Indian authorities have highlighted the turmoil seething just below the surface in the region.

Here's a closer look at what Syed Ali Geelani meant to Kashmir and why problems still roil the region two years after India revoked its semi-autonomy and declared it a federal territory.

### **WHY HAS THIS DEATH STRUCK A RAW NERVE?**

For many in the region, Geelani was the face of Kashmiri resistance against India. To his detractors, he was a hard-liner responsible for stoking tensions in the region, a charge he had denied.

Geelani was part of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, a conglomerate of various Kashmiri political and religious groups that was formed in 1993 to spearhead a movement for the region's right to self-determination.

He never wavered from his position as a devoted proponent of the merger of Kashmir with Pakistan. This stance put him at odds with other moderate separatists who wanted to engage with New Delhi and local politicians who favored Indian rule in the region with internal autonomy.

Soon after the 91-year-old's death late Wednesday, authorities quickly clamped down, blocking internet and mobile phone services and restricting public movement out of fear of anti-India protests. Geelani's family said his body was snatched away by authorities and discreetly buried without their consent.

Geelani's death is expected to be a potential setback to the larger separatist movement in Kashmir, as his supporters may find it hard to find a successor with such towering popularity.

### **WHAT IS THE STATUS OF KASHMIR?**

A flashpoint between India and neighboring Pakistan, both of which claim the region in full but rule only parts, Kashmir has been wracked with tensions for years.

In 1989, Kashmiri activists launched an armed revolt against Indian rule. Most Muslim Kashmiris support the rebel goal that the territory be united either under Pakistani rule or as an independent country.

New Delhi accuses Pakistan of sponsoring Kashmiri militants, a charge Pakistan denies. Tens of thousands of civilians, rebels and government forces have been killed in the conflict.

In 2019, hostilities peaked when Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government stripped the region of its semi-autonomy and took direct control of the region amid a harsh security clampdown and communications blackout.

Anticipating a massive backlash and protests, authorities flooded the region — already among the world's most militarized — with soldiers, and arrested thousands of young people, activists and pro-freedom Kashmiri leaders. Even pro-India politicians who favored Kashmir's semi-autonomous status within the framework of the Indian constitution were also detained for opposing the decision, but were later released.

By scrapping its statehood and separate constitution, India also removed inherited protections on land and jobs and opened up the region to Indians from outside to permanently settle, buy land and hold government jobs there.

The government said such a move would spur investment and bring more development to Kashmir. But critics and many Kashmiris fear this could dilute the region's demographics.

### **WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN THE LAST TWO YEARS?**

The situation on the ground remains tense.

India's August 2019 move deepened anti-India sentiment in the region. Armed militancy has continued to grow and gunfights between Indian forces and rebels have become more frequent. Even though many of those arrested two years ago have since been released, some remain in detention.

The move also dealt a blow to Kashmir's economy, which was then hit once again by lockdowns to curb the spread of the pandemic.

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The region has since remained without an elected government and under the direct control of New Delhi. Last year, India held local elections, calling it a vital grassroots exercise to boost development and uproot corruption. An alliance of pro-India politicians who favor self-governance in Kashmir but oppose New Delhi's recent policies won the election. They have since reiterated their demand that the 2019 decision be reversed.

Later in June, in an effort to counter criticism, Modi held a meeting with pro-India politicians from the region. The government dubbed it as an opening "to strengthen the democratic process" in the region, but the alliance leaders said they did not get any concrete assurances from Modi.

The region's separatist movement has also been impacted in the last two years.

Among those detained in 2019 were numerous top separatist leaders. With many of them still behind bars, the movement's presence on the ground has taken a hit.

## Ida deaths: Nursing home residents die after evacuation

By REBECCA SANTANA and MELINDA DESLATTÉ Associated Press

INDEPENDENCE, La. (AP) — Four nursing home residents in Louisiana died after being evacuated during Hurricane Ida to a warehouse where conditions were later determined to be unhealthy and unsafe, according to state health officials who said Thursday that they had launched an investigation into the facility.

A total of 843 residents from seven nursing facilities — all operated by one owner — were moved to the Waterbury Companies, Inc. warehouse in the town of Independence before Ida made landfall, Louisiana Department of Health spokesperson Aly Neel said. When the hurricane hit, conditions quickly deteriorated, she said.

"We know that water did enter the building," Neel told The Associated Press, adding that there were also problems with electricity generators.

Neel said the health department received reports of people lying on mattresses on the floor, not being fed or changed and not being socially distanced to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, which is currently ravaging the state. When a large team of state health inspectors showed up on Tuesday to investigate the warehouse, the nursing homes' owner demanded that they leave immediately, Neel said.

Renetta Derosia and her sister Susan Duet came to the warehouse Thursday to check on their mother, Loretta Duet, who uses a wheelchair. Their voices choked with emotion, they questioned how their mother was treated.

"We're just getting word now how bad it was here," Derosia said. "We thought they would have been better taken care of. Had I known, I would have taken her with us."

The sisters thought their mother, who had been living in a nursing home in Lafourche Parish, was being taken to another home with proper nursing beds when she was evacuated ahead of the hurricane, Derosia said.

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards said he's "grieved by the situation."

"We're going to do a full investigation into whether these facilities, the owner of the facilities, failed to keep residents safe and whether he intentionally obstructed efforts to check in on them and determine what the conditions were in the shelter," Edwards said. "And if warranted, we will take aggressive legal action against any responsible parties."

Neel identified the owner of the nursing homes as Bob Dean. Dean did not immediately respond Thursday to a telephone message the AP left at a number listed for him.

The Medicare.gov website rates six of the seven nursing facilities with one star out of five, the lowest possible rating. The remaining nursing home gets two stars, still considered below average. Five of the nursing homes specifically got one star for "quality of resident care," under the ranking system.

Independence Police Chief Frank Edwards told WVUE-TV that the warehouse was set up to receive 300 to 350 people, but the number quickly ballooned to more than 800.

The police chief confirmed that some residents were on air mattresses on the floor, that trash receptacles were too small and that there were some issues with the restrooms. He said generators at the warehouse also stopped working a couple of times, and that in general, "conditions became unacceptable."

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"I would not have wanted my mother or grandmother to be in those type of conditions," he said.

State health inspectors returned to the warehouse on Wednesday and began relocating residents. Late Thursday, all had been evacuated and taken to hospitals, nursing homes and special needs shelters, said Dr. Joe Kanter, Louisiana's chief medical officer. Fourteen required hospitalization.

"It was a Herculean task to get this many people out and to safety in such a short period of time," Kanter said.

He said law enforcement officials were already onsite investigating.

Officials used ambulances and buses to transfer the residents, Neel said. Early Thursday evening, 10 ambulances could be seen leaving the warehouse, located next to a water tower and about 50 yards (46 meters) from a railroad station. A handful of wheelchairs were standing near the entrance to the warehouse.

Police Chief Edwards was hesitant to assign any blame, saying that it appeared as though "everybody was doing the best they could under the circumstances."

"I have no idea what the situation or circumstances were when they evacuated all of those people," he said. "They may have been prepared for two nursing homes and had six more in danger. Let's assume they had more to evacuate than they had planned for and they had to decide whether to move them to the facility they had or not evacuate them at all."

But Sabrina Cox, who came to find out what happened to her aunt Bonnie Carenti, said someone should have called her family to let them know Carenti was at the warehouse. She said her father lives five minutes away, and if the family had known, they could have done something to help.

"To see this on the news and not even get a call four days in?" Cox said. "This is unacceptable. Elderly people should not be treated like this. Nobody should be treated like this."

## Seeing danger, some in GOP leery of Texas abortion law

By SARA BURNETT, SARAH RANKIN and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Almost instantly after most abortions were banned in Texas, Democrats were decrying the new law as unconstitutional, an assault on women's health that must be challenged. But the reaction from many Republicans on the other side hasn't been nearly as emphatic.

Though some in the GOP are celebrating the moment as a long-sought win for the anti-abortion rights movement, others are minimizing the meaning of the Supreme Court's Wednesday midnight decision that allowed the bill to take effect. A few are even slamming the court and the law.

Or dodging.

"I'm pro-life," said Republican Glenn Youngkin, a GOP candidate for governor in increasingly Democratic Virginia, where the only open governor's race in the nation is coming up in November. When pressed on the Texas law by a reporter, he quickly noted that he supports exceptions in cases of rape, incest and where the mother's life is in danger — exceptions notably not included in the new law.

The mixed reactions illustrate the political risks for the GOP as their anti-abortion allies begin actually achieving goals they have long sought. Americans are hardly of one mind on the issue, and loudly defending the nation's toughest curbs — in Virginia or political battlegrounds like Georgia, Arizona or Florida — in next year's midterm elections won't be hazard-free.

"It is going to be a very motivating issue for women who haven't typically been single-issue pro-choice voters," said Republican pollster Christine Matthews. That includes suburban women and independents in swing House districts and competitive governor's races who in past elections didn't believe *Roe v. Wade* was truly under threat, Matthews said.

The new Texas law represents the most significant threat yet to the Supreme Court's 1973 decision establishing the right to an abortion. Surveys suggest that ruling still has broad support — 69% of voters in last year's elections said *Roe v. Wade* should be left as is, compared with just 29% saying it should be overturned, according to AP VoteCast, a poll of the electorate.

Democrats and abortion-rights advocates, who have sometimes been frustrated by voters taking access for granted, vowed Thursday to use the moment to wake people up. They promised to go after not just

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GOP candidates and office holders who support the Texas measure and others like it but also corporations that support them. Some reignited calls to end Senate filibuster rules to give abortion access a better chance at passage in Congress.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi said the House would soon vote on codifying Roe v. Wade into law, though chances in the Senate are all but nil.

Virginia's Democratic gubernatorial nominee Terry McAuliffe already has been making abortion a key issue. He points to secretly recorded video in which Youngkin tells a woman posing as an abortion opponent that he supports defunding Planned Parenthood but can't talk about it publicly because "as a campaign topic, sadly, that in fact won't win my independent votes that I have to get."

On Thursday McAuliffe warned that if Youngkin wins and Republicans take over the state House "there's a good chance that we could see Virginia go the way of Texas."

The Texas law prohibits abortions once medical professionals can detect cardiac activity, usually around six weeks and often before women know they're pregnant. Rather than be enforced by government authorities, the law gives citizens the right to file civil suits and collect damages against anyone aiding an abortion.

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a Republican, tweeted that she wanted her office to compare her state's laws with the new Texas one "to make sure we have the strongest pro-life laws on the books in SD."

But such views were hardly universal in her party.

In South Carolina, Republican Gov. Henry McMaster this year signed a restriction requiring doctors to perform ultrasounds checking for cardiac activity and prohibiting abortion if it's found, unless the pregnancy was caused by rape or incest, or the mother's life was in danger.

Asked Thursday if he would support a Texas-style bill, such as one without exceptions for rape and incest, McMaster said he viewed South Carolina's law as "superior."

Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine called the Texas law "extreme and harmful."

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell downplayed the Supreme Court's action as "a highly technical decision."

Indeed, the conservative-majority court did not rule on the constitutionality of the Texas law. The justices instead refused to block its implementation and issued a brief statement saying the decision "in no way limits other procedurally proper challenges to the Texas law, including in Texas state courts."

The justices' role ensures that the court's makeup will be part of the revived political debate. Liberal lawmakers backed by advocates who helped power President Joe Biden to office want to expand the number of justices to rebalance power.

"Democrats can either abolish the filibuster and expand the court, or do nothing as millions of people's bodies, rights and lives are sacrificed for far-right minority rule," Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., wrote on Twitter.

While a majority of Americans support Roe v. Wade, abortion opponents have typically been more likely to let the issue determine their votes. According to AP VoteCast, just 3% of voters in the 2020 presidential election called abortion the single most important issue facing the country, but they leaned resoundingly toward Republican President Donald Trump, 89% to just 9% for Democrat Biden. In a separate question, 18% of voters called Supreme Court nominations "the single most important factor" in their presidential votes. Those voters leaned toward Biden by a relatively narrow margin, 53% to 46%.

A June poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that most Americans think abortion should be limited after the first trimester, but about 6 in 10 said it should usually be legal in the first three months of pregnancy. More than 8 in 10 said it should be legal in cases of rape or incest.

The poll found that younger adults are especially likely to support legal abortion. Sixty-three percent of those under age 45 said abortion should usually be legal, compared with 51% of those 45 and older. Still, even young adults support some limits on abortion based on the time of pregnancy, with majorities across all age groups saying most abortions should be illegal by the third trimester.

## **GOP-led states see Texas law as model to restrict abortions**

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

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STIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Republican states that have passed increasingly tough abortion restrictions only to see them blocked by the federal courts have a new template in an unusually written Texas law that represents the most far-reaching curb on abortions in nearly half a century.

On Thursday, Republican lawmakers in at least half a dozen states said they planned to introduce bills using the Texas law as a model, hoping it provides a pathway to enacting the kind of abortion crackdown they have sought for years.

In Mississippi, Republican state Sen. Chris McDaniel said he would “absolutely” consider filing legislation to match the Texas law after a sharply divided U.S. Supreme Court let it stand.

“I think most conservative states in the South will look at this inaction by the court and will see that as perhaps a chance to move on that issue,” he said.

The Texas law, which took effect Wednesday, prohibits abortions once medical professionals can detect cardiac activity, usually around six weeks and before many women know they’re pregnant. While a dozen states have tried to enact bans early in pregnancy, those laws have been blocked by courts.

Texas may have found an end-run around the federal courts by enacting an unusual enforcement scheme that authorizes private citizens to file lawsuits in state court against abortion providers and anyone involved in aiding an abortion, including someone who drives a woman to a clinic. The law includes a minimum award of \$10,000 for a successful lawsuit, but does not have government officials criminally enforce the law.

In addition to Mississippi, GOP lawmakers and abortion opponents in at least five other Republican-controlled states — Arkansas, Florida, Indiana, North Dakota and South Dakota — said they were considering pushing bills similar to the Texas law and its citizen-enforcement provision.

“Even though you may have pro-life legislators, you do not always have pro-life bureaucrats who are willing to do enforcement inspections,” said Indiana state Sen. Liz Brown, a Republican who has been the sponsor of several anti-abortion bills adopted in recent years.

Republicans for years have turned to statehouses in conservative states to find new ways to erode abortion rights enshrined by the high court’s 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. The Supreme Court — at least for now — has cleared a path forward for them.

“We’re excited, and we really do think that the heartbeat bill strategy is working,” said Blaine Conzatti, president of the Idaho Family Policy Center, which opposes abortions.

Idaho passed a law this year with similar restrictions to Texas, but it will only go into effect if a U.S. appeals court upholds another state’s law, a condition that has not been met.

Arkansas state Sen. Jason Rapert on Thursday tweeted that he planned to file legislation mirroring Texas’ law when lawmakers reconvene this fall. The Republican lawmaker sponsored a 2013 “heartbeat” abortion ban that was later struck down by federal courts and another outright ban enacted this year that a federal judge has blocked.

Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson, a Republican, said the state should wait until the more stringent anti-abortion Arkansas law receives a final judgment.

Hutchinson called the court’s ruling on Texas’ law a “procedural victory” for abortion opponents, but said it doesn’t reflect the court’s view on whether *Roe v. Wade* should be reversed. Overturning that decision is abortion opponents’ foremost goal.

In Tennessee, Stacy Dunn, the president of Tennessee Right to Life, said she is hopeful the Supreme Court’s decision to allow the Texas law to go in effect means the high court will rule to reverse *Roe*. Ten states, including Tennessee, have laws that would effectively outlaw most abortions should *Roe v. Wade* be overturned.

“This Texas law could be a ray of light at the end of a very long and dark tunnel, and our state is ready,” Dunn said in a statement.

Democrats also anticipated the Supreme Court’s new conservative majority overturning *Roe*, although they fear a ruling striking it down would leave old state laws outlawing abortions in effect.

“Reproductive freedom in our state is built on case law,” said New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy, a Democrat, as he pushed for state lawmakers to enact a bill that would enshrine access to abortions.

“All of that case law is in turn built on the Supreme Court’s decision on *Roe v. Wade*. If the foundation of

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that series of case laws is impacted, impaired, taken away, the entire reality in our state falls like a house of cards, which is why we need to, as soon as possible, put this protection into statute."

In New Mexico, Democratic state Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero of Albuquerque said she was angered by the Texas law because it might lead to underground abortion procedures that endanger the lives of women.

Roybal Caballero, a "Catholic for choice" in her words, wants New Mexico to provide safe passage to anyone seeking medical care, including abortion procedures that she believes should be a matter of personal choice. A clinic in Albuquerque is one of only a few independent facilities in the country that perform abortions close to the third trimester without conditions.

"We don't want to go back to the 1960s and 1970s underground days of illegal abortions," she said. "It's our decision. And if it's going to be our decision, it should be a safe and healthy outcome."

## Limo operator avoids prison time in crash that killed 20

By MICHAEL HILL Associated Press

SCHOHARIE, N.Y. (AP) — The operator of a limousine company was spared prison time Thursday in a 2018 crash that killed 20 people when catastrophic brake failure sent a stretch limo full of birthday revelers hurtling down a hill in upstate New York.

Loved ones of the dead excoriated Nauman Hussain, 31, as he sat quietly at the defense table during a hearing that was held in a high school gymnasium to provide for social distancing among the many relatives, friends and media members attending.

Hussain, who operated Prestige Limousine, had originally been charged with 20 counts each of criminally negligent homicide and second-degree manslaughter in what was the deadliest U.S. transportation disaster in a decade.

But under an agreement for Hussain to plead guilty only to the homicide counts and spare families the uncertainties and emotional toll of a trial, he faces five years of probation and 1,000 hours of community service. His case had been delayed by the coronavirus pandemic.

As Judge George Bartlett III prepared to accept the agreement, loved ones of the victims took turns talking of lives cut short, the holes left in their own and their frustration that the operator would avoid time behind bars.

"Every day I try to wrap my head around this impossible situation," said Sheila McGarvey, whose 30-year-old son Shane McGowan and his wife, Erin, were passengers. "I hate every day without him."

She wished, she said, that a fraction of any money Hussain spent on lawyers would have been spent to fix the limo's brakes.

Hussain was accused of putting the victims in a death trap.

"My son, my baby boy, was killed in a limo while trying to be safe," said Beth Muldoon, the mother of Adam Jackson, 34, who was killed along with his wife, Abigail King Jackson.

The couple, who with the others had rented the limo to avoid drinking and driving, had two small children. Muldoon lamented the holidays and life milestones the parents will miss.

One spectator left the hearing, cursing and shouting, "He killed 20 people," before apologizing to the judge on her way out.

Hussain sat quietly as parents talked about their smothering grief and anger. Defense attorney Joseph Tacopina said his client accepts responsibility for his actions and cried as the relatives spoke.

Hussain did not answer reporters' questions after the court proceeding.

Under the deal, Hussain will be formally sentenced after an interim probation of two years. The judge noted that Hussain's guilty plea could be used to buoy any lawsuits.

On Oct. 6, 2018, Axel Steenburg of Amsterdam, 30 miles west of Albany, rented the 2001 Ford Excursion limousine for the 30th birthday of his new wife, Amy. The party group, ranging in age from 24 to 34, included Axel's brother, Amy's three sisters and two of their husbands, and close friends.

En route to Brewery Ommegang, south of Cooperstown, the limo's brakes failed on a downhill stretch of state Route 30 in Schoharie, west of Albany. The vehicle blew through a stop sign at a T-intersection



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at over 100 mph (160 kph) and crashed into a small ravine near a popular country store.

Seventeen family members and friends were killed, along with the driver and two bystanders outside the store.

Schoharie County District Attorney Susan Mallery's office has said Hussain allowed passengers to ride in the limo despite having received "multiple notices of violations" from the state and having been told repairs were inadequate. State police said the vehicle should have been taken out of service because of brake problems identified in an inspection a month before the crash.

But complications were highlighted in the plea agreement.

In a separate report last fall, the National Transportation Safety Board concluded that while the crash was likely caused by Prestige Limousine's "egregious disregard for safety" that resulted in brake failure, ineffective state oversight contributed.

Prosecutors and Hussain's lawyers said the plea agreement assured a resolution in a case that would have faced an uncertain outcome if presented to a jury.

Lee Kindlon, an attorney for Hussain, has said his client tried to maintain the limousine and relied on what he was told by state officials and a repair shop that inspected it.

According to the plea agreement, Hussain had the 2001 vehicle serviced at a Mavis Discount Tire store multiple times in the two years before the crash, including twice for brake repairs. The same shop also inspected the limousine, rather than the state Department of Transportation as required, the document said.

A telephone message left with Mavis Discount Tires' corporate headquarters in Millwood, New York, was not immediately returned.

Prestige repeatedly changed the listed number of seats and took other steps to skirt safety regulations, according to documents released by the NTSB.

The safety board said last fall that the state Department of Transportation knew of Prestige's out-of-service violations and lack of operating authority and that the state Department of Motor Vehicles failed to properly register the limousine, allowing Prestige to circumvent safety regulations and inspection requirements.

In February 2020, former Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed limousine safety bills inspired by the upstate crash and one in 2015 on Long Island that killed four women.

One law requires safety belts, and another requires drivers of limos carrying nine or more passengers to have a passenger-endorsed commercial driver's license.

## Marvel's 'Shang-Chi' jabs, flips Asian American film cliches

By TERRY TANG and MARCELA ISAZA Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Like a lot of Asian actors, Simu Liu has played the nameless guy who can do martial arts but inevitably loses out to a more skilled white guy. It was one of his very first stunt jobs.

"Yeah, I took my paycheck and I went home. I didn't really complain about it," said the Chinese-Canadian actor. "But then, you look at the bigger picture and you look at the opportunities that are available to Asian performers. You see that yeah, past a certain point, there really isn't that deeper representation."

Now, it's Liu's time to take out baddies and be No. 1 on the call sheet. He is taking on the titular role in Marvel Studios' first Asian-led superhero flick, "Shang-Chi and The Legend of The Ten Rings." The highly anticipated movie, which opens Friday, has all the bells and whistles of a Marvel tentpole — huge fight sequences, dizzying stunts and sweeping locales. While Shang-Chi can high-fly kick and punch any opponent, is the "master of kung fu" powerful enough to make Hollywood finally bury tired story tropes and support projects by actors and filmmakers of Asian descent?

The movie, directed and written by Asian Americans, centers on trained assassin Shang-Chi trying to live an ordinary life in San Francisco. Awkwafina and comedian Ronny Chieng also star. The original comic book was inspired by the popular '70s kung fu films. It pays homage to those but also strives to bring humanity outside of the action. Liu, known for the sitcom "Kim's Convenience," won the role for his acting chops, not karate chops.

"It's his comedy. It's his ability to show simultaneous strength and vulnerability," said director Destin

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Daniel Cretton. "It's his humanity that breaks stereotypes."

The martial arts movie genre has been a double-edged sword for Asian Americans for decades. Bruce Lee, who was born in San Francisco, is credited with bringing Hong Kong kung fu films to non-Asian audiences because of his jaw-dropping martial arts prowess. But for many Asian American males, it's still an unfortunate rite of passage to be mockingly called Bruce Lee or Jackie Chan or asked about knowing karate.

"When I moved over to California from Hawaii, it was the first time that just a random person in a bar just, you know, lightly and jokingly called me Bruce Lee," Cretton said. "I love Bruce Lee. He is awesome. The only problem is that's all we had."

In fact, a national survey commissioned by nonprofit Leading Asian Americans to Unite for Change in the spring found 42% of 2,766 adults polled could not name a current famous Asian American. The next two most popular responses? Jackie Chan and Bruce Lee.

Phil Yu, who comments on Asian American pop culture on his longtime "Angry Asian Man" blog, also co-hosts a podcast, "They Call Us Bruce." Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan themselves were never the problem, he said. It was the way Hollywood ran with the formula.

"It does feel like martial arts, the concept as it's been distorted through a Western lens, is used to pigeonhole us, to make us feel smaller and to mock us," Yu said. In "Shang-Chi," "when you have a movie that is nearly all Asian ... or almost every face is Asian, you have room for everyone to serve a different narrative purpose."

Another cliché narrative that persists is the mystical Asian mentor who trains a white protagonist in martial arts. The white pupil then gets to be the savior back home in the U.S. It's a story that Marvel drew backlash for when, in 2017, they cast a white lead in their "Iron Fist" Netflix series.

The "Shang-Chi" team assures that their foray into the Marvel Cinematic Universe is something that speaks to the Asian American experience. The high-octane adventure is ultimately a family drama about a young Asian immigrant who shuns his father's wishes to live his own life in America. Dave Callaham, a co-writer, found himself getting emotional over the screenplay.

"I've been writing professionally for 19 years. It's the first time I've ever been asked to write from my own perspective," Callaham said. "Every other movie I've ever written it's 'Step one: Imagine you're a beautiful man named Chris' — a white man usually."

"Shang-Chi" is the latest in a cluster of martial arts-theme productions with Asian actors front and center. "Snake Eyes," with "Crazy Rich Asians" star Henry Golding and based on the "G.I. Joe" character, opened in July. That movie also starred Andrew Koji, who is the lead in the HBO Max series "Warrior." The historical drama, which has been renewed for a third season, was inspired by a pitch Bruce Lee wrote. Then there's the recently renewed CW Network's "Kung Fu," a remake of the 1970s show where the white David Carradine played a Shaolin monk.

Olivia Liang, star of the new "Kung Fu," said it feels like Asians are reclaiming something.

"We get to have fully fleshed out characters who also kick (butt) and do martial arts. ... That's the biggest difference that I feel right now," said Liang, at last month's "Shang-Chi" premiere. Entertainment "shapes our world view. For us having been so under-represented for so long, people who don't see a lot of Asians in the community forget we are part of the fabric of their world."

"Angry Asian Man" blogger Yu is glad to see these more progressive adaptations but is ready to see Asian talent move beyond this arena.

"We're still playing in this box of Asians as martial arts heroes," Yu said. "There's nothing inherently wrong with that. But that box should be wider. Look at all these things that are Asian-led stories that have come out in the last couple of years."

"Shang-Chi" comes at a time when Asian Americans are looking for escapism but also to feel more visible. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Asians and Asian Americans have been targets of race-based verbal and physical assault because the virus was first reported in China. All the actors in "Shang-Chi" have used their platform to speak out or donate money.

Like rom-com "Crazy Rich Asians" three years ago, "Shang-Chi" has more pressure than most of its fellow

MCU movies. It's that pressure that somehow the future of Asian-led projects is tied to box office success. "We're always seen as the 'other,'" said Jodi Long, who plays Mrs. Chen in the movie. "I just don't think we're considered sometimes. I think this movie hopefully will change that because it's our first Asian superhero. We have a lot of heroes in our Asian American community."

## **New Texas abortion law pushes women to out-of-state clinics**

By IRIS SAMUELS Associated Press/Report for America

Even before a strict abortion ban took effect in Texas this week, clinics in neighboring states were fielding growing numbers of calls from women desperate for options.

An Oklahoma clinic had received more than double its number of typical inquiries, two-thirds of them from Texas. A Kansas clinic is anticipating a patient increase of up to 40% based on calls from women in Texas. A Colorado clinic that already had started seeing more patients from other states was preparing to ramp up supplies and staffing in anticipation of the law taking effect.

The Texas law, allowed to stand in a decision Thursday by the U.S. Supreme Court, bans abortions once medical professionals can detect cardiac activity, typically around six weeks. In a highly unusual twist, enforcement will be done by private citizens who can sue anyone they believe is violating the law.

"There's real panic about how are they going to get an abortion within six weeks," said Anna Rupani, co-director of Fund Texas Choice, one of several nonprofits that help pay for travel and other expenses for patients seeking out-of-state abortions. "There's this fear that if I can't get it done in six weeks, I may not be able to get it done because I may not be able to leave my job or my family for more than a day."

Traveling for an abortion may be impossible for women who would struggle to find child care or take time off work. And for those without legal U.S. status along Texas' southern border, traveling to an abortion clinic also entails the risk of getting stopped at a checkpoint.

Fund Texas Choice is among the groups seeking to expand a network that helps women in Texas and other places with restrictive abortion laws end their pregnancies in other states. It already has seen more women reaching out. The organization typically handles 10 new cases per week but received 10 calls from new clients just Wednesday, when the law took effect.

The phenomenon is not new. Women have been increasingly seeking out-of-state abortions as Republican legislatures and governors have passed ever-tighter abortion laws, particularly in the South. At least 276,000 women terminated their pregnancies outside their home state between 2012 and 2017, according to a 2019 Associated Press analysis of state and federal data.

The trend appears to have accelerated over the past year. Abortion clinics in neighboring states began seeing an uptick in calls from Texas after Gov. Greg Abbott banned abortions in March 2020 for nearly a month under a COVID-19 executive order.

The number of Texans seeking abortions in Planned Parenthood clinics in the Rocky Mountain region, which covers Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming and southern Nevada, was 12 times higher that month. In California, 7,000 patients came from other states to Planned Parenthood clinics in 2020.

The number of Texans getting abortions in Kansas jumped from 25 in 2019 to 289 last year. The Trust Women clinic in Wichita accounted for 203 of those procedures in a three-month period. Those patients traveled an average of 650 miles (1,000 kilometers), Trust Women spokesman Zack Gingrich-Gaylord said.

"Last year was a dress rehearsal," he said, predicting similar numbers under the new Texas law.

One woman discovered she was pregnant just as Abbott's emergency order banning abortions was lifted. She and her partner had lost their jobs in San Antonio during the pandemic.

"We didn't know which way the world was going to go with everything shut down and no change in sight," said Miranda, who spoke on the condition that only her first name be used for fear of harassment and intimidation. "The last thing I wanted to do was be pregnant."

She struggled to find an abortion clinic that could help her. An online search led her to Fund Texas Choice and the Lilith Fund, another organization that offers financial assistance to Texans seeking abortions. They offered to pay for a flight to New Mexico.

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"It's so comforting because it's like someone saying, 'We got you. Let's take care of this together,'" Miranda said.

Eventually, she found an appointment at a clinic in Dallas, a five-hour drive away. The groups helped with gas and lodging, aid that will be even more important with the new law, Miranda said.

"To be able to help me in a time of need when I had nothing, not even a job — that's something I think a lot of women would benefit from if they knew those options were there," she said.

Trust Women Wichita clinic director Ashley Brink said the phones have been busier than normal this week with potential patients from Texas and beyond. Women also have been calling from Louisiana and Alabama who would typically get abortion care in Texas but are having to travel even farther.

The clinic typically sees 40 to 50 abortion patients in a week and now is expecting an additional 15 to 20.

At Trust Women's clinic in Oklahoma City, 80 appointments were scheduled over the past two days, more than double the typical amount, co-executive director Rebecca Tong said. Two-thirds were from Texas, and the earliest opening was three weeks out.

"Oklahoma has just barely enough clinics for the amount of people here," Tong said. "If anyone is thinking, 'Oh, they can just go out of state, it'll be so easy,' a lot of clinics in the Midwest and South, we don't do abortion care five days a week."

Oklahoma providers also face the potential for abortion restrictions similar to those in Texas in a matter of months.

In recent months, 15% of patients supported by Cobalt, an abortion access advocacy group in Colorado, were from out of state, president Karen Middleton said. She expects that number to keep rising.

The group administers a fund to cover the cost of the procedure, travel, lodging and meals. It began preparing for a potential influx of patients from Texas several weeks ago.

"We reached out to everyone who provides abortion care in the state of Colorado," Middleton said. "We asked them to be ready and to let us know if they could handle increased capacity."

Traveling for the procedure may still be out of reach for some. Women without legal U.S. status might turn to abortion medication, said Diana Gomez, advocacy manager with Progress Texas, though even that option is in question.

Several Republican-led states have passed laws making it harder to access the pills and banning prescriptions through virtual health visits. Texas is considering similar restrictions, which could force women to get pills by mail for do-it-yourself abortions or other methods.

"They are going to have to go underground and find alternative means in our state," Gomez said.

## Ex-prosecutor indicted for misconduct in Ahmaud Arbery death

By RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP) — A former Georgia prosecutor was indicted Thursday on misconduct charges alleging she used her position to shield the men who chased and killed Ahmaud Arbery from being charged with crimes immediately after the shootings.

A grand jury in coastal Glynn County indicted former Brunswick Judicial Circuit District Attorney Jackie Johnson on a felony count of violating her oath of office and hindering a law enforcement officer, a misdemeanor.

The indictment resulted from an investigation Georgia Attorney General Chris Carr requested last year into local prosecutors' handling of Arbery's slaying after a cellphone video of the shooting and a delay in charges sparked a national outcry.

"While an indictment was returned today, our file is not closed, and we will continue to investigate in order to pursue justice," Carr, a Republican, said in a statement.

Arbery was killed Feb. 23, 2020, after a white father and son, Greg and Travis McMichael, armed themselves and pursued the 25-year-Black man in a pickup truck after spotting him running in their neighborhood outside the coastal city of Brunswick, about 70 miles (112 kilometers) south of Savannah.

A neighbor, William "Roddie" Bryan joined the chase and took cellphone video of Travis McMichael shoot-

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ing Arbery at close range with a shotgun. The McMichaels said they believed Arbery was a burglar and that he was shot after attacking Travis McMichael.

Police did not charge any of them immediately following the shooting, and the McMichaels and Bryan remained free for more than two months until the cellphone video of the shooting was leaked online and Gov. Brian Kemp asked the Georgia Bureau of Investigation to take over the case.

Both McMichaels and Bryan were charged with murder and other crimes in May 2020 and face trial this fall. Prosecutors say Arbery was merely jogging in their neighborhood and was unarmed when Travis McMichael shot him. They say there is no evidence Arbery had committed a crime.

Greg McMichael had worked as an investigator in Johnson's office, having retired in 2019. Evidence introduced in pretrial hearings in the murder case shows he called Johnson's cellphone and left her a voice message soon after the shooting occurred.

"Jackie, this is Greg," he said, according to a recording of the call included in the public case file. "Could you call me as soon as you possibly can? My son and I have been involved in a shooting and I need some advice right away."

A record of Greg McMichael's cellphone calls that day does not show that Johnson called him back.

The indictment says Johnson showed "favor and affection" toward Greg McMichael in the investigation and interfered with police officers at the scene by "directing that Travis McMichael should not be placed under arrest."

Johnson did not immediately return a phone message seeking comment Thursday afternoon. She has previously insisted she did nothing wrong, saying she immediately recused herself from the case because Greg McMichael was a former employee.

"I'm confident that when the truth finally comes out on that, people will understand our office did what it had to under the circumstances," Johnson told The Associated Press in November after she lost reelection.

Lee Merritt, an attorney for Arbery's mother, said in a statement Thursday that prosecutors "must be held accountable when they interfere with investigations in order to protect friends and law enforcement."

Arbery's mother, Wanda Cooper Jones, posted her reaction on Facebook: "Former DA Jackie Johnson.... Indicted!!! JusticeForMyBaby!!!!"

In his call for an investigation into prosecutorial misconduct, Carr asked the GBI not only to investigate Johnson's actions related to the killing but also those of Waycross Judicial Circuit District Attorney George Barnhill. No charges have been announced against Barnhill.

After the shooting, Johnson called Barnhill to handle questions from police about how to handle the shooting.

Carr ended up appointing Barnhill to take over on Feb. 27, four days after the shooting. In his letter ordering an investigation last May, Carr said he was never told that Barnhill had already advised police "that he did not see grounds for the arrest of any of the individuals involved in Mr. Arbery's death."

Barnhill later recused himself as well, after Arbery's family learned his son worked for Johnson as an assistant prosecutor. But before he stepped aside, Barnhill wrote a letter to a Glynn County police captain saying the McMichaels "were following, in 'hot pursuit,' a burglary suspect, with solid first hand probable cause, in their neighborhood, and asking/ telling him to stop."

"It appears their intent was to stop and hold this criminal suspect until law enforcement arrived. Under Georgia Law this is perfectly legal," Barnhill advised in the letter, referencing Georgia's Civil War-era citizen arrest statute.

That law was repealed in May 2021, with overwhelming support from Republicans and Democrats, as a reaction to Arbery's death.

Johnson told the AP in May 2020 that Glynn County police contacted two of her assistant prosecutors on the day of the shooting. She said it was the officers who "represented it as burglary case with a self-defense issue."

"Our office could not advise or assist them because of our obvious conflict," Johnson said.

Johnson blamed the controversy over Arbery's death for her election defeat last year after a decade as

top prosecutor for the five-county circuit in southeast Georgia. She was defeated by independent candidate Keith Higgins, who had to collect thousands of signatures to get on the ballot.

## GM, Ford halt some production as chip shortage worsens

By TOM KRISHER Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — The global shortage of computer chips is getting worse, forcing automakers to temporarily close factories including those that build popular pickup trucks.

General Motors announced Thursday that it would pause production at eight of its 15 North American assembly plants during the next two weeks, including two that make the company's top-selling Chevrolet Silverado pickup.

Ford will stop making pickups at its Kansas City Assembly Plant for the next two weeks. Shifts will be cut at two more truck plants in Dearborn, Michigan, and Louisville, Kentucky.

The cuts will compound an already short supply of cars, trucks and SUVs on dealer lots nationwide that have pushed prices to record levels. Automakers reported that U.S. dealers had just under a million new vehicles on their lots in August, 72% lower than the 3.58 million in August of 2019.

"It now appears to be accelerating in the wrong direction," said Jeff Schuster, president of global vehicle forecasting for LMC Automotive, a consulting firm.

Industry analysts say the delta variant of the novel coronavirus has hit employees at chip factories in southeast Asia hard, forcing some plants to close. That's worsened a chip shortage that was starting to improve earlier in the summer.

"Now the prospects for new sales for the rest of the year continue to dim with the reality that tight inventory will last well into 2022," said Kevin Roberts, director of industry insights for Cargurus.com.

Demand for trucks, SUVs and other autos is strong, but buyers are growing frustrated due to lack of inventory and high prices. U.S. light vehicle sales fell nearly 18% in August compared with a year ago, while the average vehicle sale price hit over \$41,000, a record, according to J.D. Power.

Sales of Ford's F-Series trucks fell nearly 23% for the month.

The August sales dip and inventory shortages prompted Schuster to cut his U.S. sales forecast for the year to 15.7 million. Until the pandemic hit, sales had been running around 17 million per year.

Consumers who need a new vehicle don't have many choices with dealer supplies so short, Schuster said. Some have left the market because they can't find anything that meets their needs. For others, "pricing is through the roof, so they can't afford it and aren't willing to spend what it's going to cost to get that vehicle."

GM is shutting down pickup truck plants in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and Silao, Mexico, for a week starting Monday. A plant in Wentzville, Missouri, that builds midsize pickups and big vans will close for two weeks. Other plants that make small and midsize SUVs will be idled for two weeks or longer.

"These recent scheduling adjustments are being driven by the continued parts shortages caused by semiconductor supply constraints from international markets experiencing COVID-19-related restrictions," GM said in a statement.

The GM and Ford cuts come on top of temporary plant closures announced previously by Toyota, Nissan and Stellantis, formerly Fiat Chrysler.

Stellantis shut down its Ram truck assembly plant in Sterling Heights, Michigan, this week due to the chip shortage. The company's Belvidere, Illinois, small-SUV plant and a minivan plant in Windsor, Ontario, are down for two weeks.

Toyota said it would slash production by at least 40% in Japan and North America for the next two months, cutting production by 360,000 vehicles worldwide in September alone.

Nissan, which announced in mid-August that chip shortages would force it to close its huge factory in Smyrna, Tennessee, for two weeks until Aug. 30, now says the closure will last four weeks, until Sept. 13.

There is a little good news. Ford said its overall production rose to nearly 80% from July to August, although it's not clear how long that would last.

## **EXPLAINER: What to know about the new Texas abortion law**

By PAUL J. WEBER and DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The Supreme Court allowing a new Texas law that bans most abortions is the biggest curb to the constitutional right to an abortion in decades, and Republicans in other states are already considering similar measures.

The law prohibits abortions once medical professionals can detect cardiac activity, usually around six weeks — before some women know they're pregnant. Courts have blocked other states from imposing similar restrictions, but Texas' law differs significantly because it leaves enforcement up to private citizens through civil lawsuits instead of criminal prosecutors.

Here's what to know about the new Texas law that took effect Tuesday, which already has abortion clinics in neighboring states reporting a surge in the number of Texas women seeking the procedure:

### **WHAT DOES THE TEXAS LAW DO?**

It allows any private citizen to sue Texas abortion providers who violate the law, as well as anyone who "aids or abets" a woman getting the procedure. Abortion patients themselves, however, cannot be sued.

The law does not make exceptions for rape or incest. The person bringing the lawsuit — who does not have to have a connection to the woman getting an abortion — is entitled to at least \$10,000 in damages if they prevail in court. Texas Right to Life, the state's largest anti-abortion group, launched a website to receive tips about suspected violations and says it has attorneys ready to bring lawsuits.

### **HOW MANY PEOPLE COULD BE AFFECTED BY THE TEXAS LAW?**

The new Texas law could affect thousands of women seeking abortions, though precise estimates are difficult. In 2020, Texas facilities performed about 54,000 abortions on residents. More than 45,000 of those occurred at eight weeks of pregnancy or less. Some of those abortions still could have been legal under the new law, if they occurred before cardiac activity was detected.

### **HOW IS THE TEXAS LAW DIFFERENT FROM THOSE IN OTHER STATES THAT HAVE TRIED TO RESTRICT ABORTION EARLY IN PREGNANCY?**

The key difference is the enforcement mechanism. The Texas law relies on citizens suing abortion providers over alleged violations. Other states sought to enforce their statutes through government actions like criminal charges against physicians who provide abortions.

Texas is one of 14 states with laws either banning abortion entirely or prohibiting it after eight weeks or less of pregnancy. The rest have all been put on hold by courts. Most recently, a court halted a new Arkansas law that would have banned all abortions unless necessary to save the life of the mother in a medical emergency. Other states with blocked laws banning abortions early in pregnancy are Alabama, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee and Utah.

### **HOW DID THE TEXAS ABORTION LAW COME ABOUT?**

Texas has long been a major battleground over abortion rights and access, including a 2013 law that closed more than half of the 40-plus abortion clinics in the state before it was blocked by the Supreme Court.

Emboldened by victories in the 2020 elections, Republicans responded with a hard-right agenda this year that included loosening gun laws and further tightening what are already some of the nation's strictest voting rules. Anti-abortion groups say the new law was in response to frustration over prosecutors refusing to enforce other abortion restrictions already on the books.

Before Republican Gov. Greg Abbott signed the law in May, voters in Lubbock, Texas, approved an ordinance similarly intended to outlaw abortion in the city by allowing family members to sue an abortion provider.

### **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?**

A case is still proceeding in the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, though the timing of future action is unclear.

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WHAT IMPLICATIONS ARE THERE FOR ABORTION LAWS IN OTHER STATES?

The Supreme Court's action does not reinstate any stricken abortion laws in other states. But "essentially, the Supreme Court has now given other states a roadmap for circumscribing Roe vs. Wade," said Steven Schwinn, a constitutional law professor at the University of Illinois Chicago.

Indeed, some Republican lawmakers already are talking about following suit.

In Arkansas, Republican state Sen. Jason Rapert on Thursday tweeted that he planned to file legislation mirroring Texas' law for the Legislature to take up when it reconvenes this fall. But it's unclear whether that will be allowed, because the session's agenda currently is limited to congressional redistricting and COVID-19 legislation.

In Mississippi, Republican state Sen. Chris McDaniel said Thursday that he would "absolutely" consider filing legislation to match the Texas law.

"I think most conservative states in the South will look at this inaction by the court and will see that as perhaps a chance to move on that issue," McDaniel said.

The Mississippi Legislature is scheduled to start meeting in January. The Supreme Court will hear arguments this fall on a 2018 Mississippi law that would ban most abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy -- a case that is a direct challenge to Roe v. Wade.

COULD STATES TAKE A SIMILAR "CITIZENS" ENFORCEMENT APPROACH TO LAWS ON OTHER HOT-BUTTON ISSUES?

Some states already have turned to citizens to enforce new laws.

A Missouri law that took effect last week allows citizens to sue local law enforcement agencies whose officers knowingly enforce any federal gun laws. Police and sheriff's departments can face fines of up to \$50,000 per occurrence. The law was backed by Republicans who fear Democratic President Joe Biden's administration could enact restrictive gun policies.

In Kansas, a new law prompted by frustration over coronavirus restrictions allows residents to file lawsuits challenging mask mandates and limits on public gatherings imposed by counties. Last month, the Kansas Supreme Court allowed enforcement of the law to proceed while it considers an appeal of a lower court ruling that declared the law unconstitutional.

Utah also took a similar strategy on pornography last year, passing a law that allows citizens to sue websites that fail to display a warning about the effects of "obscene materials" on minors. Though adult-entertainment groups warned it was a violation of free speech, many sites have complied with the law to avoid the expense of a possible onslaught of legal challenges.

Citizens filing their own lawsuits has long been a fixture of environmental and disability-rights law, said Travis Brandon, an associate professor at Belmont University College of Law. Environmental groups, for example, help file suits against businesses accused of violating federal pollution permits.

In California, Proposition 65 allows people who might have been exposed to potentially carcinogenic materials to both file their own lawsuits and collect a kind of "bounty" if they win. Those laws are different, though, in that people generally must show they have been directly affected by a violation of the law, a feature missing from the new Texas measure, Brandon said.

## Study: Warmer Arctic led to killer cold in Texas, much of US

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Warming of the Arctic caused by climate change has increased the number of polar vortex outbreaks, when frigid air from the far north bathes the central and eastern United States in killer cold, a study finds.

The study in the journal Science Thursday is the first to show the connections between changes in the polar region and February's Valentine's Week freeze that triggered widespread power outages in Texas, killing more than 170 people and causing at least \$20 billion in damage.

The polar vortex normally keeps icy air trapped in the Arctic. But warmer air weakens the vortex, allowing it to stretch and wander south. The number of times it has weakened per year has more than doubled since the early 1980s, said study lead author Judah Cohen, a winter storm expert for Atmospheric



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Environmental Research, a commercial firm outside of Boston.

"It is counterintuitive that a rapidly warming Arctic can lead to an increase in extreme cold in a place as far south as Texas, but the lesson from our analysis is to expect the unexpected with climate change," Cohen said.

Climate scientists are still debating how and whether global warming is affecting cold snaps — they know it's reducing the overall number of cold days, but they are still trying to understand if it leads to deeper cold snaps.

Cohen's study is the first to use measurements of changes in the atmosphere to help explain a phenomenon that climate models had struggled to account for.

Cohen's study "provides a potentially simpler interpretation of what's going on," said Pennsylvania State University climate scientist Michael Mann, who wasn't part of the study.

Cohen was able to show how there have been dramatic differences in warming inside the Arctic itself, which drives how the polar vortex can stretch and weaken.

When the area north of England and around Scandinavia warms more than the area around Siberia, it stretches the polar vortex eastward and the cold air moves from Siberia north over the polar region and then south into the central and eastern part of the United States.

"The Texas cold blast of February 2021 is a poster child" for the link between a changing Arctic and cold blasts in lower latitudes, said climate scientist Jennifer Francis of the Woodwell Climate Research Center on Cape Cod. She helped pioneer the Arctic link theory, but wasn't part of Cohen's research. "The study takes this controversial hypothesized linkage and moves it solidly toward accepted science," she said.

## **EXPLAINER: How Ida can be so deadly 1000 miles from landfall**

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Natural and some man-made ingredients came together, causing the weakened but still soggy remnants of Hurricane Ida to devastate the Northeast more than 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometers) away from its landfall.

This sort of distant and deadly flooding from hurricanes has happened before, and meteorologists had warned that Ida could cause it. But the head of the National Weather Service said the storm's onslaught of rain was so strong and came so quickly that it overwhelmed the region's ability to cope with the downpour.

Although Ida had lost most of its 150 mph (240 kph) wind force, the storm kept its strong rainy core. Then it merged with a wet and strengthening non-tropical storm front, according to meteorologists and atmospheric scientists.

When this happens, "very exceptional rainfall can occur," said MIT meteorology professor Kerry Emanuel.

"This is not rare," Emanuel added. "For example, it happened with Hurricane Camille of 1969, which took a similar path." Camille killed more than 100 people in Virginia from flooding after making landfall as a Category 5 hurricane in Mississippi.

Over the weekend, National Weather Service Director Louis Uccellini and other meteorologists started seeing an eerie similarity to Camille and it raised alarms for them.

"We collectively were aware of this possibility. These discussions were started even before the storm made landfall in Louisiana," Uccellini told The Associated Press in an interview Thursday.

Hurricane Ivan in 2004 took a similar track and triggered record rainfall in Pittsburgh, said meteorologist Bob Henson of Yale Climate Connections. In Ida's case, he said, conditions were ripe "for rainmaking and it all came to fruition along the I-95 corridor."

The storm dumped more than 3 inches of rain on New York's Central Park in just an hour Wednesday night, obliterating a record set less than two weeks earlier by Tropical Storm Henri. Parts of New Jersey, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Pennsylvania got more than 9 inches of rain.

The death toll and damage amounts are mounting.

"Some of this is just bad luck too. If Ida had tracked just 100 miles farther east, that heaviest swath of rainfall would have been over the ocean and no one would care," said University of Miami hurricane researcher Brian McNoldy.

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"The severe weather threat and the flash flooding threat in these areas were very well-forecast days in advance, but that doesn't reduce the destruction they cause," McNoldy said in an email, attaching National Weather Service warnings from Monday and Tuesday.

Ken Kunkel, a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration meteorologist who specializes in extreme rainfall and heat, said his study a few years ago found that one-third of the extreme rainfall events in the Northeast came from remnants of hurricanes and tropical storms.

Government officials in New York had been planning for heavy rain, but Uccellini said the rain that fell — more than 3 to 8 inches of rain forecast Tuesday — just overwhelmed infrastructure in the Northeast.

"People are ready but is the infrastructure ready for the magnitude of these storms?" Uccellini said. "It doesn't appear to be that way."

"I think with the weather getting worse. .. This is something we have to look at now and into the future," he said.

Human-caused global warming from burning of fossil fuels also likely made Ida's far-reaching impacts a bit worse, experts said.

Warmer air holds more moisture that it can dump, said former hurricane hunter meteorologist Jeff Masters, also of Yale Climate Connections. Air above the oceans has about 10% more moisture than in 1970 and that comes down in storms, he said.

That extra moisture condenses inside storms and releases extra heat energy, which leads to updrafts and makes storms more intense and longer lasting," This can lead to a 30% increase in rainfall, as has been documented in several cases of major flooding," he said.

Heavier rain falls onto urban areas where pavement such as roads and parking lots worsens water runoff leading to flooding, said University of Georgia meteorology professor Marshall Shepherd. "That human impact is a part of flooding disasters often overlooked."

Despite planning and efforts since 2012's Superstorm Sandy to be more resilient to extreme weather, more remains to be done, Columbia University climate scientist Adam Sobel said. "Obviously our infrastructure is not up to events like this."

## **Prosecutors: Sex assault charges fairly filed against NY doc**

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Federal prosecutors urged a judge Thursday to reject claims by a former New York doctor that his guilty plea in state court in a sex abuse case means he can't be prosecuted in federal court on sex assault charges.

In papers in Manhattan federal court, prosecutors defended their charges against Robert A. Hadden, calling it an "absurd contention" to say they can't prosecute because Hadden in 2016 pleaded guilty under a state plea deal, admitting to forcible touching and one count of a criminal sex act.

They urged rejection of defense arguments contending that federal prosecutors were a puppet of the New York County District Attorney's Office.

Hadden, 63, of Englewood, New Jersey, was arrested a year ago and has pleaded not guilty to charges accusing the former New York gynecologist of singling out young and unsuspecting victims for abuse, including a young girl he'd delivered at birth.

Prosecutors said they began their probe last year before obtaining an indictment charging Hadden with sexually abusing dozens of female patients from approximately 1993 to 2012 while trying to make the victims believe that the sexual abuse was appropriate and medically necessary.

The indictment said Hadden sexually abused patients, including multiple minors, at his medical offices and Manhattan hospitals while he worked as a medical doctor at Columbia University and at New York Presbyterian Hospital.

The indictment detailed what it described as the abuse of one minor female and five adult women who traveled from out of state to see Hadden.

Hadden remains free on \$1 million bail.

A message seeking comment was sent to Hadden's defense lawyers.

## Lake Tahoe wildfire seemed controllable, until winds flared

By DON THOMPSON Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Just last week, managers overseeing the fight against the massive wildfire scorching California's Lake Tahoe region thought they could have it contained by the start of this week.

Instead, the Caldor Fire crested the Sierra Nevada on Monday, forcing the unprecedented evacuation of all 22,000 residents of South Lake Tahoe and tens of thousands of tourists who would otherwise be winding down their summers by the alpine lake straddling the California-Nevada state line.

That drastic move might never have been needed if authorities could have thrown more firefighters at the blaze when it was small. That didn't happen because the Dixie Fire was simultaneously raging across the mountain range 100 miles (161 kilometers) to the north, on the way to becoming the second-largest wildfire in California history.

"I do think the Dixie and the way that it's burned and its magnitude did impact the early response to the Caldor," said Scott Stephens, a professor of wildland fire science at the University of California, Berkeley. "It really drew resources down so much that the Caldor got very few for the first couple days."

By the time Caldor approached Lake Tahoe two weeks later, there were 4,000 fire personnel, dozens of water-dropping aircraft and hundreds of fire engines and bulldozers.

But all that manpower and equipment were overmatched by tinder dry conditions, whipping downslope winds and an overgrown forest ripe to burn, a half-dozen fire experts said. And with resources already stretched across the West and internationally, they said the long-term situation will only worsen as exhausted firefighters battle bigger blazes that start earlier and last longer.

"Mother Nature is calling the cards on our hubris that we can conquer and control wildfires during these extreme conditions," said Timothy Ingalsbee, a former federal firefighter who now heads Oregon-based Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics and Ecology, which advocates for working with wildfires instead of reflexively putting them out.

The Caldor Fire ignited from an unknown cause on Aug. 14 in the steep wooded foothills east of California's capital city of Sacramento. In the first few days, about 240 firefighters were dispatched, compared to the 6,550 firefighters battling the Dixie Fire at the time.

It wasn't until four days later that Cal Fire Chief Thom Porter said fire managers diverted 30 fire engines from the Dixie Fire to the Caldor Fire. Overnight, the number of engines and firefighters nearly tripled. But by then the fire had already burned through Grizzly Flats, destroying dozens of homes in the town of about 1,200 people.

"We are moving resources around as needed, sharing among the incidents," Porter told reporters on Aug. 18. But he acknowledged that "we are having a very difficult time" because resources were so stretched across the West.

Officials couldn't say how many firefighters would have been ideal and when, but Cal Fire was candid that there initially was a shortage, said Ken Pimlott, who retired as the agency's director in 2018 and lives a few miles from the fire's origin.

"Early on, this was not the highest priority because there were other threats on other fires that were higher," Pimlott said.

As the fire marched toward Lake Tahoe and its crystal clear waters that attract visitors from around the world, it destroyed hundreds of homes and other structures and left a firefighter with serious burns.

Still, officials predicted as recently as last weekend that they could hold the fire outside the Lake Tahoe Basin. They feverishly expanded fire lines to take advantage of the barren granite that caps the mountain chain which has formed an impenetrable barrier to flames in the past. This time, their optimism merely lulled residents into a false sense of security, leaving many scrambling to pack their lives in bags when evacuation orders came Monday.

Chad Hanson of the John Muir Project said fire managers were foolish to think they could stop the flames

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based on the expected winds.

"It is 100% predictable that under those conditions the fire will continue to move in that direction. So it's hard for me to imagine why anyone would conclude otherwise," said Hanson, a frequent critic of forest management efforts.

Firefighters had thought they made good progress during favorable conditions going into the weekend, said Jason Hunter, a spokesman for Caldor Fire managers. But then came the changing weather pattern with "incredibly gusty winds" that pushed burning embers over the crest.

"The weather, is what it boils down to, is what changed," Hunter said. Containment projections are a "constantly moving target" based on evolving conditions, he said. The Caldor Fire's containment projection has since been pushed back to Sept. 13.

Experts agreed conditions are grim because drought has been worsened by consecutive climate change-driven heat waves that sap humidity before dry winds whip flames and ferry embers sometimes a mile or more ahead of the main blaze.

"These embers are leapfrogging over fire lines and rivers, ridges and roads and other things that typically stop wildfire spread, and so you have these fires kind of hopscotching across the landscape," Ingalsbee said.

Firefighters were outflanked by a shift in localized winds that funneled flames into the Tahoe basin, said John Battles, a University of California, Berkeley professor of forest ecology.

Fire managers have become adept at projecting the weather and how fuels will burn, but still lack the ability to predict localized winds at fires — some caused by the fires themselves — with 10 different computer models offering as many conflicting outcomes, he said.

"They're trying to predict winds at a mountain pass. That is the most complex topography we have," Battles said. "That's why you have this feeling like they didn't know what they're doing."

He added: "When you're fighting a fire the size of the Caldor, you make your best guess."

The Caldor Fire is just the second in modern history to have traversed the Sierra. The first was the Dixie Fire that started in mid-July near the town of Paradise and has grown to 1,300 square miles (3,367 square kilometers), more than four times as large as Caldor.

Such monster fires typically come later in the year when conditions are their driest but also when cooler days, rising humidity and ultimately rain and snow have aided the firefight, said Char Miller, a professor at Pomona College who has written extensively about wildfires.

But California has received far less precipitation than normal the last two years and there's no guarantee more will arrive this fall to aid firefighters. "This may burn through October," Miller said.

Yet the fire experts said the biggest challenge is neither drought nor climate change, but the overgrown forests that could actually benefit from fire — so long as it is set or allowed to burn at a low intensity during the spring or fall before it can explode out of control.

Firefighters still quickly contain about 95% of fires, but it's the ones that escape that do the major damage, Pimlott said. Once fires spread, firefighters may need to start prioritizing communities that can be protected while letting the flames burn around them, he said.

"It's a hard pill to swallow for all of us in the firefighting community, because we want to put these fires to bed," he said. "We just may not be able to do that on every one of these fires, because of the conditions we're facing."

## Life in Louisiana's boot challenging, adventuresome post-Ida

By JAY REEVES Associated Press

BELLE CHASSE, La. (AP) — Life in Louisiana's Plaquemines Parish is a mix of frustration and a little adventure since Hurricane Ida, with cowboys wrangling loose cattle on a highway, residents navigating alligator-infested floodwaters to get home and thousands waiting in long lines for gas and food.

On the plus side, no one died during the Category 4 storm in this narrow spit of soggy land southeast of New Orleans. On the down side, thousands of homes are damaged, many lack power and water and no one is sure when things will get back to normal.

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"It's getting worse," Gail Rudolph said Wednesday as she sat in a pickup truck near where dozens were lined up outside a closed grocery store waiting for it to open.

Chris Vanhoosier stood in line for an hour to fill up a few 5-gallon cans with gas.

"We're waiting for the water to come back on. We lost a generator, so once that gets back on we'll do a little bit better," he said.

Just a few miles down the road, toward the tip of Louisiana's boot-shaped coast, it was like a scene from the Old West as wranglers on horseback used ropes to catch a black cow that got loose in the storm. After about 15 minutes of work, they finally shooed it into a corral set up on a highway.

"There are a couple hundred more out there," said one of the cowboys.

Still further south, past oil refineries that line the Mississippi River bank, Ben Tucker rode in a boat with his nephew, Robert Singlemen, and Michael Restock to check out his fish camp house at Myrtle Grove Marina for the first time.

Navigating slowly through flooded fields past alligators, snakes and hundreds of dead nutria, they found a neighborhood of about 70 flooded homes, many of which were missing siding and the contents of first-floor garages and carports, which were inundated by storm surge from Ida.

Mud was everywhere, and only a little of it was washed away by an afternoon thunderstorm. Tucker's fishing equipment was scattered everywhere and the benches near his dock were gone. But the main floor of the house, which stands on stilts, was remarkably dry and the roof seemed fine.

All in all, Tucker said, things could be a lot worse.

"It's here. It survived. It ain't the prettiest, but we'll be back," he said.

Next-door neighbor Gayle Lawrence, who rode out Ida with her husband in the neighborhood, which is built along canals, fretted over the loss of two cars, refrigerators and most everything else in their garage, filled with marsh grass and stinking, dead fish.

"The house is solid, it didn't even move. But when the water came up it destroyed everything," she said.

The entire lower part of the parish remains under a mandatory evacuation order, and the town of Belle Chasse is under a voluntary evacuation order. In one area, workers are cutting through a levee to let water drain back toward the gulf, officials said. Water service is spotty because of power failures and local government offices are closed until next week.

Parish President Kirk Lepine urged residents who fled Ida to stay away a while longer until roads can be cleared, power restored, dead livestock removed and more.

"We do want to see your smiling face. We want you to come home. But not right now," he told a news briefing.

Louisiana calls itself a "sportsman's paradise," and Plaquemines gets a lot of credit for the nickname. Skilled taxidermists can do a good business in this parish of 23,000 people preparing all the mounted fish and deer heads that hang on walls in residents' homes. They're sometimes beside paintings of crabs, shrimp and other coastal delicacies.

The houses that some residents call "fish camps" are a lot like the big, nice houses that line so much of the Gulf Coast. Refinery and oil industry workers in the area make enough money to have a good life with a little extra to spare for boats, hunting gear, top-quality fishing poles and more. It's a place where it's easy to forget the problems of the world.

"It's just great. The water is just serenity. It's like you're on an island except when a hurricane comes," said Lawrence, 79, who retired to Plaquemines Parish with her husband Warren. "We talked about selling when this was coming through, but we can't do that."

Tucker, who works for a road-building company and lives in the New Orleans suburb of Gretna, might quit the parish some day, but it's hard to imagine when. The fishing is good, the beer is awfully tasty when it's cold on a hot day and hurricanes, like alligators, come and go.

"As long as it's more fun than work, I'm all in," he said.

**Biden blasts high court failure to block Texas abortion curb**

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By JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Thursday blasted the Supreme Court's decision not to block a new Texas law banning most abortions in the state and directed federal agencies to do what they can to "insulate women and providers" from the impact.

Hours earlier, in the middle of the night, a deeply divided high court allowed the law to remain in force. It is the nation's biggest curb to abortion rights since the court announced in its landmark 1973 Roe v. Wade decision that women have a constitutional right to abortion.

The court voted 5-4 to deny an emergency appeal from abortion providers and others but also suggested that their order likely wasn't the last word and other challenges can be brought.

Biden said in a statement that his administration will launch a "whole-of-government effort to respond to this decision" and look at "what steps the federal government can take to ensure that women in Texas have access to safe and legal abortions as protected by Roe."

Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a statement that the Justice Department was "deeply concerned" about the Texas law and "evaluating all options to protect the constitutional rights of women, including access to an abortion."

Biden, who has come under pressure from Democrats to expand the size of the Supreme Court, has ordered a review of the court that is due next month.

The Texas law, signed by Republican Gov. Greg Abbott in May, prohibits abortions once medical professionals can detect cardiac activity, usually around six weeks and before many women know they're pregnant.

The law is part of a broader push by Republicans nationwide to impose new restrictions on abortion. At least 12 other states have enacted bans early in pregnancy, but all have been blocked from going into effect.

The high court's order declining to halt the Texas law came just before midnight Wednesday. The majority said those bringing the case had not met the high burden required for a stay of the law.

"In reaching this conclusion, we stress that we do not purport to resolve definitively any jurisdictional or substantive claim in the applicants' lawsuit. In particular, this order is not based on any conclusion about the constitutionality of Texas's law, and in no way limits other procedurally proper challenges to the Texas law, including in Texas state courts," the unsigned order said.

Chief Justice John Roberts dissented along with the court's three liberal justices. Each of the four wrote a statement expressing disagreement with the majority.

Roberts noted that while the majority denied the request for emergency relief "the court's order is emphatic in making clear that it cannot be understood as sustaining the constitutionality of the law at issue."

Separately, the justices are planning to tackle the issue in a major case when they begin hearing arguments again in the fall. That case involves the state of Mississippi, which is asking to be allowed to enforce an abortion ban after 15 weeks of pregnancy.

The vote in the Texas case underscores the impact of the death of the liberal Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg last year and then-president Donald Trump's replacement of her with conservative Justice Amy Coney Barrett. Had Ginsburg remained on the court there would have been five votes to halt the Texas law.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor called her conservative colleagues' decision "stunning."

"Presented with an application to enjoin a flagrantly unconstitutional law engineered to prohibit women from exercising their constitutional rights and evade judicial scrutiny, a majority of Justices have opted to bury their heads in the sand," she wrote.

Texas lawmakers wrote the law to evade federal court review by allowing private citizens to bring lawsuits in state court against anyone involved in an abortion, other than the patient. Other abortion laws are enforced by state and local officials, with criminal sanctions possible.

In contrast, Texas' law allows private citizens to sue abortion providers and anyone involved in facilitating abortions. Among other situations, that could include anyone who drives a woman to a clinic to get an abortion. Under the law, anyone who successfully sues another person would be entitled to at least \$10,000.

Justice Elena Kagan wrote that the law was "patently unconstitutional," and Justice Stephen Breyer said a "woman has a federal constitutional right to obtain an abortion during" the first stage of pregnancy.

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However, anti-abortion groups cheered the court's action.

"This is the most significant accomplishment for the pro-life movement in Texas since Roe v. Wade," said John Seago, legislative director for Texas Right to Life, the state's largest anti-abortion group. "We had the Supreme Court that is allowing the strongest bill we've ever passed to go into effect. And that is unheard of."

Kristan Hawkins, the president of Students for Life of America, said in a statement that her group was "celebrating this decision for what it is, baby steps in the right direction toward the obvious conclusion that Roe is fatally flawed and must go."

But Nancy Northup, the head of the Center for Reproductive Rights, which represents abortion providers challenging the law, vowed to keep fighting it.

"Right now, people seeking abortion across Texas are panicking — they have no idea where or when they will be able to get an abortion, if ever," she said.

Texas has long had some of the nation's toughest abortion restrictions, including a sweeping law passed in 2013. The Supreme Court eventually struck down that law, but not before more than half of the state's 40-plus clinics closed.

## NHTSA: Traffic deaths rise again as drivers take risks

The Associated Press undefined

U.S. traffic deaths in the first quarter of 2021 rose by 10.5% over last year, even as driving has declined, the government's road safety agency reported Thursday.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimated that 8,730 people died in motor vehicle traffic crashes from January through March, compared with the 7,900 fatalities from the same period in 2020.

The increase in traffic fatalities is a continuation of a trend that started in 2020. In June, the NHTSA reported that traffic deaths rose 7% last year to 38,680, the most since 2007. That increase came even as the number of miles traveled by vehicle fell 13% from 2019 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The NHTSA said drivers continue to exhibit risky behavior on the roads, including speeding, not wearing seat belts, and driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Preliminary data from the Federal Highway Administration shows that vehicle miles traveled fell 2.1% — roughly 14.9 billion miles — in the first three months of 2021. The agency estimates that there were 1.26 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled in the first quarter this year, compared to a rate of 1.12 deaths for the same period in 2020.

Neither the data from 2020 nor 2021 is final.

## Documents show US investigation of 2 Kuwaitis in FIFA case

By GRAHAM DUNBAR AP Sports Writer

GENEVA (AP) — Two senior Olympic officials from Kuwait, one reputed to be the "kingmaker" of IOC elections and another who is president of swimming's international governing body, have been targeted by the U.S. Department of Justice for suspected racketeering and bribery related to FIFA and international soccer politics, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press.

The U.S. embassy in Kuwait made a formal request to local authorities in 2017 for assistance to secure evidence including records of multiple bank accounts held in the Gulf state, according to one document.

The request included a document dated June 7, 2017, titled: "Request for assistance in the investigation of Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, Husain al-Musallam, Reza Charim, Vahid Kardany and others."

The documents confirm that Sheikh Ahmad is under investigation and provide insight into the U.S. government's probe of high-level foreign officials as part of the broad FIFA investigation that began more than a decade ago.

The sheikh is an influential powerbroker in Olympic circles who was a key ally behind Thomas Bach's successful run to the IOC presidency in 2013. The long-time IOC member is president of the group of national Olympic bodies known as ANOC and a former member of the FIFA executive committee.

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"I asked Kuwait to give them everything," Sheikh Ahmad told the AP this week about the American request. "I have nothing to hide."

Al-Musallam, a close ally of the sheikh, took over as president of swimming governing body FINA in June and for the last 16 years has been the Olympic Council of Asia's director general. Sheikh Ahmad has been president of the OCA since 1991.

At the Tokyo Olympics in July, al-Musallam told the AP he had done nothing wrong and was never questioned about the case by American authorities.

FINA did not immediately comment on the case on Thursday while the IOC declined to do so.

Sheikh Ahmad is also currently standing trial in Geneva on an unconnected matter in a dispute between political factions in Kuwait's royal family. He has denied wrongdoing and said that case is politically motivated.

The 58-year-old sheikh has been seen as a potential future Emir of the oil-rich kingdom, a status that fueled rivalry.

After the indictment in Geneva was revealed three years ago, Sheikh Ahmad agreed to step aside temporarily from the IOC and presidency of ANOC. He continues to lead the OCA and have influence in Asian soccer elections.

The DOJ document seen by the AP details payments totaling about \$1 million from Kuwait — wired from personal accounts held by three of the men and Olympic organizations run by the sheikh — to a FIFA official from Guam. That man, U.S. citizen Richard Lai, admitted to financial conspiracy charges in federal court in April 2017 and agreed to pay \$1.1 million in penalties. He has yet to be sentenced.

The sheikh and al-Musallam could be identified as co-conspirators in 2017 from federal court documents in that case. Lai admitted to taking bribes from a Kuwaiti faction that wanted to buy influence and votes in Asian and world soccer.

Since 2013, Sheikh Ahmad and his allies have run the Asian Football Confederation. They control most of the soccer body's 46 votes at FIFA's annual meeting of 211 members, and can place people on FIFA committees.

Sheikh Ahmad and al-Musallam have denied wrongdoing in the FIFA case, were never indicted and continued their Olympic work despite being implicated in paying bribes. U.S. authorities made no further comment and it has been unclear how active the investigation was.

"As a matter of policy, the Justice Department does not publicly comment on mutual legal assistance requests to and from our partner countries, including confirming or denying the very existence of such requests," Justice Department spokesperson Nicole Navas Oxman said in a statement to the AP.

Last week, the DOJ restated its commitment to its wider FIFA investigation when it announced paying tens of millions of dollars in money forfeited and seized from corrupt soccer officials back into FIFA's control as restitution.

"Our work isn't finished," Michael J. Driscoll of the FBI's New York Field Office said in a statement last week, "and our promise to those who love the game — we won't give up until everyone sees justice for what they've done."

The documents seen by the AP show that within weeks of Lai's guilty pleas, the DOJ drafted a formal approach to the "Central Authority of the State of Kuwait" to help get potential evidence.

It stated federal prosecutors in New York are investigating if the named men and others "have violated United States criminal laws by making, accepting, and/or facilitating bribes, kickbacks and other types of illicit payments to (FIFA officials) and laundering such bribe payments and proceeds, conduct which also constitutes racketeering."

It reveals that an ANOC account, at the Alahli Bank, was used to wire two payments of \$50,000 each in 2015. Lai had said in court he received money from personal accounts and the OCA.

The DOJ document was to be presented to Kuwaiti authorities by the U.S. Embassy in the country.

The formal request for legal assistance from the embassy, dated Sept. 27, 2017, and also seen by the AP, was to be sent to Kuwait's ministry of foreign affairs for passing on to the attorney general.

American prosecutors told their Kuwaiti counterparts they wanted to establish if the suspects made other payments to Lai, or if their accounts were used to wire possible bribe payments to other soccer officials.



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They requested documents dating from 2009, including details of accounts, safe deposit boxes, wire transfers, due diligence reports, currency transactions, emails and internal bank communications "concerning media reports discussing any of the above accountholders."

American prosecutors said copies should be authenticated by "appropriate custodians" from the banks knowing that false statements "would subject the maker to criminal penalties under the laws of Kuwait."

The two other men identified in the documents, Kardany and Charim, who are both Iranian, were assistants to al-Musallam at the Kuwait-based Olympic Council of Asia.

Kardany later joined the governing body of Asian soccer, the Malaysia-based AFC, where he is now deputy general secretary.

The DOJ document details that an account in Kardany's name at Alahli Bank wired \$50,000 to Lai in October 2013 and \$95,000 in May 2014. An account in Kardany's name at Gulf Bank wired 43,679 euros (\$51,500) in May 2015.

## Deal with OxyContin maker leaves families angry, conflicted

By JOHN SEEWER and GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

Among the families who lost children and other loved ones in the nation's opioid crisis, many had held out hope of someday facing OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma and its owners in a courtroom.

That prospect all but vanished Wednesday after a bankruptcy judge conditionally approved a settlement worth an estimated \$10 billion. It was a deal that left many of those families feeling they didn't get what they really wanted.

There was no apology from members of the Sackler family who own Purdue Pharma, they weren't forced to give up all of their vast fortune, and there was no chance to confront them face-to-face about the lives lost to opioids.

Instead, the individual victims, thousands of state and local governments and other entities that sued Purdue Pharma agreed to a deal in which the Sacklers will pay \$4.5 billion and give up ownership of the company, which will be reorganized.

The company's profits and the Sacklers' contribution will go toward fighting opioid addiction through treatment and education programs. Also, victims of drug addiction can receive payments ranging from \$3,500 to \$48,000.

The conclusion to the case left families conflicted, deflated and still angry.

"Am I happy they don't have to admit guilt and give up all their money? Of course not," said Lynn Wencus, of Wrentham, Massachusetts. "But what would that do? It doesn't bring my son back and it doesn't help those who are suffering."

In the first years after her son Jeff died of an overdose in 2017, all she wanted was vengeance. While her anger remains, she is hopeful the settlement will finally bring help to communities ravaged by overdoses.

"I know people disagree with that and want the Sacklers to suffer," she said. "But the reality is we need money to get into the states, into education, into treatment."

A half-million Americans have died from opioids over the past two decades, a toll that includes victims of prescription painkillers like OxyContin and Vicodin and illicit drugs such as heroin and street-grade fentanyl.

In one of the hardest-fought provisions in the settlement, the family will be protected from any future opioid lawsuits. While the Sacklers weren't given immunity from criminal charges, there have been no indications they will face any.

Despite the settlement, the family could see its wealth rise from an estimated \$10.7 billion to more than \$14 billion over the coming decade, according to a group of state attorneys general who based their projection on investment returns and interest. Lawyers for Purdue and the Sackler family disputed the estimate.

"Their lives aren't going to change. It's a shame there can't be something done that would make them suffer with the rest of us," said Tamara Graham, of St. Petersburg, Florida.

But she was willing to accept the outcome because it gives her a sliver of hope that the money for treatment could save her youngest brother, who has struggled with addiction for longer than she can remember.

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"I wish that I could stand up there," she said. "I would love to make them watch a video of him going through withdrawals, the pain, the vomiting, him begging us to kill him."

The settlement came nearly two years after the Stamford, Connecticut-based company filed for bankruptcy while facing some 3,000 lawsuits that accused Purdue of fueling the crisis by aggressively pushing sales of OxyContin.

"You don't take the architects of the opioid crisis and give them a sweetheart deal," said Ed Bisch, whose 18-year-old son died of an overdose nearly 20 years ago. "Where is the deterrent?"

Bisch, who has spent more than a decade pushing for the Sacklers to be criminally prosecuted, is leading a group of families that are asking the U.S. Justice Department to appeal the settlement.

"The Sacklers are buying immunity with blood money," said Bisch, of Westampton, New Jersey. "The only silver lining is their name is mud, and it will forever be mud."

Purdue Pharma will be reorganized into a new company with a board appointed by public officials and will funnel its profits into government-led efforts to prevent and treat opioid addiction.

The drugmaker said in a statement that the settlement will avert years of costly litigation and instead ensure that billions will go to help people and communities hurt by the crisis.

"I feel like the victims are once again at the bottom of the list," said Dede Yoder, of Norwalk, Connecticut. "I don't know what the states feel that their loss was. I can tell them what my loss is."

Her only child, Chris, died of an overdose in 2017 when he was 21. He was first given OxyContin after knee surgeries as a teenager.

"I would have loved a moment in front of the Sacklers to show them pictures of my son as this beautiful boy and this happy, athletic, strong person that they decimated," she said.

U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Robert Drain acknowledged the concerns of those who complained that the proposed payouts to victims are insufficient. He also pointed out that none of the four Sacklers who testified offered an explicit apology.

"A forced apology is not really an apology, so we will have to live without one," he said.

The judge said he did not have "fondness for the Sacklers or sympathy for them" but he also said that drawn-out litigation would delay getting settlement money to victims and programs for treating opioid addiction.

"Now it's its over. It's done, just like our children's lives," said Vicki Meyer Bishop, of Clarksburg, Maryland, whose 45-year-old son, Brian Meyer, died four years ago.

She said she at least hopes the money will help open more spaces in treatment programs and lift the stigma surrounding addiction.

"We need to worry about the 200 who will die tomorrow. If the money can go to help them, it's all worth it," she said. "I'm hoping we can save 200 today, 200 tomorrow and the next day."

## Social media's 70-up 'grandfluencers' debunking aging myths

By LEANNE ITALIE AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Joan MacDonald's health was in shambles at age 71. She was overweight and on numerous medications with high cholesterol, rising blood pressure and kidney trouble.

Her daughter, a fitness coach, warned that she'd wind up an invalid if she didn't turn things around. She did, hitting the gym for the first time and learning to balance her diet with the help of a brand new tool, an iPhone.

Now 75, MacDonald is a hype beast for health with a bodybuilder's physique and 1.4 million loyal followers on Instagram.

She's among a growing number of "grandfluencers," folks 70 and up who have amassed substantial followings on social media with the help of decades-younger fans.

"It's so rare to find someone her age being able to do all these things," said one of her admirers, 18-year-old Marianne Zapata of Larchmont, New York. "It's just such a positive thing to even think about."

Both aspirational and inspirational, older influencers are turning their digital platforms into gold.

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MacDonald has paid partnerships with the sportswear and supplement brand Women's Best, and the stress-busting device Sensate. And she just launched her own health and fitness app not so many years after learning how to use digital technology herself.

On TikTok, four friends who go by @oldgays — the youngest is 65 — have 2.2 million followers, including Rihanna. They have an endorsement deal with Grindr as they delight fans with their clueless answers to pop culture questions.

Others focus on beauty and style, setting up Amazon closets with their go-to looks and putting on makeup tutorials live. Lagetta Wayne, at 78, has teens asking her to be their grandmother as she tends to her vegetables and cooks them up in Suisun City, California, as @msgrandmasgarden on TikTok.

Wayne, with 130,500 followers amassed since joining in June 2020, owes her social media success to a teenage granddaughter. Her very first video, a garden tour, clocked 37,600 likes.

"One day my garden was very pretty and I got all excited about that and I asked her if she would take some pictures of me," Wayne recalled. "She said she was going to put me on TikTok and I said, well, what is TikTok? I had never heard of it."

Most people ages 50 and up use technology to stay connected to friends and family, according to a 2019 survey by AARP. But less than half use social media daily for that purpose, relying on Facebook above other platforms.

Just 37% of those 70 and older used social media daily in 2019, the research showed. Since coronavirus struck, older creators have expanded their horizons beyond mainstay Facebook and gotten more voracious, often driven by the growing number of feeds by people their own age, said Alison Bryant, senior vice president for AARP.

In the California desert town of Cathedral City, Jessay Martin is the second youngest of the Old Gays at 68.

"I thought I was going to spend the rest of my life relaxing pretty much, and I do, but this is picking up more for us. I had a very structured week where Monday I worked the food bank at the senior center, Tuesday and Friday I did yoga for an hour and a half, Wednesday I was on the front desk at the senior center. I was just sort of floating by, not being social, not putting myself out there in the gay community. And boy, has the Old Gays changed that," Martin said.

Like MacDonald, they do a lot of myth busting about what's possible in life's sixth, seventh and eighth decades.

"They're showing that anybody can do these things, that you don't have to be afraid of aging. The 20 and 30 somethings don't often think about that," Bryant said. "The authenticity that we're seeing in some of these older influencers is really refreshing. That's part of the complexity of their narratives. They're bringing other parts of their lives to it. They're grandparents and great-grandparents and spouses. They're more comfortable in their own skins."

Sandra Sallin, a blogger and artist, has slowly built her following to 25,300 on Instagram. Her reach recently extended to the British Olympic gold-medal diver Tom Daley, who raved about her mother's cheesecake recipe after his coach spotted it online and made it for her athletes and staff. Sallin, a lover of lipstick who focuses on cooking and beauty, also shares photos from her past and other adventures, like her turn last year in a vintage Spitfire high above the Cliffs of Dover.

"I wanted to expand my world. I felt that I was older, that my world was shrinking. People were moving, people were ill," Sallin said. "So I started my blog because I wanted to reach out. After that, I heard about this thing called Instagram. It was really hard learning it. I really stumbled my way in. I'm shocked because most people who follow me are 30 and 40 years younger. But there are people who are older, who have kind of given up and say, 'You know, I'm going to start wearing lipstick.'"

Toby Bloomberg, 69, in Atlanta is a Sallin supporter. She discovered Sallin after Sallin competed on the short-lived Food Network show "Clash of the Grandmas."

"She talks a lot about aging. That's quite an unusual phenomenon on social media, which is obviously dominated by people far younger than we are," Bloomberg said.

MacDonald said she was surprised at the beginning that people actually cared what she had to say.

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"Why would people want to follow an old broad," she giggled from her home in Ontario, Canada. "My daughter, Michelle, cleared that up. She said it's what you're representing, that people can do what they think they've not been able to do or were told that they couldn't do."

Grace Maier, 32, is home full time with her two kids, ages 6 months and 2. She follows Barbara Costello, a 72-year-old Connecticut grandmother who uses the handle @brunchwithbabs.

"She does these posts, 'Did your mom ever tell you?' and I followed her immediately on Instagram," Maier said. "Her content brings me joy! She's got all of these life hacks and tips that remind me of things my grandma shared with me before she passed. She also doesn't take herself too seriously and just seems like the kind of person who would welcome you into her home."

Mae Karwowski, founder and CEO of the influencer marketing agency Obviously, has more than 100 influencers in her network between the ages of 60 and 80. With more than a billion users on Instagram alone, she points to the successes on that platform of 93-year-old Helen Ruth Elam (baddiewinkle), 67-year-old Lyn Slater (iconaccidental) and 100-year-old style legend Iris Apfel.

There's another aspect to the reach of seniors: Grandparents and grandchildren who have teamed up to share their adventures together, from traveling the world to Nerf gun battles.

"Mainstream media, I would say, presents a really narrow viewpoint on this age group. What's great about social media is you can follow a really cool 75-year-old woman who is just doing her thing in Florida and that's fun. That's different. And she's funny," Karwowski said. "The 21-year-old fashion model influencer is managed. She has a team. She has designers falling all over themselves to give her everything. She has professional photographers. A lot of these 70-plus influencers are doing it all."

Candace Cima, 74, taught herself to shoot and edit video for Instagram by watching YouTube tutorials. She hopped on the platform in February 2019 as a fresh voice on fashion and style while encouraging her audience not to be afraid of aging. Her husband sometimes helps out with photos for @styleinyour70s. withleslieb (Leslie is her middle name).

"I'm still in that learning curve, I have to be honest. Two and a half years ago, I didn't even know what an influencer was," said Cima, in Ithaca, New York. "I've always had a lot of ideas about aging. I don't understand why aging has such a negative connotation."

With 37,900 followers, some of her youngest fans have shared with her why they care: "They don't want to age the way they saw their relatives aging," Cima said. "They feel like they can learn something."

## **Qatar says it's not clear when Kabul airport will reopen**

By KATHY GANNON, TAMEEM AKHGAR and ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Qatar's top diplomat said Thursday that experts are racing to reopen Kabul's airport but warned it was not clear when flights would resume, with many still desperate to flee Afghanistan's new Taliban leaders amid concerns over what their rule will hold.

In the wake of their rapid takeover, the Taliban have sought to calm those fears, including pledging to let women and girls attend school and allow people to travel freely. But many are skeptical, and Britain's foreign minister stressed the importance of engaging with the new rulers to test their promises.

In a reflection of those anxieties, dozens of women protested outside the governor's office in the western province of Herat to demand their rights be protected. They shouted slogans and urged the country's new leaders to include women in their Cabinet — a remarkable demonstration of the transformation in women's lives in the past 20 years.

When they last held power in the late 1990s, the Taliban imposed a repressive rule, meting out draconian punishments and largely excluding women from public life. On Thursday, Taliban fighters prevented the female demonstrators from seeing the governor as they demanded, but they did not break up the rally.

Amid uncertainty about Afghanistan's future, tens of thousands raced to flee the country in a frantic U.S.-run airlift that ended ahead of the final American withdrawal earlier this week. A suicide bomber targeted the evacuation efforts at one point, killing 169 Afghans and 13 U.S. service members.

Kabul's airport, a major way out of the country, is now in Taliban hands but is closed, and Qatari Foreign

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Minister Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al Thani warned Thursday that there's still "no clear indication" of when it will reopen.

A team of Qatari and Turkish technicians flew to Kabul on Wednesday to help restart operations at the facility, which the U.N. says is crucial to providing the country with humanitarian assistance. It remains to be seen, however, whether any commercial airlines will be willing to offer service.

"We remain hopeful we will be able to operate it as soon as possible," Al Thani told reporters in Doha. "We are still in the evaluation process. ... We are working very hard and engaging with the Taliban to identify what are the gaps and the risks for having the airport back up and running."

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu suggested that military flights — which could be used to evacuate more people — could potentially resume first.

Qatar, a tiny Gulf Arab sheikhdom that has played an outsized role in American efforts to evacuate tens of thousands of people from Afghanistan, said it remains in talks with other world powers to enable the capital's airport to resume commercial flights.

Appearing alongside Al Thani, U.K. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab touched on concerns over how diplomatic and aid efforts will proceed as foreign powers confront a leadership whose members remain on terrorist watch lists around the world.

Although the United Kingdom won't formally recognize the Taliban "anytime in the foreseeable future," Raab said, "there is an important scope for engagement and dialogue to test the intentions and indeed the assurances that have already been made by the Taliban."

Those assurances range from creating a more inclusive government to protecting the rights of women to preventing international terrorist groups from using the war-scarred country as a base.

"In all of these areas," Raab said, "we will judge them by what they do, not just by what they say."

In Herat, the protesters had a similar message for the Taliban.

"The Taliban leadership is announcing women rights, but they should show it in action," said Friba Kabrzani, who helped organize a rally at the provincial governor's office.

"We want the world to hear us and we want our rights to be saved," Kabrzani said, noting that some families forbade women from joining the demonstration out of fear for their safety.

Another participant, Maryam Ebram, warned that "anything can be expected from the Taliban," but that Afghan women would continue to protest for their rights nonetheless.

"Our rights were not gifted to us and we will not let them fade easily," she said.

## Democrats promote Cheney to vice chairwoman of Jan. 6 panel

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Democrats have promoted Republican Rep. Liz Cheney to vice chairwoman of a committee investigating the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection, placing her in a leadership spot on the panel as some Republicans are threatening to oust her from the GOP conference for participating.

Cheney, a fierce critic of former President Donald Trump, has remained defiant amid the criticism from her own party, insisting that Congress must probe the Capitol attack, in which hundreds of Trump's supporters violently pushed past police, broke into the building and interrupted the certification of Joe Biden's presidential election victory.

"We owe it to the American people to investigate everything that led up to, and transpired on, January 6th," Cheney, R-Wyo., said in a statement as Democrats announced her promotion on Thursday. "We will not be deterred by threats or attempted obstruction and we will not rest until our task is complete."

Cheney's appointment as vice chairwoman comes amid an effort by some Republicans to oust Cheney and Rep. Adam Kinzinger of Illinois from the GOP conference because they accepted their appointments to the panel from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. A draft letter by Arizona Rep. Andy Biggs to Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy obtained by The Associated Press calls Cheney and Kinzinger "two spies for the Democrats" whom Republicans cannot trust to attend their private meetings.

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Biggs, chairman of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, is calling on the conference to change its rules to state that any Republican who accepts a committee assignment or serves on a committee without a recommendation from GOP leadership "shall immediately cease to be a Member of the Conference." McCarthy's office did not respond to a request for comment about Biggs' proposal.

Cheney, who was already booted from her position as GOP conference chairwoman earlier this year, has been undeterred by the criticism, despite serious primary challenges back home. The daughter of former Vice President Dick Cheney has formed the unlikely alliance with Pelosi in what she has framed as an existential fight for the party and for democracy itself.

"Every member of this committee is dedicated to conducting a non-partisan, professional, and thorough investigation of all the relevant facts regarding January 6th and the threat to our Constitution we faced that day," Cheney said in the statement. "I have accepted the position of Vice Chair of the committee to assure that we achieve that goal."

As the committee has met privately, Cheney has worked closely with Democrats in determining the direction of the probe. The committee's chairman, Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson, said in the statement announcing Cheney's appointment that Democrats are "fortunate to have a partner of such strength and courage" and that Cheney's insights have shaped the early work of the panel.

Cheney "has demonstrated again and again her commitment to getting answers about January 6th, ensuring accountability, and doing whatever it takes to protect democracy for the American people," Thompson said.

The vice chair position, usually reserved for a member of the Democratic majority, gives Cheney a top role on the panel after McCarthy decided not to appoint any of his members to the committee. McCarthy pulled all five Republicans he had chosen after Pelosi rejected two of them, and he has harshly criticized Cheney and Kinzinger for participating at her request.

The committee's work is just getting started and could last months or years. Thompson issued broad requests for information last week to law enforcement agencies and social media companies about the planning of the insurrection, and this week he asked technology and telecommunications platforms to preserve personal communications surrounding the attack.

In July, the panel held an emotional first hearing with four police officers who battled the insurrectionists and were injured and verbally abused as the rioters broke into the building and repeated Trump's lies about widespread election fraud.

At the hearing, Cheney expressed to the officers "deep gratitude for what you did to save us" and defended her decision to accept an appointment on the committee.

"The question for every one of us who serves in Congress, for every elected official across this great nation, indeed, for every American is this," she said then. "Will we adhere to the rule of law, respect the rulings of our courts, and preserve the peaceful transition of power?"

## **NFL returns social justice helmet decals, end zone stencils**

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

NFL players can wear social justice messages on their helmets again this season and "It Takes All of Us" and "End Racism" will be stenciled in end zones for the second straight year as part of the league's Inspire Change platform.

The league will also bring back the "Say Their Stories" initiative and for the first time, each team will highlight its social justice work during a regular-season home game in Weeks 17 and 18.

"We are committed to Inspire Change and the social justice work that inspires change for the long-term," Anna Isaacson, NFL senior vice president of social responsibility, told The Associated Press.

The six messages players can choose from as part of the helmet decal program are: "End Racism," "Stop Hate," "It Takes All of Us," "Black Lives Matter," "Inspire Change" and "Say Their Stories."

The end zone stencils will be placed on field for all clubs in all home games, except when another cause is being recognized. For example, during a club's Salute to Service game, "End Racism" will be replaced

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with "Salute To Service" in one end zone and "It Takes All of Us" will remain on the opposite side.

This year's "Say Their Stories" features will again be voiced by NFL players but will evolve to include social justice heroes who have been personally identified by players for their impact in this area, particularly those from their local communities.

For the final two weeks of the regular season, all clubs will receive the relevant banners, goal post wraps, stencils, helmet decals and video board graphics. The elements will continue to be featured during playoff games.

"That will provide a unified time frame for us to further amplify all of the work that our clubs are doing and that will lead into the playoffs where Inspire Change will continue to take center stage," Isaacson said. "The key message for us as the season is starting, we are ramping up again in a big way with our social justice work."

The league also worked with New Era and the Players Coalition to offer an Inspire Change knit hat that can be worn on the sideline during Weeks 17 and 18 by players, coaches and other personnel to add additional visibility to the cause. The hat will be sold at retail, and 100% of the league's proceeds will be donated to Inspire Change grant recipients.

## Companies loosen job requirements but challenges remain

By ANNE D'INNOENZIO The Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Landing a waitressing job or bartending gig at the Lost Dog Cafe in Northern Virginia had never been easy.

"Help Wanted" signs were a rarity, and half the chain's staff stuck around for at least 10 years. The onset of the pandemic made job prospects even worse when Lost Dog had to temporarily shut down indoor dining.

But as vaccinated patrons rushed back to eat out and once-loyal workers moved onto new opportunities, the business began struggling in May to fill the roughly 20% in vacancies on its service staff.

To address the shortage, it did something it hadn't done before: look to people without experience. It also started recruiting workers under 18.

Lost Dog is one of a growing number of companies that, in a desperation for hired hands, is loosening restrictions on everything from age to level of experience. Drug store chain CVS announced earlier in August it would no longer require a minimum high school degree to fill entry level spots at its stores. This year, it also plans to end its GPA requirement of 3.0 when it recruits on college campuses. Meanwhile, Amazon has stopped testing job seekers for marijuana.

The changing standards may have helped boost hiring this summer, even as many companies complained they couldn't find all the workers they need. Employers added a hefty 940,000 jobs in both June and July, lowering the unemployment rate to 5.4%.

On Friday, the government will release figures for August, and economists forecast they will show another 750,000 jobs were added that month, with unemployment falling to 5.2%. Some analysts worry job gains will come in lower because of the delta variant, but are optimistic about hiring in the fall.

The trend to relax the rules started about three years ago when the labor market started to tighten. It accelerated this past spring when employers were caught flat-footed as Americans enthusiastically emerged from months of pandemic lockdowns, eager to shop and dine again. At the same time, workers were reevaluating their jobs and whether the long hours were worth the paycheck.

The perfect storm led to record job openings, which increased to 10.1 million in June from 9.2 million in May at a rate of 6.5% — the highest since the Labor Department started tracking the numbers two decades ago. People voluntarily leaving their jobs increased to 3.9 million from 3.6 million in May.

Employers dangled incentives like higher hourly wages and extra bonuses but still had trouble filling openings. Data from various sources show that they are now more willing to let go of some restrictions that in the past have shut out certain populations from the workforce.

Job-hunting platform ZipRecruiter, which scrubs 16 million job postings of all types of work, says the

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percentage of jobs requiring a bachelor's degree fell from nearly 15% in 2016 to just over 11% in 2020. But that figure dropped even more drastically to 7% from January to June of this year. For the percentage of job listings requiring no experience, the figure went from roughly 9.2% in 2016 to 14.3% in 2020, and jumped again to 18.6% for the first six months of this year.

Experts say many of the restrictions were artificial barriers that perpetually kept out low-income workers, particularly people of color. Education requirements, for instance, tend to favor white workers over Black. Compared with 47.1% of white adults, just 30.8% of Black adults have earned some form of college degree, according to the Educational Trust, an educational nonprofit.

Delta Air Lines says 95% percent of its jobs in customer service no longer require a four-year college degree, up from 78% back in the first quarter of 2020. Ashley Black, director of equity strategies at Delta, said the move was not directly because of any labor shortages; rather, it was about finding the right talent for the job and the organization.

"Traditional hiring processes are highly subjective and can have multiple barriers that complicate access to economic opportunities for any potential talent," Black said. "Still, this disproportionately impacts people of color. Without being able to easily and credibly assess skills, implicit bias can shape the recruiting and hiring processes."

Sarah White, area manager for Lost Dog Cafe and a restaurant consultant, says the relaxed requirements have opened doors for job prospects who might have not been previously considered.

"We get locked in these ideas of what the job looks like," White said. "Now, we are getting people we wouldn't have hired before. And they have been some of the most amazing employees. It would have been our loss."

Karen Rosa, 32, started out as a server at the Lost Dog Cafe last September but then became a bartender without any experience. She says she can now pull in a steady \$600 to \$700 a week. She says her server's income was more volatile.

"They gave me a chance," she said. "They were very helpful."

But there are downsides, too. White says she's been so desperate at times she's had to hire some servers who have bad attitudes and have actually scared away customers.

"We don't have anyone to wait on them, but we are also losing them because they get service but it's from someone that I wouldn't want serving them," she said.

Daniel Schneider, professor of public policy at the Harvard Kennedy School, says that the difficulties of finding good workers like servers underscores "a lie" that this is not skilled labor.

"Not just anyone can step into these roles," he said. "These are skilled jobs, and they should be compensated accordingly."

Companies say they're making up for the lack of experience by doing a better job with training. Lost Dog now trains cooks on different types of menu items every day and also posts cocktail recipes on the back of the bar rail where customers can't see them. CVS just opened two new workforce innovation and talent centers in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, where it works with faith-based and community organizations to find, train and place workers in jobs such as pharmacy technicians and customer service workers.

No one can predict whether companies will go back to tightening requirements when they're flush with lots of job applicants again.

Brad Hershbein, senior economist and communications Advisor at W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, said employers may still offer leeway on academic credentials but desperate moves like hiring people with bad attitudes will go away.

"Employers may decide there are other ways of actually screening employees that are more effective than looking at key words on their resume or do they pass this education or experience requirement," Hershbein said.

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined



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## Today in History

Today is Friday, Sept. 3, the 246th day of 2021. There are 119 days left in the year.

## Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 3, 1939, Britain, France, Australia and New Zealand declared war on Germany, two days after the Nazi invasion of Poland; in a radio address, Britain's King George VI said, "With God's help, we shall prevail." The same day, a German U-boat torpedoed and sank the British liner SS Athenia some 250 miles off the Irish coast, killing more than 100 out of the 1,400 or so people on board.

## On this date:

In 1609, English explorer Henry Hudson and his crew aboard the Half Moon entered present-day New York Harbor and began sailing up the river that now bears his name. (They reached present-day Albany before turning back.)

In 1783, representatives of the United States and Britain signed the Treaty of Paris, which officially ended the Revolutionary War.

In 1943, Allied forces invaded Italy during World War II, the same day Italian officials signed a secret armistice with the Allies.

In 1976, America's Viking 2 lander touched down on Mars to take the first close-up, color photographs of the red planet's surface.

In 1978, Pope John Paul I was installed as the 264th pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1995, the online auction site eBay was founded in San Jose, California, by Pierre Omidyar under the name "AuctionWeb."

In 1999, a French judge closed a two-year inquiry into the car crash that killed Princess Diana, dismissing all charges against nine photographers and a press motorcyclist, and concluding the accident was caused by an inebriated driver.

In 2003, Paul Hill, a former minister who said he murdered an abortion doctor and his escort to save the lives of unborn babies, was executed in Florida by injection, becoming the first person put to death in the United States for anti-abortion violence.

In 2005, President George W. Bush ordered more than 7,000 active duty forces to the Gulf Coast as his administration intensified efforts to rescue Katrina survivors and send aid to the hurricane-ravaged region in the face of criticism it did not act quickly enough.

In 2009, a private funeral service was held in Glendale, California, for pop superstar Michael Jackson, whose body was entombed in a mausoleum more than two months after his death.

In 2010, Defense Secretary Robert Gates toured U.S. bases and war zones in Afghanistan, saying he saw and heard evidence that the American counterinsurgency strategy was taking hold in critical Kandahar province.

In 2019, Walmart said it would stop selling ammunition for handguns and short-barrel rifles, and the store chain requested that customers not openly carry firearms in its stores; the announcement followed a shooting at a Walmart store in Texas that left 22 people dead.

Ten years ago: A judge in North Carolina sentenced Robert Stewart to spend the rest of his life behind bars for killing eight people at a rural nursing home in 2009. (Stewart had opened fire on his victims, seemingly at random, as he searched for his wife, an employee at the home.) The Vatican vigorously rejected accusations it had sabotaged efforts by Irish bishops to report priests who sexually abused children to police.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama and China's President Xi Jinping (shee jihn-peeng) sealed their nations' participation in the Paris climate change agreement during a ceremony on the sidelines of a global economic summit in Hangzhou. Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump visited the Great Faith Ministries International, a predominantly Black church in Detroit, to call for a "civil rights agenda for our time." Authorities in Minnesota said they had identified the remains of Jacob Wetterling, an 11-year-old boy kidnapped by a masked gunman in October 1989 near his home in St. Joseph; the case was solved when a man confessed to sexually assaulting and killing the boy.

One year ago: A report in The Atlantic detailed multiple instances of President Donald Trump making disparaging remarks about members of the U.S. military who had been captured or killed; Trump em-

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phatically denied making the comments, many of which were confirmed by The Associated Press. In a series of tweets, Trump said people who voted early by mail should also show up at their polling places on Election Day and vote again if their ballots hadn't been counted; experts said the suggestion would lead to chaos and long lines. Self-described anti-fascist Michael Reinhoehl, the suspect in the slaying of a right-wing protester in Portland, Oregon, the previous weekend, was fatally shot by federal agents who said he had pulled a gun as they tried to arrest him near Lacey, Washington. Facebook said it would restrict new political ads in the week before the election and remove posts that conveyed misinformation about COVID-19 and voting.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Pauline Collins is 81. Rock singer-musician Al Jardine is 79. Actor Valerie Perrine is 78. Rock musician Donald Brewer (Grand Funk Railroad) is 73. Rock guitarist Steve Jones (The Sex Pistols) is 66. Actor Steve Schirripa is 64. Actor Holt McCallany is 57. Rock singer-musician Todd Lewis is 56. Actor Costas Mandylor is 56. Actor Charlie Sheen is 56. Singer Jennifer Paige is 48. Dance-rock musician Redfoo is 46. Actor Ashley Jones is 45. Actor Nichole Hiltz is 43. Actor Joel Johnstone is 43. Actor Nick Wechsler is 43. Rock musician Tomo Milicevic (30 Seconds to Mars) is 42. Bluegrass musician Darren Nicholson (Balsam Range) is 38. Actor Christine Woods is 38. Actor Garrett Hedlund is 37. Olympic gold medal snowboarder Shaun White is 35. Hip-hop singer August Alsina is 29.