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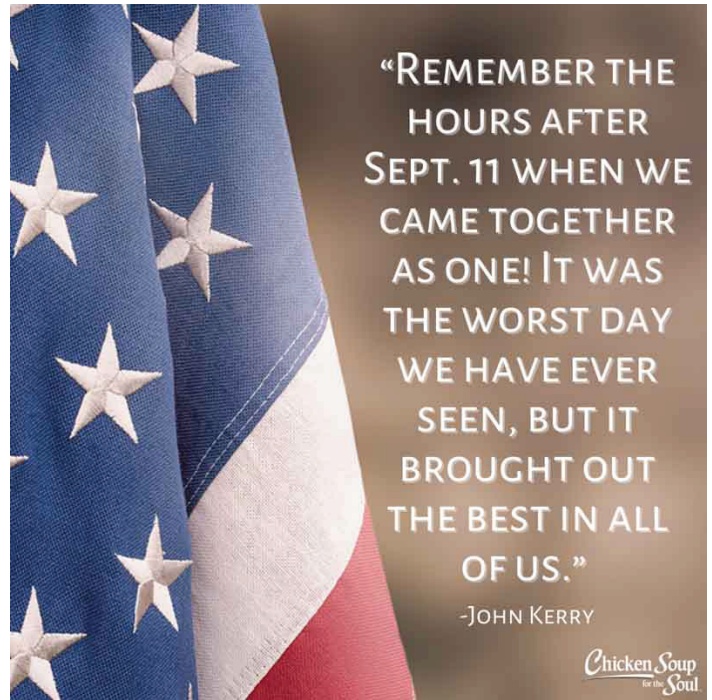
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Upcoming Events

Saturday, Sept. 11

Groton City-Wide Rummage Sales, 8-3
Junior High Football Jamboree at Warner, 10 a.m.
Soccer at Sioux Falls Christian: Girls at 1 p.m.,
Boys at 3 p.m.

Sunday Sept. 12

Sunflower Classic Golf Tourney

Monday, Sept. 13

Cross Country at Webster, 4 p.m.
School Board Meeting, 6 p.m.
Homecoming Coronation, 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, Sept. 14

Boys Golf at Redfield, 10 a.m.

Thursday, Sept. 16

Boys Golf at Dakota Magic Golf Course, 11 a.m.

Homecoming Week Dress up days

Day	MS/HS	Elementary
Monday	Awkward Phase Day	Jersey Day
Tuesday	Twin Day	Animal OR Superhero Day
Wednesday	Halloween Costume Day	Twin/Matching Day
Thursday	Class color Day	Pajama Day
Friday	Spirit Day	Spirit Day



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

Groton Area stuns Deuel, 20-14



Christian Ehresmann intercepted the ball to set up Groton Area's first touchdown. (Photo

lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

The fourth quarter was laced with big defensive plays that created a climatic finish and a 20-14 Groton area win over Deuel.

The game was played in Clear Lake and was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Allied Climate Professionals with Kevin Nehls, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, Milbrandt Enterprises Inc., BK Custom Ts & More, the John Sieh Agency, Doug Abeln Seed Company and touchdown sponsor Bahr Spray Foam.

Deuel's second possession was intercepted by Christian Ehresmann setting up the Tigers in the corner of the end zone for a 16 yard touchdown with 3:02 left in the first quarter. Jackson Cogley kicked the PAT and Groton Area took a 7-0 lead.

Deuel would counter with 8:21 left in the first half when Owen Quail would score from three yards out. Quail would run in the extra points

and the Cardinals would take an 8-7 lead.

2012 loss.

Deuel would kick off to start the second half and the Tigers would start from their own 30 yard line. Groton Area would consume nearly five minutes off the clock. Groton Area went for a first down on fourth and seven when Kaden Kurtz would connect with Andrew Marzahn to get a first down. On the next play, Kaden Kurtz would score with 7:17 left in the third quarter. The two-point conversion failed and Groton Area took a 13-8 lead.

Deuel would start from its own 34 yard line, but would get three first downs in three plays to get down to the Tiger 22 yard. Two plays later Ty Lorre would catch a 17 yard touchdown throw from Trey Maaland. The two-point conversion was incomplete, but Deuel took a 14-13 lead with 4:07 left in the third quarter.

Groton would march down the field with a golden scoring opportunity at the three-yard line; however, the pass was intercepted in the end zone and the Tiger threat was stopped early in the fourth quarter.

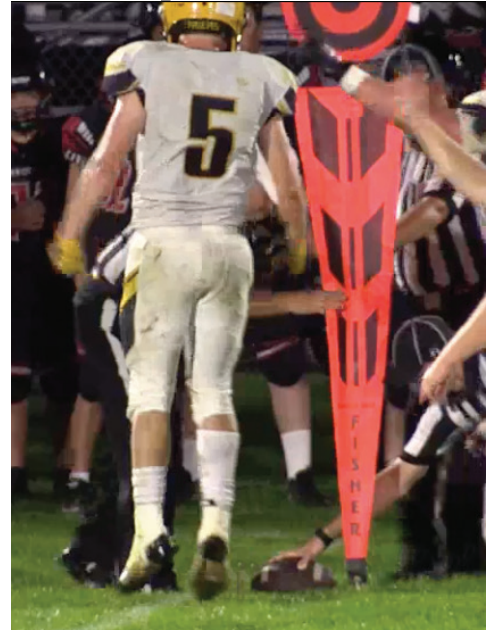
Deuel tried to march to the other end, but on fourth and one at their own 45 yard line, their attempt to gain a first down was short by an inch after a measurement.

Groton Area would take over at the Deuel 45 yard line with 6:30 left in the game. Five plays and two first downs later, Kaden Kurtz would connect with Jackson Cogley for a 24 yard pass play and the Tigers would recapture the lead. Cogley would kick the PAT and Groton would take a 20-14 lead with 4:53 left in the game.

Now Deuel was going to use its passing arsenal to try and tie the game. The Cardinals would start at their own 29 yard line, but on fourth and 10 still at their own 29 yard line, Deuel would go for it and the attempt failed. Groton Area would take over at the Deuel 35 yard line with 4:29 left in the game.

But after being second and 20, the Tigers would end up punting pushing Deuel back to its own 15 yard line with 2:35 to go in the game.

On third and 10 from their own 27 yard line, the Cardinals would have a big 53 yard pass play to get down to the Groton Area 20 yard line with 1:20 left in the game. On third 10 from the 20, Andrew Marzahn would intercept the ball; however a penalty negated the play and the Cardinals were still in contention.



The Tiger defense held Deuel short of a key first down by one inch. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

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The penalty gave the Cardinals an automatic first down. It was now first and goal from the 10 for Deuel with a minute left in the game.

On fourth and goal from the 10 yard line with 47 seconds left in the game, Favian Sanchez would intercept the ball and the Tigers would reclaim the ball with 36 seconds left in the game. Groton Area would take a knee and that would end the game.

The stats would reflect how evenly matched the teams were with both teams having 15 first downs, Deuel had more yards rushing, 107-95, and more yards passing, 152-144.

This was the 24th time that these two teams have met, according to stat guy Tom Woods. Groton Area has the upper hand, winning 14 while Deuel has won 10 times.

Groton Area is now 3-1 on the season and will host Mobridge-Pollock in a homecoming game. Deuel suffered its first loss, now at 2-1, and will host Dakota Hills.

First Downs: Groton: 24-95 (Andrew Marzahn 6-40, Kaden Kurtz 13-39, Pierce Kettering 2-13, Favian Sanchez 3-3). Deuel: 27-107 (Trey Maaland 10-39, Carver Northern 9-39, Owen Quail 8-29-1TD).

Passing: Groton: Kaden Kurtz completed 14 of 22 passes for 144 yards, two touchdowns and one interception. Receivers: Andrew Marzahn 5-40, Jackson Cogley 3-39, Jordan Bjerke 2-30, Favian Sanchez 2-22, Ethan Gengerke 2-15. Deuel: Trey Maaland completed 10 of 26 passes for 152 yards, one touchdown, two interceptions. Receivers: Zane Bingham 5-107, Cooper Schiernbeck 4-28, Ty Love 1-17-1TD.

Fumbles: None

Penalties: Groton: 4-25. Deuel: 3-20.

Defensive Leaders: Groton: Pierce Kettering 9 tackles, Kaden Kurtz 9 tackles, Jackson Cogley 8 tackles, Jordan Bjerke 7 tackles and 1 sack, Favian Sanchez 6 tackles and one interception returned for 25 yards, Christian Ehresmann 1 interception returned for 2 yards. Deuel: Ronnie Begalka and Gavin Benck each had 6 tackles, Trey Maaland and Braydon Simon each had 5 tackles.

- Paul Kosel

West Central squeaks past Groton Girls Soccer Team

State top seeded West Central came to Groton Area on Friday, only to face a formidable Tiger squad. West Central would score a single goal with six minutes left in the game to edge past the Lady Tigers, 1-0.

DANR and GFP Harmful Algal Blooms Notice

PIERRE, S.D. – The Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) and the Department of Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) remind people that Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) remain prevalent in South Dakota waters.

HABs can be harmful to people and fatal to pets and livestock so remember, “WHEN IN DOUBT, STAY OUT”.

High temperatures experienced this summer have contributed to the persistence of HABs in several lakes around the state. A HAB occurs when toxin producing algae grow excessively in a waterbody. HABs generally occur during warm summer months (July through September) in nutrient-enriched lakes and ponds but can occur earlier or later in the year depending on conditions.

DANR and its partners collect toxin samples at multiple lakes throughout the state and sample results are posted to an Interactive Web Map:

[https://sdbit.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=ec7a545532a24a3599a46cee428def48.](https://sdbit.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=ec7a545532a24a3599a46cee428def48)

The map highlights toxin concentration levels at specific locations during a snapshot in time. The results should NOT be used to determine whether waters are safe for recreation/pet use at any given time.

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INSPIRATION FOR NATIONAL ANTHEM HAPPENED 207 YEARS AGO TUESDAY

Verse Written After Successful Defense of Baltimore
By Tom Emery

Rarely has the sunrise brought such joy.

Tuesday marks the anniversary of the inspiration for the national anthem, when the dawn of morning over Fort McHenry in Baltimore harbor revealed that the Stars and Stripes still flew after a British attack.

The sight on Sept. 14, 1814 inspired an onlooker named Francis Scott Key to pen a verse later known as "The Star-Spangled Banner." Those stirring moments helped define the War of 1812 and uplifted the spirits of an American people downtrodden after the burning of Washington three weeks before.

Dr. Don Hickey, a professor at Wayne State College in Nebraska who has written seven award-winning books on the War of 1812, says that the American defense of Baltimore was a key moment in the war.

"The victory at Baltimore was a very important event in the war, and along with the successes at Lake Champlain and New Orleans, gave the Americans a string of victories late in the war," said Hickey, author of *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*. "That was a big help to the American cause."

The British invasion of the United States had begun with a disastrous American defeat at Bladensburg, Md. on August 24, which left the nation's capital vulnerable. Hours later, the British set the torch to the White House, the capitol, the Library of Congress, and other public buildings.

Their attention then shifted to Baltimore, the third-largest city in the U.S. and a crucial stronghold whose loss likely would have sealed an American defeat in the war. Despite a formidable defense, the British advanced on the city, and a Royal Navy fleet launched an intense bombardment on the 1,000-man garrison at Fort McHenry in the harbor on the rainy night of September 13.

Flying above the fort was an American flag, measuring 30 by 42 feet, that was commissioned by the commander of the stronghold, Major George Armistead. The massive flag dominated the skyline, the goal of Armistead, who wanted a flag so large that the British would "have no difficulty seeing it from a distance."

Among those in view of the bombardment was Key, a 35-year-old Washington attorney and self-styled poet who was aboard the British sloop *Tonnant* on a mission of mercy.

Historians have labeled the War of 1812 the most unpopular war in American history, even more than Vietnam. Key was among the opponents, calling the war "abominable" and a "lump of wickedness."

He was on the scene to plead for William Beanes, a 65-year-old Maryland physician who had been arrested after British invaders had tried to ravage his home two weeks earlier.

Key agreed to help secure Beanes' release and received permission from President James Madison to negotiate with the enemy. Key's efforts proved successful, but since the attack had commenced, he was forced to remain on the *Tonnant*, eight miles upriver from Fort McHenry, until the battle had ended.

From his vantage point, Key could see the bombardment, and, as he wrote, "the heavens aglow were a seething sea of flame." Amidst a night that left the *Tonnant* "tossed as though in a tempest," Key recalled that "it seemed as though mother earth had opened and was vomiting shot and shell in a sheet of fire and brimstone." Armistead later reported that "from fifteen to eighteen hundred shells" were fired during the onslaught – as many as one per minute.

When dawn broke, the mists had not cleared sufficiently for Key to view the flag flying above the fort. Fearing that the British banner had been raised, Key wrote that "at last, a bright streak of gold mingled with crimson shot athwart the eastern sky, followed by another, and still another, as the morning sun

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rose." Finally, enough light had risen that Key could see the American flag, flying defiantly above the fort. Key called the moment a "most merciful deliverance."

Dr. Hickey notes that the win at Baltimore was badly needed after the burning of the public buildings in the capitol. "That was the low point for the U.S," he remarked. "But the high points were the victory in Baltimore harbor three weeks later, along with the key wins at Plattsburgh on Lake Champlain and at New Orleans, which is what people remember from that war."

Whether Key actually saw the enormous flag designed by Armistead is a matter of debate. Historians have speculated that he spied a smaller flag that may have been raised during the rainstorm. Regardless, Key's relief at the spectacle induced him to write a few lines of verse onto the back of a letter from his pocket, the only paper he had available.

As the British fleet withdrew, Key and Beanes were released, and on the trip back to shore, Key enhanced the few lines he had already written. In his room at a Baltimore inn the next day, he finalized his rhyme of four stanzas.

Joseph Nicholson, Key's brother-in-law and a commander of militia at the fort, printed the poem for public distribution. The verse, titled "Defence of Fort M'Henry," came with the recommendation that it be sung to the music of an old English drinking song.

Later retitled "The Star-Spangled Banner," it spread across the nation within weeks and became a popular tune of American patriotism for decades. On March 3, 1931, the song was officially named the national anthem, despite protests from critics for its war message and supposed lack of "singability."

Armistead's grand flag was later given to the Smithsonian, where it has been refurbished. Ironically, Armistead is overshadowed by his nephew, Lewis Armistead, who fought against the Stars and Stripes as a brigadier general in Confederate service in the Civil War. The younger Armistead was mortally wounded on the final day's action at Gettysburg on July 3, 1863.

One of Key's sons, Philip Barton Key, also met an unusual fate. In a celebrated scandal, he was shot to death in 1859 by U.S. Senator Daniel Sickles, who learned that the younger Key was having an affair with his wife. Sickles later lost his leg as a major general in Union service at Gettysburg, the day before Lewis Armistead's fatal wounding.

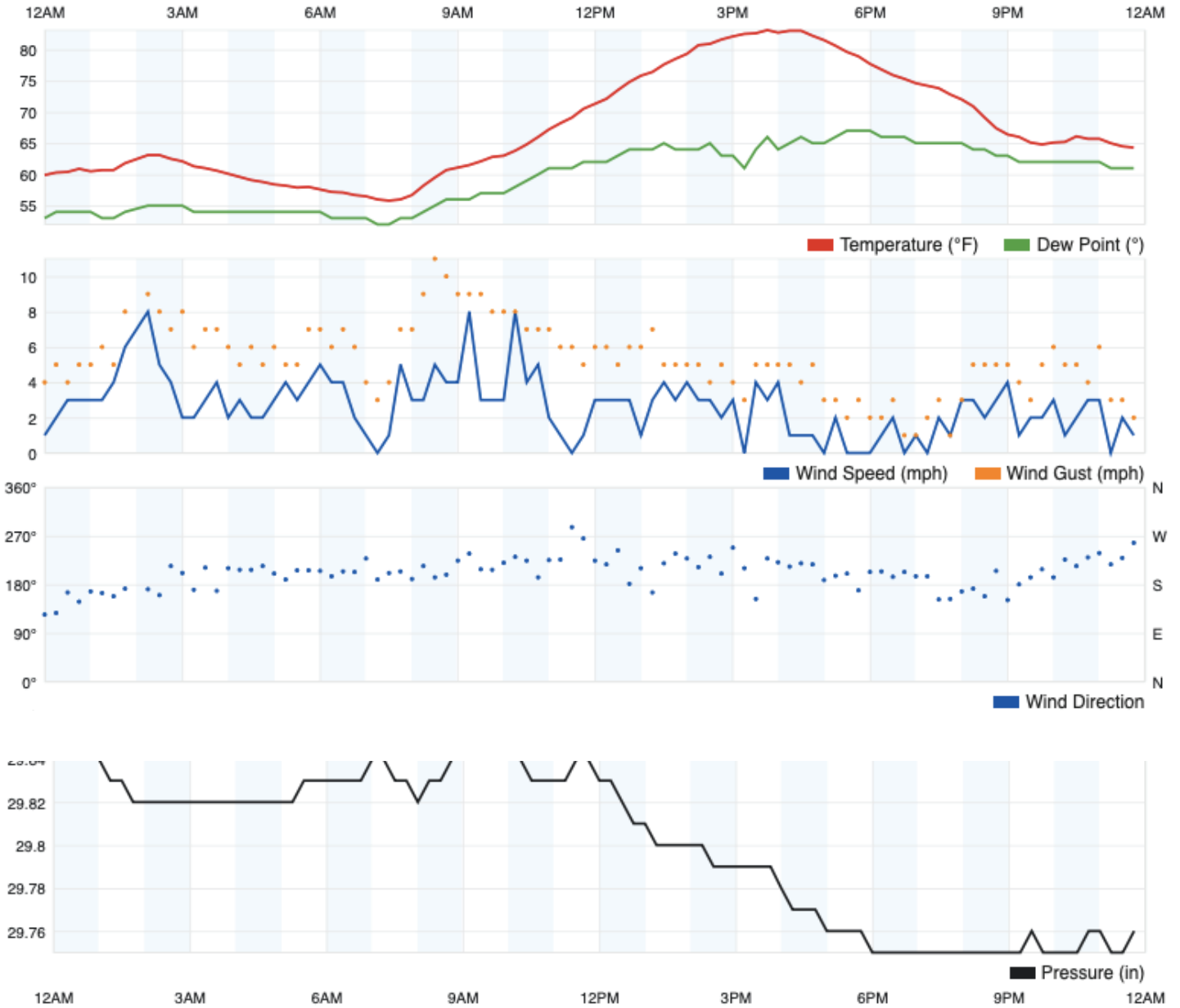
Francis Scott Key died on Jan. 11, 1843 at the age of 63. A Baltimore newspaper eulogized him by writing that "so long as patriotism dwells amongst us, so long will this song be the theme of our nation."

Tom Emery is a freelance writer and historical researcher from Carlinville, Ill. He may be reached at 217-710-8392 or ilcivilwar@yahoo.com.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Partly Sunny
and Breezy
then Partly
Sunny

High: 75 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy

Low: 48 °F

Sunday



Sunny

High: 74 °F

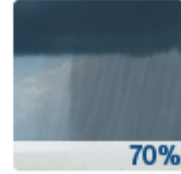
Sunday
Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 52 °F

Monday



Showers
Likely

High: 73 °F

 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
Updated: 9/11/2021 5:21 AM Central

Today

-Highs 70s, low 80s
-Breezy northeast winds

Tonight

-Lows upper 40s, low 50s
-Slight change of showers,
Mainly south of Highway 212

More widespread chance for showers and thunderstorm Monday - Monday night



A cold front will slide across the area today, bringing mostly cloudy skies and breezy northeasterly winds. There is a slight chance for showers later tonight, mainly south of Highway 212.

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Today in Weather History

September 11, 1978: High winds to 65 mph damaged the roofs of several barns outside of Watertown during the early evening.

1900: The remnants of the Great Galveston Hurricane were located over central Iowa on this day. Eastern Nebraska, northwest Iowa, and southern Minnesota show four-plus inches of rain from this storm.

1961: Hurricane Carla made landfall on the northeast part of Matagorda Island, Texas as a strong Category 4 storm.

1992: Hurricane Iniki struck the island of Kaua'i with winds of 145 mph and a central pressure of 27.91 inches of mercury, making it a Category 4 hurricane. Iniki is the strongest hurricane to strike Hawaii Islands in recent history.

2011: Hurricane Erin was off the coast of New Jersey and New York on this day.

1949 - An early snowstorm brought 7.5 inches to Helena MT. In Maine, a storm drenched New Brunswick with 8.05 inches of rain in 24 hours, a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1961 - Very large and slow moving Hurricane Carla made landfall near Port Lavaca TX. Carla battered the central Texas coast with wind gusts to 175 mph, and up to 16 inches of rain, and spawned a vicious tornado which swept across Galveston Island killing eight persons. The hurricane claimed 45 lives, and caused 300 million dollars damage. The remnants of Carla produced heavy rain in the Lower Missouri Valley and southern sections of the Upper Great Lakes Region. (David Ludlum) (Storm Data)

1976 - Up to five inches of rain brought walls of water and millions of tons of debris into Bullhead City AZ via washes from elevations above 3000 feet. Flooding caused more than three million dollars damage. Chasms up to forty feet deep were cut across some roads. (The Weather Channel)

1986 - Thunderstorms caused flash flooding and subsequent river flooding in central Lower Michigan. Up to 14 inches of rain fell in a 72 hour period, and flooding caused 400 million dollars damage. (Storm Data)

1987 - Late afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in Texas, and spawned three tornadoes. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 70 mph at Goodnight TX. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Snow blanketed parts of the Central Rocky Mountain Region and the Central Plateau, with ten inches reported at Mount Evans in Colorado. Smoke from forest fires in the northwestern U.S. reached Pennsylvania and New York State. Hurricane Gilbert, moving westward over the Caribbean, was packing winds of 100 mph by the end of the day. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Nine cities in the north central U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Havre MT with a reading of 23 degrees. Livingston MT and West Yellowstone MT tied for honors as the cold spot in the nation with morning lows of 17 degrees. Thunderstorms produced hail over the Sierra Nevada Range of California, with two inches reported on the ground near Donner Summit. The hail made roads very slick, resulting in a twenty car accident. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

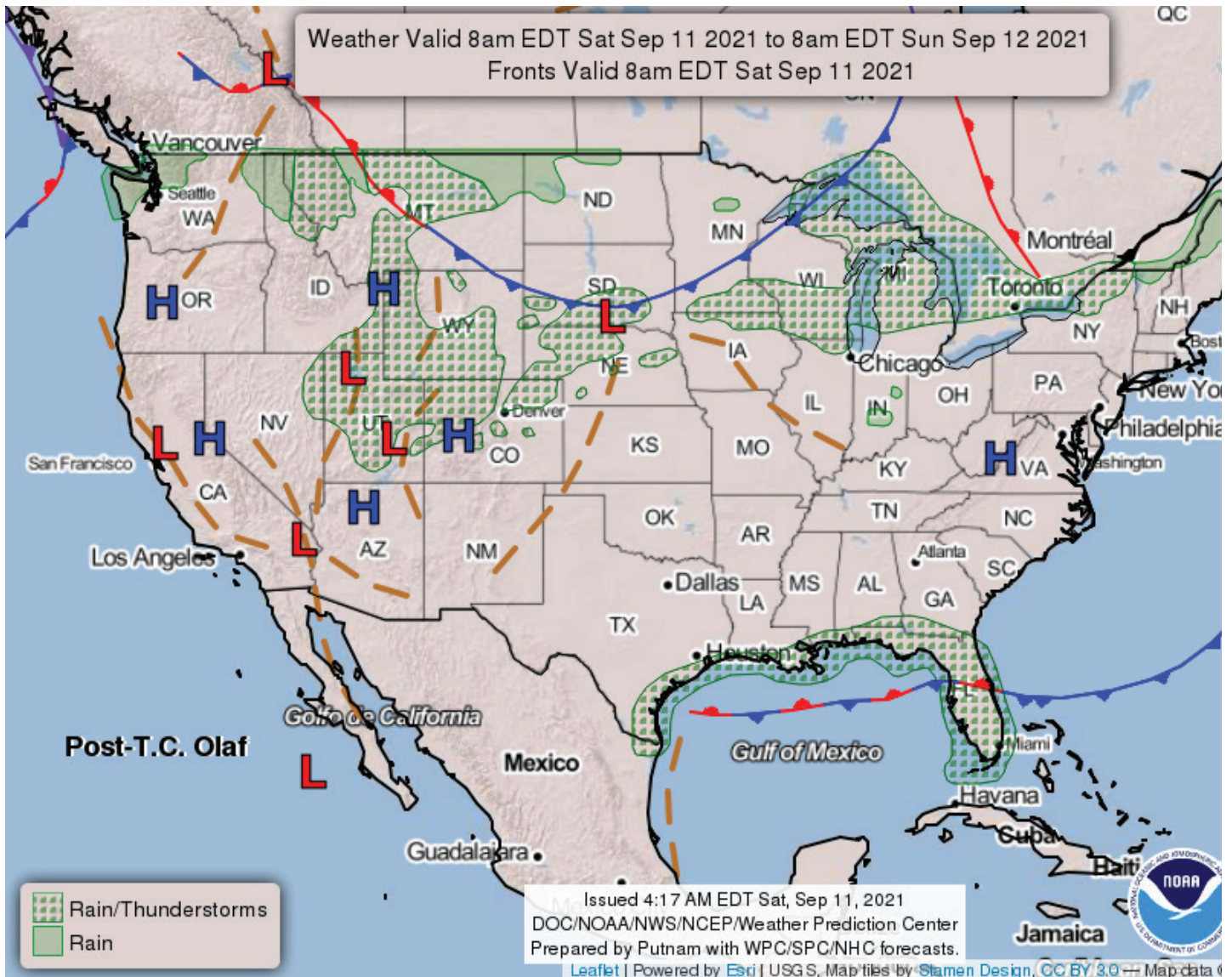
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 83.1 °F at 3:45 PM
Low Temp: 55.8 °F at 7:30 AM
Wind: 11 mph at 8:30 AM
Precip: 0.00

Record High: 100° in 1927
Record Low: 28° in 1940
Average High: 77°F
Average Low: 49°F
Average Precip in Sept.: 0.75
Precip to date in Sept.: 1.77
Average Precip to date: 17.09
Precip Year to Date: 14.91
Sunset Tonight: 7:52:29 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:06:25 AM



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AN IMPORTANT WARNING!

The road to spiritual, mental, and physical healing is often long and difficult. Sometimes it takes us through periods of dark days and endless nights when it seems as though we are left to survive on our own. We struggle and strain and worry and work but it seems as though we will be left to our own designs.

There is great advice in today's verse: "When I said, 'My foot is slipping,' Your love, O Lord, supported me." Before the Psalmist fell, he recognized that he was facing a situation, having to solve a problem, or making a decision that could have been disastrous to his well-being. So, he did not wait until calling on God was too late - that his need for the grace of God would be too late and be out maneuvered by Satan. When he realized that his foot was slipping, he called on God immediately, and God's love supported him! He did not need to ask for forgiveness - he asked God to intervene immediately and sustain him.

As Paul brought his second letter to Timothy to a close, he must have had this verse in mind. "Timothy," he wrote, "the Lord stood at my side and gave me the strength that I needed, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and that all the Gentiles might hear it."

Paul recognized how important it was for him to depend on God's strength and not his own. He knew that the battle was not his but the Lord's. So, rather than let his witness be destroyed, He called on God. Who do you call on in times of need?

Prayer: Father, help us to realize that our strength is limited but Yours is not. May we learn to depend on You before we slip, not after we fall. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: When I said, 'My foot is slipping,' Your love, O Lord, supported me. Psalm 94:18

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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

Police find Sioux Falls man drinking beer inside closed bar

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls man faces burglary charges after police found him afterhours at a bar drinking a beer.

Police say the 53-year-old man was arrested at about 5:30 a.m. Friday. The man was charged with first degree burglary and booked into the Minnehaha County Jail.

The Argus Leader reports An alarm notified police of a possible occupant at the bar. Police say they found the man walking around the establishment drinking a beer.

Police were unsure how the man got into the bar, but they said forced entry was not a factor.

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press undefined

PREP FOOTBALL=

Aberdeen Roncalli 30, Redfield 6

Beresford 42, Parker 9

Brookings 16, Watertown 0

Canistota 46, Viborg-Hurley 18

Dakota Hills 29, Sisseton 20

Dell Rapids 42, Chamberlain 14

Dell Rapids St. Mary 36, Colman-Egan 8

Douglas, Wyo. 51, Belle Fourche 0

Dupree 30, Newell 18

Flandreau 29, Baltic 8

Florence/Henry 56, Waverly-South Shore 0

Gayville-Volin 43, Corsica/Stickney 14

Gregory 31, Kimball/White Lake 6

Groton Area 20, Deuel 14

Harrisburg 35, Sioux Falls Lincoln 27

Herreid/Selby Area 62, Sunshine Bible Academy 6

Hot Springs 49, Bennett County 0

Howard 26, Chester 8

Ipswich 48, Northwestern 0

Kadoka Area 42, Jones County 8

Lead-Deadwood 49, Lakota Tech 14

Lennox 42, Dakota Valley 7

McCook Central/Montrose 36, Elk Point-Jefferson 20

Mobridge-Pollock 24, Clark/Willow Lake 16

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 50, Tripp-Delmont/Armour/Andes Central/Dakota Christian 0

Parkston 27, Platte-Geddes 15

Rapid City Central 27, Douglas 0

Sioux Falls Jefferson 48, Rapid City Stevens 32

Stanley County 26, Sully Buttes 14

Timber Lake 30, Lemmon/McIntosh 12

Todd County 50, Little Wound 6

Wagner 21, Miller/Highmore-Harrold 20

Wall 48, Philip 18

Warner 47, North Central Co-Op 0

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West Central 33, Milbank 32, 20T
Wolsey-Wessington 53, Bon Homme 12
Woonsocket/Wessington Springs/Sanborn Central 43, Jim River 6
Yankton 58, Spearfish 0

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

Information from: ScoreStream Inc., <http://ScoreStream.com>

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press undefined
PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Aberdeen Central def. Spearfish, 19-25, 25-18, 25-15, 25-11
Brookings def. Rapid City Central, 25-16, 22-25, 25-22, 25-9
Pierre def. Sturgis Brown, 25-9, 25-20, 25-17
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=
Crazy Horse def. Takini, ccd.

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

Information from: ScoreStream Inc., <http://ScoreStream.com>

Sioux Falls restaurants clean up their act during pandemic

By MAKENZIE HUBER Sioux Falls Argus Leader

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — It was apparent to Dominic Miller that Sioux Falls restaurants used their time during the height of the coronavirus pandemic well.

The public health inspector, now Sioux Falls public health manager, was one of six inspectors evaluating Sioux Falls' 700-plus restaurants and grocery stores on a bi-annual basis.

Restaurants had shut down dine-in eating in the spring of 2020. Many restaurants filled their employees' time by cleaning to avoid layoffs and prepare for the eventual return of customers, Miller said.

"It was actually very refreshing," Miller said. "The restaurant industry really took the time to clean. You could see how they pulled the equipment out and did some deep cleaning throughout the establishment. You immediately knew they'd used their downtime well so they were ready again when customers came back."

That effort has bled into 2021 inspection reports, with an average inspection score of 97.5 out of 100 across the city, Miller said. Only one restaurant failed its inspection this year, compared to five failed establishments last year, too.

Doing a deep clean has made it easier to continue that routine this year, Miller said. Not only that, but restaurants have health and cleaning at the top of their minds because of the pandemic, the Sioux Falls Argus Leader reported.

Mikael Engebretson, assistant general manager for Blarney Stone Pub in downtown Sioux Falls, said the restaurant laid off 45 employees during the beginning of the pandemic as they switched to a to-go only model. After opening back up to customers, workers made sure to enhance cleaning efforts across the entire restaurant with sanitizer stations and other pandemic precautions.

Blarney Stone usually gets high scores on inspections — 97 in 2021 and a 96 previously — and the restaurant staff holds "high cleaning standards," Engebretson said.

But the pandemic shifted how important it is to consistently and visibly keep the restaurant clean, he added.

"If anything, we made cleaning routines more extremely frequent," Engebretson said. "We wanted guests

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to be overly aware that we're taking things seriously. It gives them peace of mind that we're doing our part to keep them and us safe."

During the height of the pandemic, inspections changed slightly to encourage social distancing. Some inspectors chose to surprise restaurants with a visit in their downtime instead of during rush hours so they wouldn't be entering a busy or packed restaurant, Miller said.

"We're not only contractually obligated (with the city and state to inspect restaurants twice a year), but there are also expectations from the public and restaurant owners that we keep up inspections," Miller said. "For the most part, inspections of restaurants are not antagonistic — they're viewed as a partnership."

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

20-32-35-47-64, Mega Ball: 18, Megaplier: 2

(twenty, thirty-two, thirty-five, forty-seven, sixty-four; Mega Ball: eighteen; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$368 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$409 million

First sports bets have been wagered at Deadwood casinos

DEADWOOD, S.D. (AP) — The first sporting bets have been wagered in Deadwood, bringing to fruition an effort that began several years ago after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a federal law that banned commercial sports gambling.

Four casinos in Deadwood opened sports betting on Thursday — Tin Lizzie, Cadillac Jack's, Gold Dust and Mustang Sally's. Betting is only allowed at licensed facilities in Deadwood. People can place their bets with tellers at a window, at a digital kiosk, or soon, through an app on their phone. The app will only work within the facilities.

The South Dakota Commission on Gaming issued a final ruling Wednesday on a list of sporting events that gamblers will be able to place bets on, including Olympic events, professional and college-level sports, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Deadwood Gaming Association Executive Director Mike Rodman said Thursday's opening was a success.

"We're very pleased that we got to this point. And it's been a long haul getting there. We're happy to be there today."

Rodman said the process to bring legalized sports gambling to Deadwood began several years ago. In 2019, the Deadwood Gaming Commission attempted to get the state legislature to legalize it, but came up three votes short.

In 2020, South Dakota voters legalized sports gambling with about 58% approval and the state legislature passed the gaming laws in 2021.

Voters could be asked about changes in state drug laws

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg has introduced two ballot measures that could change the way law enforcement handles illegal drug possession and ingestion cases in South Dakota.

The measures would make ingesting a controlled substance a petty offense instead of a felony and possession of a controlled substance a class one misdemeanor.

Voters would have a chance to vote on the ballot measures in the 2022 election.

The first measure would reclassify the illegal possession of all controlled drugs or substances as class one misdemeanors, regardless of their scheduled drug status in state law.

Anyone caught with illegal possession of a scheduled 1 or 2 drug faces up to five years in prison and a

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\$10,000 fine while the maximum penalty for a scheduled 3 or 4 drug is two years in prison and a \$4,000 fine, the Argus Leader reported.

The maximum penalty of a class one misdemeanor is a year in jail and a \$2,000 fine.

Anyone caught ingesting drugs would have to pay a \$25 fine, according to the ballot measure. They would not have to serve any prison time.

Prison guard indicted on accusations of sexual misconduct

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota prison guard has been indicted on accusations of sexual misconduct.

Rien Fitzpatrick, 32, was indicted this week by a Minnehaha County grand jury on a charge of committing sexual acts prohibited between prison employees and prisoners. The felony is punishable by up to two years in prison.

The sex acts are alleged to have occurred between Feb. 2 and March 17, KELO-TV reported.

Fitzpatrick was released on a \$1,000 bond.

A discovery and plea offer deadline was set for Oct. 1 and a motion, plea and trial deadline was set for Oct. 15, according to a court scheduling order.

The indictment comes as the Department of Corrections is being investigated following allegations of sexual misconduct and nepotism at the state penitentiary in Sioux Falls.

Gov. Kristi Noem fired a number of prison officials and staff when an anonymous complaint accused former prison warden Darin Young of fostering a poor working environment.

It was not clear whether Fitzpatrick has an attorney who could speak on his behalf.

The Latest: Flight 93 victims remembered for their spirit

SHANKSVILLE, Pa. — The victims and heroes of Flight 93 are being commemorated at a ceremony at the site where the plane crashed in a field on Sept. 11, 2001.

President Joe Biden was making an appearance, and Vice President Kamala Harris, former President George W. Bush and Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf were also speaking.

Wolf said the passengers and crew of Flight 93, whose actions are believed to have led the hijackers to abandon their mission of targeting the U.S. Capitol, offered a lasting lesson of courage and hope.

"This story and this place remind us each day what it means to be an American," said Wolf, a Democrat. "In times of strife, we Americans, we come together. We comfort each other. We protect each other and we stand up for each other. This memorial is a powerful reminder of what we have lost. But it's also a powerful reminder of the strength of the American spirit."

Larry Catuzzi, father of Flight 93 passenger Lauren Catuzzi Grandcolas, said in an interview that he talks to her every day.

"I say something that kind of reminds me of her, and I'll talk to her. Or something good happens to me and I thank her for her being with me," said Catuzzi, whose 38-year-old daughter was pregnant when she perished.

The family started a foundation in her name that has distributed college scholarships to more than 100 girls, funded three neonatal units and built a park in Houston memorializing the victims of Flight 93.

MORE ON SEPT. 11:

- From 9/11's ashes a new world took shape. It did not last
- Surviving 9/11 was 'just the first piece of the journey'
- 9/11: As the decades pass, the act of remembering evolves
- How 9/11 changed air travel: more security, less privacy
- Two decades after 9/11, Muslim Americans still fighting bias
- 20 years later, fallout from toxic WTC dust grows
- They were some of 9/11's biggest names. Where are they now?

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— From election to COVID, 9/11 conspiracies cast a long shadow
— Read these stories and more AP coverage of the Sept. 11 anniversary at: <https://apnews.com/hub/9-11-a-world-changed>.

— ARLINGTON, Va. — Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin says that “we remember not just who our fallen teammates were, but the mission that they shared.”

Austin made the prepared remarks at a Pentagon ceremony Saturday marking the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks.

He continued, “We recall their common commitment to defend our republic ... and to squarely face new dangers.”

Austin noted that “almost a quarter of the citizens who we defend today were born after 9/11,” including many of the 13 American service members killed in the recent attack in Afghanistan.

He says that “as the years march on, we must ensure that all our fellow Americans know and understand what happened here on 9/11 ... and in Manhattan ... and in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.”

The Pentagon chief says that “it is our responsibility to remember. And it is our duty to defend our democracy.”

He says, “We cannot know what the next 20 years will bring. We cannot know what new dangers they will carry. ... But we do know that America will always lead.”

And to the audience at the Pentagon commemoration, the defense secretary said, “We still work here. We still remember here. We still uphold our values here. With clear heads and fearless hearts.”

— NEW YORK — Bruce Springsteen has performed at the World Trade Center memorial plaza during a ceremony marking the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

The audience of dignitaries and family members of people killed in the 2001 attacks applauded after Springsteen performed his song “I’ll See You In My Dreams” while accompanying himself on guitar and harmonica.

Victims’ relatives then resumed their reading of names of the fallen, a tradition since the first anniversary of the attacks that leveled the trade center’s twin towers.

— NEW YORK — The 9/11 anniversary commemoration at ground zero has begun with a tolling bell and a moment of silence, exactly 20 years after the start of the deadliest terror attack on U.S. soil.

President Joe Biden, former Presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton, members of Congress, and other dignitaries joined a crowd of victims’ relatives Saturday on the Sept. 11 memorial plaza in New York. The memorial stands where the World Trade Center’s twin towers were rammed and felled by hijacked planes.

Observances are also planned at the two other sites where the 9/11 conspirators crashed their hijacked jets: the Pentagon and a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

Biden is scheduled to pay respects at all three places, and former President George W. Bush is to speak at the Pennsylvania ceremony.

— KABUL, Afghanistan -- The Taliban flag is waving over the Afghan presidential palace the same day the U.S. and the world marks the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks.

The milestone anniversary Saturday takes place just weeks after the chaotic U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and the return to power of the Taliban, the faction that sheltered the Muslim militant group founded by Osama bin Laden that carried out the attacks.

The Taliban flag was raised Friday and could be seen waving over the presidential palace in Kabul on Saturday.

The U.S. is set to mark the 9/11 anniversary with commemorations at New York’s World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

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WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama has lauded the heroes of 9/11 — and of the years since — in a message to mark the 20th anniversary of the terror attacks.

“One thing that became clear on 9/11 — and has been clear ever since — is that America has always been home to heroes who run towards danger in order to do what is right,” said Obama, who was U.S. President from 2009 to 2017.

He said the enduring image for him and his wife Michelle of that day was not the wreckage and destruction but the people. He singled out firefighters who ran up the stairs as others were running down, passengers who stormed the cockpit of their plane and volunteers who came forward across the country in the days that followed.

“Over the last 20 years, we’ve seen the same courage and selflessness on display again and again,” Obama said.

“We saw it a decade ago when, after years of persistence, our military brought justice to Osama bin Laden. And we’re seeing it today — in the doctors and nurses, bone tired, doing what they can to save lives; the servicemembers, some of whom weren’t even born 20 years ago, putting themselves at risk to save Americans and help refugees find a better life; the first responders battling roaring fires and rising waters to bring families to safety.”

LONDON -- Queen Elizabeth II marked the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks by offering her sympathies to the victims, survivors and families affected by the atrocity.

In a message to U.S. President Joe Biden, the British monarch remembered the “terrible attacks” on New York and Washington, D.C.

“My thoughts and prayers — and those of my family and the entire nation — remain with the victims, survivors and families affected, as well as the first responders and rescue workers called to duty,” she said.

“My visit to the site of the World Trade Center in 2010 is held fast in my memory. It reminds me that as we honor those from many nations, faiths and backgrounds who lost their lives, we also pay tribute to the resilience and determination of the communities who joined together to rebuild.”

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has also remembered the attacks, issuing a statement ahead of the anniversary saying that the terrorists had failed to “shake our belief in freedom and democracy.”

“They failed to drive our nations apart, or cause us to abandon our values, or to live in permanent fear.”

US marks 20 years since 9/11, in shadow of Afghan war’s end

By JENNIFER PELTZ and BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Americans solemnly marked the 20th anniversary of 9/11 on Saturday, remembering the dead, invoking the heroes and taking stock of the aftermath of the deadliest terror attack on U.S. soil less than two weeks after the fraught end of the war in Afghanistan.

The ceremony at ground zero in New York began exactly two decades after the attack started with the first of four hijacked planes crashing into one of the World Trade Center’s twin towers.

“It felt like an evil specter had descended on our world, but it was also a time when many people acted above and beyond the ordinary,” said Mike Low, whose daughter, Sara Low, was a flight attendant on that plane.

Her family has “known unbearable sorrow and disbelief” in the years since, the father told a crowd that included President Joe Biden and former presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton.

But “as we carry these 20 years forward, I find sustenance in a continuing appreciation for all of those who rose to be more than ordinary people,” Low said.

The anniversary unfolded under the pall of a pandemic and in the shadow of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, which is now ruled by the same militants who gave safe haven to the 9/11 plotters.

“It’s hard because you hoped that this would just be a different time and a different world. But sometimes history starts to repeat itself and not in the best of ways,” Thea Trinidad, who lost her father in the attacks, said before reading victims’ names at the ceremony.

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Bruce Springsteen and Broadway actor Kelli O'Hara sang at the commemoration, but by tradition, no politicians spoke there. In a video released Friday night, Biden addressed the continuing pain of loss but also spotlighted what he called the "central lesson" of Sept. 11: "that at our most vulnerable ... unity is our greatest strength."

Biden was also scheduled to pay respects at the two other sites where the 9/11 conspirators crashed the jets: the Pentagon and a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Together, the attacks killed nearly 3,000 people.

Calvin Wilson came to the Pennsylvania memorial to reflect on his brother-in-law LeRoy Homer, the first officer of the plane that crashed in Pennsylvania after passengers and crew fought to regain control. Hijackers are believed to have been targeting the U.S. Capitol or the White House.

Wilson said he believes a polarized country has "missed the message" of the passengers' and crew members' heroism.

"We don't focus on the damage. We don't focus on the hate. We don't focus on retaliation. We don't focus on revenge," Wilson said. "We focus on the good that all of our loved ones have done."

Former President George W. Bush, the nation's leader on 9/11, and current Vice President Kamala Harris were to speak at the Pennsylvania memorial. The only other post-9/11 U.S. president, Donald Trump, planned to be in New York, in addition to providing commentary at a boxing match in Florida in the evening.

Other observances — from a wreath-laying in Portland, Maine, to a fire engine parade in Guam — were planned across a country now full of 9/11 plaques, statues and commemorative gardens.

In the aftermath of the attacks, security was redefined, with changes to airport checkpoints, police practices and the government's surveillance powers. For years afterward, virtually any sizeable explosion, crash or act of violence seemed to raise a dire question: "Is it terrorism?" Some ideological violence and plots did follow, though federal officials and the public have lately become increasingly concerned with threats from domestic extremists after years of focusing on international terror groups in the wake of 9/11.

New York faced questions early on about whether it could ever recover from the blow to its financial hub and restore a feeling of safety among the crowds and skyscrapers. New Yorkers ultimately rebuilt a more populous and prosperous city but had to reckon with the tactics of an empowered post-9/11 police department and a widened gap between haves and have-nots.

A "war on terror" led to invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, where the longest U.S. war ended last month with a hasty, massive airlift punctuated by a suicide bombing that killed 169 Afghans and 13 American service members and was attributed to a branch of the Islamic State extremist group. The U.S. is now concerned that al-Qaida, the terror network behind 9/11, may regroup in Afghanistan, where the flag of the Taliban militant group once again flew over the presidential palace on Saturday.

Melissa Pullis lost her husband, Edward, on 9/11. His namesake, Edward Jr., is serving on the USS Ronald Reagan, where he released a wreath bearing the words "Never Forget" into the water Saturday.

"I really don't care about the Taliban," said Melissa Pullis, who attended the ceremony with her other son, Andrew. "I'm just happy all the troops are out of Afghanistan ... We can't lose any more military. We don't even know why we're fighting, and 20 years went down the drain."

Two decades after helping to triage and treat injured colleagues at the Pentagon on Sept. 11, retired Army Col. Malcolm Bruce Westcott is saddened and frustrated by the continued threat of terrorism.

"I always felt that my generation, my military cohort, would take care of it — we wouldn't pass it on to anybody else," said Westcott, of Greensboro, Georgia. "And we passed it on."

Sept. 11 propelled a surge of shared grief and common purpose, but it soon gave way.

Muslim Americans endured suspicion, surveillance and hate crimes. The quest to understand the catastrophic toll of the terror attacks prompted changes in building design and emergency communications, but it also spurred conspiracy theories that seeded a culture of skepticism. Schisms and resentments grew over immigration, the balance between tolerance and vigilance, the meaning of patriotism, the proper way to honor the dead, and the scope of a promise to "never forget."

Trinidad was 10 when she overheard her dad, Michael, saying goodbye to her mother by phone from

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the burning trade center. She remembers the pain but also the fellowship of the days that followed, when all of New York "felt like it was family."

"Now, when I feel like the world is so divided, I just wish that we can go back to that," said Trinidad, of Orlando, Florida. "I feel like it would have been such a different world if we had just been able to hang on to that feeling."

+++

Associated Press Writer Michael Rubinkam in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, contributed to this report.

Biden, Obama, Clinton mark 9/11 in NYC with display of unity

By ZEKE MILLER and ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Three presidents and their wives stood somberly side by side at the National September 11 Memorial, sharing a moment of silence to mark the anniversary of the nation's worst terror attack with a display of unity.

Presidents Joe Biden, Barack Obama and Bill Clinton all gathered at the site where the World Trade Center towers fell two decades ago. They each wore blue ribbons and held their hands over their hearts as a procession marched a flag through the memorial, watched by hundreds of Americans gathered for the remembrance, some carrying photos of loved ones lost in the attacks.

Before the event began, a jet flew overhead in an eerie echo of the attacks, drawing a glance from Biden toward the sky. For much of the ceremony he stood with his arms crossed and head bowed, listening while the names of the victims were read. At one point, the president wiped a tear from his eye.

Biden was a senator when hijackers commandeered four planes and executed the attack. Now he marks the 9/11 anniversary for the first time as commander in chief.

The president will spend Saturday paying his respects at the trio of sites where the planes crashed, but he left the speech-making to others.

Vice President Kamala Harris was set to speak at the Flight 93 National Memorial in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, commemorating the heroes that brought down a hijacked plane that was headed for the U.S. Capitol. According to prepared remarks, Harris planned to praise their courage and the resilience of the American people, and speak about the unity that Americans experienced in the days following the attacks, calling unity "essential to our shared prosperity, our national security, and to our standing in the world."

The White House released a taped address late Friday in which Biden also spoke of the "true sense of national unity" that emerged after the attacks, seen in "heroism everywhere — in places expected and unexpected."

"To me that's the central lesson of September 11," he said. "Unity is our greatest strength."

Biden arrived in New York on Friday night as the skyline was illuminated by the "Tribute in Light," hauntingly marking where the towers once stood.

Following the morning ceremony in New York City, Biden will visit the field near Shanksville where the plane fell from the sky and then will head to the Pentagon, where the world's mightiest military suffered an unthinkable blow to its very home.

Biden's task, like that of his predecessors before him, was to mark the moment with a mix of grief and resolve. A man who has suffered immense personal tragedy, Biden speaks of loss with power.

He gave voice to the pain that comes with memories of 9/11 in his video message, saying, "No matter how much time has passed, these commemorations bring everything painfully back as if you just got the news a few seconds ago."

Robert Gibbs, who served as Obama's press secretary, said for Biden, "It's a moment for people to see him not as Democratic president, but as president of the United States of America."

"The American people are somewhat conflicted about what they have seen out of Afghanistan the last couple of weeks," Gibbs said. "For Biden, it's a moment to try to reset some of that. Remind people of what it is to be commander in chief and what it means to be the leader of the country at a moment of such significance."

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On the 20th anniversary of the attacks, Biden now shoulders the responsibility borne by his predecessors to prevent future tragedy, and must do so against fresh fears of a rise in terror after the United States' hasty exit from Afghanistan, the country from which the Sept. 11 attacks were plotted.

Biden is the fourth president to console the nation on the anniversary of that dark day, one that has shaped many of the most consequential domestic and foreign policy decisions made by the chief executives over the past two decades.

The terror attack defined the presidency of George W. Bush, who was reading a book to Florida schoolchildren when the planes slammed into the World Trade Center. He spent that day being kept out of Washington for security reasons — a decision that then-Sen. Biden urged him to reconsider, the current president has written — and then delivered a brief, halting speech that night from the White House to a terrified nation.

The following year, Bush chose Ellis Island as the location to deliver his first anniversary address, the Statue of Liberty over his shoulder as he vowed, "What our enemies have begun, we will finish."

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were still deadly when Obama visited the Pentagon to mark his first Sept. 11 in office in 2009.

"No words can ease the ache of your hearts," he said.

"We recall the beauty and meaning of their lives," he said. "No passage of time, no dark skies can dull the meaning of that moment."

By the time Obama spoke at the 10th anniversary, attack mastermind Osama bin Laden was dead, killed in a May 2011 Navy SEAL raid. Though the nation remained entangled overseas, and vigilant against terror threats, the anniversary became more about healing.

President Donald Trump pledged to get the U.S. out of Afghanistan, but his words during his first Sept. 11 anniversary ceremony in 2017 were a vivid warning to terrorists, telling "these savage killers that there is no dark corner beyond our reach, no sanctuary beyond our grasp, and nowhere to hide anywhere on this very large earth."

On Saturday, as Biden was making his way to all three sites, Bush was to pay his respects in Shanksville. Trump planned at least one stop in Manhattan and was to deliver ringside commentary at a boxing match at a casino in Hollywood, Florida.

—
Jaffe reported from Washington.

In the GOP, voter ID is a slam dunk ... except in Nebraska

By GRANT SCHULTE Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — State Sen. Mike Groene was frustrated but not terribly surprised last year when Nebraska's legislature rejected, for the seventh time, a measure that would have forced voters to show a government-issued identification at the polls.

The issue is a slam dunk in most conservative states, where Republican majorities simply brush aside Democratic objections to pass more restrictive voting laws. But not in Nebraska, a GOP stronghold whose quirky, nonpartisan Legislature enables more liberal lawmakers to derail bills that are widely supported in a state where Republicans hold every statewide and federal office.

"It's the way the system is set up," said Groene, a conservative Republican who supports a voter ID law. "It isn't designed to address major issues that most of the state wants."

Now, a campaign bankrolled by the conservative governor's mother is aiming to end Nebraska's distinction as the only GOP state without a voter-ID law. The group Citizens for Voter ID is gathering the roughly 125,000 signatures needed to put the issue on the 2022 general election ballot, and even opponents acknowledge the measure probably will pass.

The effort is the latest reflection of a polarized political climate that no longer tolerates much variation from the prevailing partisan agenda, regardless of local tradition or circumstances. Although Nebraska's

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unique nonpartisan, one-chamber legislative system is unlikely to change because it's part of the state constitution, politicians are increasingly willing to work around it.

"I thought it was time to take it to the people," said state Sen. Julie Slama, the petition drive's sponsor.

Slama acknowledged that Nebraska has no history of voter fraud, but she said constituents in her rural, conservative district wonder why the state doesn't have a measure that's Republican orthodoxy elsewhere.

"It makes us look bad," said Doug Kagan, president of the conservative Nebraska Taxpayers for Freedom, which has pushed for voter ID laws. "Every year, there are more states that pass some kind of voter ID law. It's kind of an anomaly that we haven't passed one."

The campaign has already raised \$377,000, with all but \$1,000 of that coming from Marlene Ricketts, the mother of GOP Gov. Pete Ricketts and the wife of Joe Ricketts, a billionaire conservative activist.

Opponents argue that the goal of voter ID isn't to ensure secure elections but to discourage voting by minorities and others who tend to vote for Democratic candidates. But they acknowledge that Nebraska is likely to remain solidly Republican with or without voter ID. Nebraska is 88% white and backed Donald Trump in the 2020 general election by 19 percentage points over Democrat Joe Biden.

Nevertheless, following the party line here probably won't be easy. Since 1937, Nebraska's legislature, unlike all other states, has been comprised of one chamber and lawmakers have been officially nonpartisan, though party affiliations are widely known. There are no formal caucus meetings where party leaders tell members how to vote; Democrats are sometimes chosen to head committees despite holding only 17 of the 49 seats.

Longstanding rules also require a two-thirds vote to overcome a filibuster, meaning supporters of a bill need at least 33 members — one more seat than Republicans hold.

Those rules have helped Democrats beat back numerous bills over the year, including charter school proposals, efforts to end the state's practice of splitting up its presidential electoral votes and of course, voter ID.

It leaves Republicans frustrated, but over the years few have tried to change the system, approved by voters at the urging of former U.S. Sen. George Norris, a progressive Republican who argued it would be more responsive to regular people's needs. Some legislators also believe the system encourages cooperation and limits firebrands who want to roll over their opponents.

Republican state Sen. John McCollister, of Omaha, has voted against voter identification bills and other bills supported by his party, drawing strong condemnation from GOP officials outside the Legislature, but not from his colleagues.

"I think most of us feel free to be more independent than we would in a state with a party caucus system," said McCollister. "We aren't so quick to jump on some of these political exercises that other states have gotten into."

But the push for ballot measures may grow stronger as other partisan issues get stuck in the Legislature, said Hal Daub, a longtime Republican activist and former congressman and Omaha mayor. Over the last decade, petition drives have allowed Nebraska voters to reinstate the death penalty, expand Medicaid, regulate payday lenders, legalize casino gambling and raise the minimum wage — all issues where the electorate overruled state lawmakers.

"It's a structural problem that's going to force more of these initiatives," said Daub, who donated \$1,000 to the voter ID campaign.

Follow Grant Schulte on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/GrantSchulte>

The Latest: Taliban flag flies at Afghan presidential palace

By The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan -- The Taliban flag fluttered over the Afghan presidential palace on Saturday — the same day the U.S. and the world marked the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks.

The milestone anniversary takes place just weeks after the chaotic U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan

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and the return to power of the Taliban, the faction that sheltered the al-Qaida terror network founded by Osama bin Laden that carried out the attacks.

Hemad Sherzad, a Taliban fighter and member of the group's cultural council, said the flag at the presidential palace was raised on Friday morning. The militant group has also painted their white-backdrop banner on the entry gate to the U.S. Embassy building.

The U.S. is set to mark the 9/11 anniversary with commemorations at New York's World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Taliban shot dead the brother of Amrullah Saleh, the former vice president of Afghanistan, and his driver in northern Panjshir province, Saleh's nephew said Saturday.

Shuresh Saleh said his uncle Rohullah Azizi was going somewhere in a car Thursday when Taliban fighters stopped him at a checkpoint. "As we hear at the moment Taliban shot him and his driver at the checkpoint," he said.

A message left with a Taliban spokesman Saturday was not immediately returned.

Shuresh Saleh said it was unclear where his uncle, an anti-Taliban fighter, was headed when the Taliban caught him. He said phones were not working in the area.

Amrullah Saleh led forces resisting the Taliban in Panjshir, which was the last holdout province to be overrun by Afghanistan's new rulers.

Videos circulating on social media purportedly show Taliban opening fire on anti-Taliban fighters in Panjshir whom they have arrested.

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KABUL, Afghanistan — More than 250 foreign nationals have left Afghanistan in the past three days, says Zalmay Khalilzad, Washington's special envoy and the architect of an often criticized deal with the Taliban.

The deal signed last year provided for the safe withdrawal of U.S and NATO troops but say his critics was heavily weighted in favor of the hardline-Islamic movement.

In a series of tweets Khalilzad praised both the Middle Eastern State of Qatar, whose national airline carried out the flights and the "Taliban's cooperation in this important effort," for the recent departure of foreign nationals from Afghanistan.

"We will continue to engage the government of Qatar, the Taliban, and others to ensure the safe passage of our citizens, other foreign nationals, and Afghans that want to leave," Khalilzad tweeted.

However, hundreds of Afghans, including U.S. citizens and green card holders, remain stranded in northern Afghanistan's Mazar-e-Sharif waiting to be evacuated but stopped by Taliban rulers demanding travel documents.

Prince Andrew's lawyers question service of legal documents

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A U.S. court will hold a pretrial conference Monday in the civil suit filed by a woman who claims Prince Andrew sexually assaulted her as the two sides argue over whether the prince was properly served with documents in the case.

Attorneys for the woman, Virginia Giuffre, say the documents were handed over to a Metropolitan Police officer on duty at the main gates of Andrew's home in Windsor Great Park on Aug. 27.

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But Blackfords, a law firm that said they represent Andrew "in certain U.K. matters," have questioned whether the papers were properly served and raised the possibility of challenging the court's jurisdiction in the case, according to a Sept. 6 letter referenced in court documents filed by Giuffre's attorneys.

"We reiterate that our client reserves all his rights, including to contest the jurisdiction of the US courts (including on the basis of potentially defective service)," they wrote.

A U.S. judge will ultimately determine whether the papers were properly delivered. Judge Lewis Kaplan of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York will hold the first pretrial conference in the case via teleconference on Monday.

The prince has repeatedly denied the allegations in the lawsuit brought by Giuffre, a longtime accuser of the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

When the suit was filed last month, legal experts suggested it left Andrew with no good options as the second son of Queen Elizabeth II seeks to repair his image and return to public life.

If the prince tries to ignore the lawsuit, he runs the risk that the court could find him in default and order him to pay damages. And if he decides to fight, Andrew faces years of sordid headlines as the case winds its way through court.

Giuffre's attorney, David Boies, said in court documents that it was implausible that Andrew is unaware of the suit.

"Attorneys at Blackfords, who he has apparently instructed to evade and contest service, have confirmed that Prince Andrew himself already has notice of this lawsuit and is evaluating his chances of success," Boies wrote. "And even if Blackfords had not confirmed as much, any other conclusion would be implausible — reputable media outlets around the world reported on the filing of plaintiff's complaint, and hundreds, if not thousands, of articles about this lawsuit have been published."

The lawsuit is another unwanted story for the royals, reminding the public of Andrew's links to Epstein two years after his death. Britain's royal family is also still recovering from allegations of racism and insensitivity leveled at them by Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, earlier this year.

White House, Democrats tangle over Biden bid to raise taxes

By JOSH BOAK and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden has a simple message for fellow Democrats about his plan to raise taxes to remake large swaths of the American economy: look beyond the bottom line.

Biden is trying to persuade Democrats to embrace a more emotional argument, namely that the plan is fair, that it increases taxes on those who can afford to pay more and spends money on programs targeting children and the middle class.

The president has proposed more than \$3 trillion worth of revenue increases, primarily through higher taxes for corporations and the country's richest households as well as greater IRS enforcement that would target the wealthy. But key lawmakers voiced doubts this past week about the size and possible impacts on the economy as congressional committees considered the measures and a wide array of business groups sifted through the details to highlight what they oppose.

Interviews with three administration officials suggest the White House is comfortable with settling for a lower price tag as part of the negotiating process, so long as the end result produces a tax system that voters judge as fair. The officials, who were not authorized to publicly discuss ongoing negotiations and spoke on condition of anonymity, said Democrats are united on this front.

If the playbook of appealing to voters sounds familiar, it was the same strategy used by Biden to cement a bipartisan infrastructure deal earlier this year.

"This is a commonsense thing that people agree with," said Kate Berner, White House deputy communications director. "They don't understand why companies can park profits overseas and pay no money in taxes. They don't understand why a hedge fund manager pays a lower tax rate than a pipefitter. It's something that people think of as fundamentally broken."

But in a sign of uncertainty, the administration has also stayed publicly quiet about how low Biden is will-

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ing to go in slimming down the package. The administration also finds itself grappling with interest groups that the White House views as intentionally misrepresenting its tax plans in hopes of eroding support. Officials say that claims of job losses by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other groups are overblown and fail to consider investments in family leave, children, child care, health care and the environment that they believe will help the economy.

The president outlined his tax plans in his budget proposal, setting a baseline for congressional committees. But some Democratic lawmakers, including West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, have already objected to the amount of spending and the taxes being raised. Manchin early on raised concerns about Biden's proposal to increase the corporate income tax rate from 21% to 28%.

"If you're going to be a leader in the world and the superpower of the world, you better have a competitive tax rate, period," he said.

While Manchin and Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., both voted for the budget blueprint that allowed Democrats to begin crafting the social programs package, they have made it clear they will not support the proposed topline spending figure of \$3.5 trillion over 10 years.

"Establishing an artificial \$3.5 trillion spending number and then reverse-engineering the partisan social priorities that should be funded isn't how you make good policy," Manchin wrote in *The Wall Street Journal*.

On the House side, Democrats can afford to lose only three votes and still pass the spending bill if the GOP unanimously opposes it, as expected. There have already been early signals of unrest, with Rep. Stephanie Murphy, D-Fla., voting against two sections of her party's bill during a committee hearing this past week, and Rep. Ron Kind, D-Wis., joining her in voting no on one of those votes.

"I don't know how much we're spending, how much we're raising, how we're spending some of the money and how we're raising any of the money," Murphy complained.

Under Biden's initial proposal, changes to corporate taxes would raise roughly \$2 trillion over a decade, with about 70% of that sum coming from putting the corporate rate at 28% and revising a global minimum tax on profits. An additional \$755 billion would come from higher individual taxes on the wealthiest Americans, including an increase to the rate charged on profits from the sale of capital assets such as stocks or real estate.

Increased enforcement by the IRS would yield roughly \$460 billion. But a Treasury Department analysis indicates that figure would grow to \$1.6 trillion in the following decade as more IRS employees were fully trained, one of the key arguments for saying that the budget would be fiscally responsible.

Part of the challenge for Democrats is the memory of voter backlash against proposed tax increases during the 1984 presidential election against Ronald Reagan nearly four decades ago.

Many older Democrats and those from more conservative areas fear that voters will penalize them if taxes increase by too much, even if Biden and advocacy groups push the argument that voters are now rejecting Reagan-ism and will reward Democrats for raising taxes on companies and the wealthy.

"We're in a generational struggle within the Democratic Party," said Frank Clemente, executive director of the advocacy group Americans for Tax Fairness. "We're in a very different era, and these Democrats haven't caught up with the era we're in."

Americans for Tax Fairness is among the organizations trying to persuade Democratic lawmakers to back Biden's tax proposals. The groups have commissioned a national poll and six battleground state polls and mobilized 97 national groups and 620 state organizations to back the plans on the premise that they are popular.

Even if business groups oppose parts of the plan, their objections can vary by industry. The Chamber of Commerce has emphasized its dislike of higher rates for corporations and capital gains, while the American Bankers Association sent a letter to lawmakers on Tuesday voicing concerns about the increased reporting requirements to the IRS on customers' accounts.

The Retail Industry Leaders Association, whose members include Target, Best Buy and other major retailers, urged congressional leaders Thursday not to raise corporate tax rates, but to boost IRS enforcement and ensure that all companies pay at least a minimum tax before an increase in the corporate tax

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rate is considered.

"We are doing a lot of meetings educating members on this issue and making sure they understand how a rate increase will harm retail and the importance of ensuring all profitable companies contribute," said Melissa Murdock, a vice president with the trade group.

The American Petroleum Institute, the largest trade group representing the U.S. oil and gas industry, is lobbying to beat back a proposed fee on methane emissions that supporters contend would slow climate change and dramatically improve air quality in communities located near oil and gas facilities.

The group is running a \$1 million-plus ad campaign that tells viewers when it comes to energy, "Washington wants to chart an extreme course" that could make energy more expensive and less reliable."

Sen. Bernie Sanders, a Vermont independent, spoke about the full-court press to reshape or even kill the tax increases.

"You've got all of the big money interests of the country fighting us day after day after day," Sanders said. "At the end of the day, in my mind, what we are trying to do is to restore the faith of the American people that their government can work for them, not just for lobbyists on Capitol Hill or the big money interests. And we are going to prevail."

But even as trade groups focus on individual details of a complex budget, the topline proposal to fund \$3.5 trillion in additional spending over the next decade is the main obstacle. Neil Bradley, executive vice president and chief policy officer at the Chamber of Commerce, said the proposed tax increases are unprecedented but also inadequate to pay for all the programs while complying with Senate rules on budgeting.

"I've been doing this for 25 years," Bradley said. "Based on that experience, it's my belief that a package of this size collapses under its own weight."

Crowded stadiums, pandemic create combustible mix this fall

By TOM MURPHY AP Health Writer

More than 65,000 fans packed a stadium in Tampa to watch Tom Brady lead the Buccaneers to a win in the NFL's season opener, just hours after President Joe Biden announced a sweeping new plan to slow the latest COVID-19 surge.

Most people at the open-air stadium Thursday night didn't wear masks. There was no vaccine requirement for fans, something Biden has urged sports and entertainment venues to impose. Many other football stadiums are taking a similarly lax approach to pandemic measures this fall, and that worries health experts.

This fall's crowded college and professional football stadiums could create ripe conditions for COVID-19 to spread among unvaccinated fans, experts say.

The risk of catching or passing a virus that has infected more than 40 million people in the United States will depend on where the stadium is and whether the game is outdoors, among other factors.

HOW RISKY ARE STADIUMS?

It's difficult to predict how many COVID-19 cases might develop from a single event. That depends partly on infection rates where the venue is located and how many people are vaccinated.

The highly contagious delta variant has triggered a surge in infections this summer that just recently started to taper. The seven-day rolling average for daily new cases in the U.S. sits at about 150,000 after starting September above 167,000, according to Johns Hopkins University.

At those rates, it is "basically a certainty" that there will be at least one infected person at any gathering of a thousand people, epidemiologist Ryan Demmer said.

Many football stadiums seat 60,000 fans or more.

"At any sort of large event like at a football stadium, without question there will be many infected people there," said Demmer of the University of Minnesota School of Public Health.

HAS COVID-19 SPREAD AT OTHER EVENTS?

Yes. The Lollapalooza music festival in Chicago drew about 385,000 people in late July. Festivalgoers had to show proof of vaccination or a negative test. Nearly two weeks after the event, city officials reported 203 COVID-19 cases connected to it.

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In Wisconsin, health officials have said nearly 500 coronavirus cases may be linked to the crowds that attended Milwaukee Bucks games or gathered outside the arena — estimated as high as 100,000 one night — during the team's push to the NBA championship.

ARE VENUES TAKING ANY MEASURES?

The NFL doesn't have a blanket policy for masks or vaccination status for fans. That creates a patchwork of guidelines that each of the 32 teams has developed.

The Las Vegas Raiders, for instance, will require proof of vaccination for all fans 12 and over. The New Orleans Saints and Seattle Seahawks will require that fans show proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test.

Louisiana State University, a college football powerhouse, has a policy similar to the Saints.

Many teams are asking fans to wear masks indoors but not requiring them while they are in their seats.

Football games are the latest events to resume with full stadiums or arenas, following a summer of concerts, NBA playoff games and baseball.

DO OUTDOOR STADIUMS ELIMINATE RISK?

No. But they are considered safer because air circulates better in them, which can hamper the airborne virus's ability to spread.

That said, there's still an "extremely high chance" an unvaccinated and unmasked fan could wind up with COVID-19 if they sit next to an infected person for three hours or so, even outdoors, said Demmer, the epidemiologist.

Most of the NFL's 30 stadiums are open-air venues.

Four teams have closed roofs — the Detroit Lions, Las Vegas Raiders, New Orleans Saints and Minnesota Vikings — and five have retractable roofs that can be opened or closed.

A stadium that opened last year in Los Angeles and is home to the Chargers and Rams has a canopy-type roof and panels at each end that allow air in and out.

WHAT PRECAUTIONS CAN FANS TAKE?

The biggest measure is becoming fully vaccinated. Doctors say the shots don't eliminate risk, but they lower it considerably, especially when it comes to developing a serious case that requires hospitalization.

"The delta variant is ... so much more contagious that if you've got clusters of unvaccinated people, it's going to rip through them," said Dr. Amesh Adalja of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security.

Bringing masks and hand sanitizer to the game is a good idea, said Dr. Sharon Wright, chief infection prevention officer at Beth Israel Lahey Health in Boston.

She noted that masks are not perfect, but they offer some protection. They also prevent people from touching their faces.

"Lots of people touch lots of things in sports arenas," she noted.

Once fans get to their seat, they should try to stay there as much as possible to minimize contact with infected people, Demmer said.

"Don't wander around the stadium," he said. "Try not to stand in a lot of concession lines."

The epidemiologist said there is no question that crowded stadiums this fall will lead to more infections, but he also realizes that "we can't live for the next five or 10 years not having large gatherings" because of the virus.

"I just wish everyone would get vaccinated and then we can really move past this once and for all," Demmer said.

Murphy reported from Indianapolis. Associated Press Writer Brady McCombs contributed to this report from Salt Lake City.

Follow Tom Murphy on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/thpmurphy>

Amid talk of boosters, global vaccine disparity gets sharper

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By CARA ANNA and SUDHIN THANAWALA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Several hundred people line up every morning, starting before dawn, on a grassy area outside Nairobi's largest hospital hoping to get the COVID-19 vaccine. Sometimes the line moves smoothly, while on other days, the staff tells them there's nothing available, and they should come back tomorrow.

Halfway around the world, at a church in Atlanta, two workers with plenty of vaccine doses waited hours Wednesday for anyone to show up, whiling away the time by listening to music from a laptop. Over a six-hour period, only one person came through the door.

The dramatic contrast highlights the vast disparity around the world. In richer countries, people can often pick and choose from multiple available vaccines, walk into a site near their homes and get a shot in minutes. Pop-up clinics, such as the one in Atlanta, bring vaccines into rural areas and urban neighborhoods, but it is common for them to get very few takers.

In the developing world, supply is limited and uncertain. Just over 3% of people across Africa have been fully vaccinated, and health officials and citizens often have little idea what will be available from one day to the next. More vaccines have been flowing in recent weeks, but the World Health Organization's director in Africa said Thursday that the continent will get 25% fewer doses than anticipated by the end of the year, in part because of the rollout of booster shots in wealthier counties such as the United States.

Bidian Okoth recalled spending more than three hours in line at a Nairobi hospital, only to be told to go home because there weren't enough doses. But a friend who traveled to the U.S. got a shot almost immediately after his arrival there with a vaccine of his choice, "like candy," he said.

"We're struggling with what time in the morning we need to wake up to get the first shot. Then you hear people choosing their vaccines. That's super, super excessive," he said.

Okoth said his uncle died from COVID-19 in June and had given up twice on getting vaccinated due to the length of the lines, even though he was eligible due to his age. The death jolted Okoth, a health advocate, into seeking a dose for himself.

He stopped at one hospital so often on his way to work that a doctor "got tired of seeing me" and told Okoth he would call him when doses were available. Late last month, after a new donation of vaccines arrived from Britain, he got his shot.

The disparity comes as the U.S. is moving closer to offering booster shots to large segments of the population even as it struggles to persuade Americans to get vaccinated in the first place. President Joe Biden on Thursday ordered sweeping new federal vaccine requirements for as many as 100 million Americans, including private-sector employees, as the country faces the surging COVID-19 delta variant.

About 53% of the U.S. population is vaccinated, and the country is averaging more than 150,000 new cases of COVID-19 a day, along with 1,500 deaths. Africa has had more than 7.9 million confirmed cases, including more than 200,000 deaths, and the highly infectious delta variant recently drove a surge in new cases as well.

The head of the WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, insisted Wednesday that rich countries with large supplies of coronavirus vaccines should hold off on offering booster shots through the end of the year and make the doses available to poorer countries.

John Nkengasong, director of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, told reporters Thursday that "we have not seen enough science" to drive decisions on when to administer booster shots.

"Without that, we are gambling," he said, and urged countries to send doses to countries facing "vaccine famine" instead.

In the U.S., vaccines are easy to find, but many people are hesitant to get them.

At the church in northwest Atlanta, a nonprofit group offered the Johnson & Johnson and Pfizer vaccines for free without an appointment from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. But site manager Riley Erickson spent much of the day waiting in an air-conditioned room full of empty chairs, though the group had reached out to neighbors and the church had advertised the location to its large congregation.

Erickson, with the disaster relief organization CORE, said the vaccination rate in the area was low, so he

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wasn't surprised by small turnout. The one person who showed up was a college student.

"When you put the effort into going into areas where there's less interest, that's kind of the result," he said. His takeaway, however, was that CORE needed to spend more time in the community.

A second vaccination site run by county officials — this one in downtown Atlanta — had a little more foot traffic around lunchtime, but not enough to cause even the slightest delay.

Margaret Herro, CORE's Georgia director, said the group has seen an uptick in vaccinations at its pop-up sites in recent weeks amid a COVID-19 surge fueled by the delta variant and the FDA's full approval of the Pfizer vaccine. It has administered more than 55,000 shots from late March through the end of August at hundreds of sites around the state, including schools and farmers' markets. It also has gone to meatpacking plants and other work locations, where turnout is better, and it plans to focus more on those places, Herro said.

"We definitely don't feel like it's time to let up yet," she said.

In Nairobi, Okoth believes there should be a global commitment to equity in the administration of vaccines so everyone has a basic level of immunity as quickly as possible.

"If everyone at least gets a first shot, I don't think anyone will care if others get even six booster shots," he said.

Thanawala reported from Atlanta.

From COVID to Ida: Louisiana's marginalized 'see no way out'

By AARON MORRISON Associated Press

CHALMETTE, La. (AP) — Darkness set in for Natasha Blunt well before Hurricane Ida knocked out power across Louisiana.

Months into the pandemic, she faced eviction from her New Orleans apartment. She lost her job at a banquet hall. She suffered two strokes. And she struggled to help her 5-year-old grandson keep up with schoolwork at home.

Like nearly a fifth of the state's population — disproportionately represented by Black residents and women — Blunt, 51, lives below the poverty line, and the economic fallout of the pandemic sent her to the brink. With the help of a legal aid group and grassroots donors, she moved to Chalmette, a few miles outside New Orleans, and tried to settle into a two-bedroom apartment. Using a cane and taking a slew of medications since her strokes, she was unable to return to work. But federal benefits kept food in the fridge for the most part.

Then came Hurricane Ida.

The storm ravaged Louisiana as the fifth-strongest hurricane to ever hit the U.S. mainland, wiping out the power grid before marching up the coast and sparking devastating flooding in the Northeast. Among survivors of the deadly storm, the toll has been deepest in many ways for people like Blunt — those who already lost livelihoods to the COVID-19 pandemic in a region of longstanding racial and social inequality. Advocates say the small wins they'd made for marginalized communities and people of color since the pandemic began have been quickly wiped out.

"The government is really disconnected from what it's like for people who have little to no safety net," said Maggie Harris, a documentarian and grassroots organizer who last year created a fundraiser for Blunt and other women economically devastated by the pandemic. "You marginalize people, you don't pay them enough, they have health problems and aren't insured, you offer little cash assistance or rent assistance, and you allow them to be evicted.

"The message that people get is their lives are expendable."

As Ida approached Louisiana, Blunt knew it was intensifying rapidly. She evacuated to a hotel in Lafayette, more than two hours west of her new home, a day ahead of landfall. But she could afford only a short stay, and the hotel was booked with other evacuees. She had to return to Chalmette, despite officials' warnings not to go back to hot, humid cities with boil-water advisories and no power.

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Her apartment was pitch black. Ida's Category 4 winds had blown in the windows of her upstairs bedroom. Her few possessions — beds, clothing, furniture — were waterlogged. She'd spent her last dollars getting to the hotel, with no federal aid to evacuate.

"It's like I've got to start all over again," Blunt said, sobbing as she surveyed the first floor of her apartment, where she sleeps now that the bedroom is uninhabitable. "Every time I get a step ahead, I get pushed back down. And I'm tired. I don't see no way out."

Now, Blunt faces eviction for the second time in a year. Her only hope, she said, is Social Security and other disability benefits. She applied before the storm, she said, but has yet to hear back — social safety net programs are often disrupted in the wake of disasters.

Blunt wants to find a new home, preferably far from the storm-battered Gulf Coast — a place where grandson Kamille can resume schooling without worrying about power and Internet outages. But she's far from optimistic.

"This is the end of the road; I can't go on much longer," she said. Kamille put down his kindergarten worksheet to gently rub his grandma's leg.

"Don't cry," he told her. She managed a tender reply: "Do your ABCs, baby."

Anti-poverty and housing advocates in Louisiana bemoan links between being Black or brown, living in impoverished areas, and being underserved by governmental disaster response. Available aid from anti-poverty programs often fails to meet the heightened needs of storm victims in states of emergency.

And that, the advocates say, is what happened during Ida. In Louisiana, where 17 storms that caused at least \$1 billion in damage have hit since 2000, nonprofits see some of the most dire need and the starkest divide along socioeconomic lines.

"One of the things that we get really frustrated about, in terms of the narrative, is people saying, 'Ugh, Louisiana is so resilient,'" said Ashley Shelton of the Power Coalition for Equality and Justice, a statewide nonprofit that provides resources and encourages civic participation in underserved communities of color.

"We don't want to be resilient forever," she said. "Yes, we're beautiful and resourceful people. But when you force people to live in a constant state of resilience, it's just oppression. Fix the systems that are structurally broken."

It doesn't help that Louisiana's poverty rate is higher than the national average, according to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey. High poverty makes the prospect of temporary or permanent relocation precarious for people who were already teetering on the edge before disaster struck, said Andreanecia Morris of HousingNOLA, a program of the Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance.

"Housing is a foundational issue for all of these catastrophes, whether that be COVID, economic crisis, criminal justice, or education," Morris said. "Our failure to address racial bias, gender bias and poverty bias in housing impedes all of those things. There is nowhere that is more clear than in our government's response to disasters. And this one is no different."

Less than a week after Ida hit, Morris spent a day canvassing areas of New Orleans where her organization helps the neediest cases. In the Lower Ninth Ward, a New Orleans neighborhood that suffered immensely after Hurricane Katrina, 57-year-old Lationa Kemp found herself cut off from most aid.

Kemp said she had been relying on neighbors with cars to get ice, hot meals and bottled water. To stay cool, Kemp left her front door open for fresh air. She'd gone days without power, and Ida had caused roof leaks and fence damage.

To Morris, the situation was urgent. Kemp had disputes with her landlord over the home's condition, and the threat of eviction loomed. The landlord listed on her eviction notice did not respond to AP's calls for comment.

Morris wants to get Kemp and her 25-year-old son, Alvin, moved elsewhere permanently. In the meantime, Morris suggested a cooling center.

"Thank you, baby, but I'm fine," Kemp told her, explaining that she'd rather stay in a dilapidated home — past experiences make her fear the shelter system. "I already told the Lord, I'm praying that when I leave out of here, I'm going to a better house. I'll have better income so I won't have to go through this

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anymore.”

The Biden administration set aside nearly \$50 billion for rental assistance during the pandemic, but the money has been slow to get out the door. Advocates in Louisiana say they hoped those COVID-19 funds could be transitioned for storm aid, too, but that it hasn't been so easy. And, for people like Blunt and Kemp, the technological savvy needed to apply online can be a hurdle.

Eventually, the Kemps will probably get the help they need, but it takes time, said Cynthia Wiggins, a tenant and property manager at New Orleans public housing development Guste Homes, one of just a few resident management corporations left in the U.S., where tenants share the responsibilities that landlords typically shoulder.

“There's nothing that we can do to get around the process,” Wiggins said. “We have the available units, but we paused processing applications when the storm hit.”

Like many in Louisiana, Blunt has survived her share of storms — starting with her birth, during the fallout of Hurricane Camille in 1969. As she tells it, her pregnant mother had been moved to a naval medical ship to give birth. Today, Blunt can chuckle over the coincidence of her grandson's name, Kamille.

“It's like the storms keep coming for me,” she said, laughing.

The memory of Katrina is scarier. Blunt evacuated to Alabama and then Chicago. When it was safe, she and Kamille's grandfather returned to their home in New Orleans' seventh ward to find floodwater damage. But even with the horror stories of Katrina, Blunt said, Ida has been worse for her.

“This here was my worst-ever life experience, coming back to this, coming back to darkness,” she said. “I'm mad enough, I'm sick and scared as it is. Now, I'm tossing and turning at night.”

It might be enough for the lifelong Louisiana resident to leave for good. As she finds herself trashing her storm-damaged belongings, she said she sees no way to find peace in the state.

She's not alone. Many people have fled the state after major storms, data show. In metro New Orleans, and even in Chalmette in particular, the U.S. Census Bureau recorded significant population loss from its 2000 to 2020 counts. After Katrina, in 2006, nearly 160,000 Louisiana residents in total moved to Texas, Georgia and Mississippi. Louisiana's population rebounded as people returned to rebuild, but it's been in decline again since 2016.

For families who stay in spite of natural disasters, it seems each new generation learns new lessons of survival, said Toya Lewis of Project Hustle, a New Orleans nonprofit that organizes Black and brown street vendors who work in the informal economies.

“No one was prepared to be without power in New Orleans for more than eight days,” Lewis said. “We're taking all of this lived experience and organizing to thrive. We must begin organizing around our survival.”

And Blunt knows that no matter where she ends up, she'll survive. Even in the darkness, she finds some light by helping her community — trying to secure a power source for a neighbor's breathing machine, sharing her car as a way for folks to charge cellphones. She tells herself: “I'm going to be OK. ... I do good. I don't hurt nobody. I'm still standing.”

There's solace in the glimmers of light, but she wants more — not just for her, but for her grandson. “I want us to go somewhere better,” Blunt said, helping Kamille with the TV remote, the power finally restored in their apartment.

“Somewhere I can be stable. I just want to be stable.”

AP writers Seth Borenstein in Kensington, Maryland, and Michael Schneider in Orlando, Florida, contributed to this report.

Morrison is a member of the AP's Race and Ethnicity team. Follow him on Twitter: <https://www.twitter.com/aaronlmorrison>.

With more doses, Uganda takes vaccination drive to markets

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By RODNEY MUHUMUZA Associated Press

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — At a taxi stand by a bustling market in Kampala, Uganda's capital, traders simply cross a road or two, get a shot in the arm and rush back to their work.

Until this week, vaccination centers were based mostly in hospitals in this East African country that faced a brutal COVID-19 surge earlier this year.

Now, more than a dozen tented sites have been set up in busy areas to make it easier to get inoculated in Kampala as health authorities team up with the Red Cross to administer more than 120,000 doses that will expire at the end of September.

"All of this we could have done earlier, but we were not assured of availability of vaccines," said Dr. Misaki Wayengera, who leads a team of scientists advising authorities on the pandemic response, speaking of vaccination spots in downtown areas. "Right now we are receiving more vaccines and we have to deploy them as much as possible."

In addition to the 128,000 AstraZeneca doses donated by Norway at the end of August, the United Kingdom last month donated nearly 300,000 doses. China recently donated 300,000 doses of its Sinovac vaccine, and on Monday a batch of 647,000 Moderna doses donated by the United States arrived in Uganda.

Suddenly Uganda must accelerate its vaccination drive. The country has sometimes struggled with hesitancy as some question the safety of the two-shot AstraZeneca vaccine, which is no longer in use in Norway because of concerns over unusual blood clots in a small number of people who received it.

Africa has fully vaccinated just 3.1% of its 1.3 billion people, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Public health officials across Africa have complained loudly of vaccine inequality and what they see as hoarding in some rich countries. Soon hundreds of millions of vaccine doses will be delivered to Africa through donations of excess doses by wealthy nations or purchases by the African Union.

Africa is aiming to vaccinate 60% of the continent's population by the end of 2022, a steep target given the global demand for doses. The African Union, representing the continent's 54 countries, has ordered 400 million Johnson & Johnson doses, but the distribution of those doses will be spread out over 12 months because there simply isn't enough supply.

COVAX, the U.N.-backed program which aims to get vaccines to the neediest people in the world, said this week that its efforts continue "to be hampered by export bans, the prioritization of bilateral deals by manufacturers and countries, ongoing challenges in scaling up production by some key producers, and delays in filing for regulatory approval."

Uganda, a country of more than 44 million people, has recorded more than 120,000 cases of COVID-19, including just over 3,000 deaths, according to official figures. The country has given 1.65 million shots, but only about 400,000 people have received two doses, according to Wayengera. Uganda's target is to fully vaccinate up to 5 million of the most vulnerable, including nurses and teachers, as soon as possible.

At the Red Cross tent in downtown Kampala, demand for the jabs was high. By late afternoon only 30 of 150 doses remained, and some who arrived later were told to come back the next day.

"I came here on a sure deal, but it hasn't happened," said trader Sulaiman Mivule after a nurse told him he was too late for a shot that day. "I will come back tomorrow. It's easy for me here because I work in this area."

Asked why he was so eager to get his first shot, he said, "They are telling us that there could be a third wave. If it comes when we are very vaccinated, maybe it will not hurt us so much. Prevention is better than cure."

Mivule and others who spoke to the AP said they didn't want to go to vaccination sites at hospitals because of they expected to find crowds there.

Bernard Ssematya said he had been driving by when he spotted the Red Cross's white tent and went in for a jab on the spur of the moment. Afterward, he texted his friends about the opportunity.

"I was getting demoralized by going to health centers," he said. "You see a lot of people there and you don't even want to try to enter."

Yet, despite enthusiasm among many, some still walked away without getting a shot when they were

told their preferred vaccine was not yet available.

The one-shot J&J vaccine, still unavailable in Uganda, is frequently asked for, said Jacinta Twinomujuni, a nurse with the Kampala Capital City Authority who monitored the scene.

"I tell them, of course, that we don't have it," she said. "And they say, 'Okay, let's wait for it.'"

Pope's Central Europe visit tests his health and diplomacy

By NICOLE WINFIELD and JUSTIN SPIKE Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis is making his first foreign trip since undergoing intestinal surgery in July, a four-day visit to Central Europe that will not only test his health but also provide one of the most awkward moments of his papacy — a meeting with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, the sort of populist, right-wing leader Francis typically scorns.

Francis is only spending seven hours in Budapest on Sunday before moving on to a three-day, hop-scotch tour of neighboring Slovakia. The lopsided itinerary suggests that Francis wanted to avoid giving Orban the bragging rights, political boost and photo opportunities that come with hosting a pope for a proper state visit.

Trip organizers have insisted Francis isn't snubbing Hungary, noting that the Hungarian church and state only invited him to close out an international conference on the Eucharist on Sunday. "If I am only invited to dinner, I cannot spend the night," said the Rev. Kornel Fabry, secretary general of the Eucharist conference.

But the message being sent is clear, and Francis even hammered home the point in a recent interview with the COPE broadcaster of the Spanish bishops' conference. In the interview last week, Francis said he didn't even know if he'd meet with Orban while in Budapest. Vatican officials have said he will, of course, meet with the prime minister along with the Hungarian president in a scheduled meeting.

Botond Feledy, policy expert for the Institute of Social Reflection, a Hungarian Jesuit organization, said it was clear Francis and Orban disagree on some fundamental issues — migration topping the list — but said the aim is not to escalate differences or conflicts.

"It is quite clear that the 30 minutes that Pope Francis has in his program to meet with the head of state, the head of government and the bishop is a very, very short time," Feledy said in an interview. "This shows that he is not really coming for a political visit, but to give a Mass at the congress after having a protocol greeting with the Hungarian politicians."

Francis has long expressed solidarity with migrants and refugees — he once brought a dozen Syrian Muslim refugees home with him during a trip to a refugee camp in Greece — and criticized what he called "national populism" advanced by governments like Hungary's.

Orban is known for his hard-line stance against immigration and frequently depicts his government as a defender of "Christian civilization" in Europe and a bulwark against migration from Muslim-majority countries. In 2015, he rejected proposals to settle refugees from the Middle East and Africa in Hungary and erected a fence along Hungary's southern border to keep out EU asylum-seekers.

Asked in 2016 about Donald Trump's border wall with Mexico, Francis famously quipped that anyone who builds a border wall is "not Christian."

The start of the closed-door meeting will not be filmed live — one of the few moments of interest that the pope will be off-camera during the trip. It's a visit that is being closely watched given it marks Francis' first big and prolonged public outing since he underwent scheduled surgery in July for what the Vatican said was a severe narrowing of his large intestine.

Francis, 84, had 33 centimeters (13 inches) of his colon removed and spent 10 days in the hospital recovering. He has recently resumed holding public and private audiences and says he is now living a "totally normal life." But he is still on medication and cannot stand for long periods of time.

Papal trips are grueling under ordinary circumstances, with back-to-back meetings, multiple transfers and lengthy liturgical services, all covered around-the-clock by live television cameras. After his last one — a trip to Iraq in March before the surgery — Francis admitted he might have to slow down, given his age and fatigue.

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But the Hungary-Slovakia program bears no evidence of an aging pope or of one the mend and in fact harks back to the frenzied scheduling that was the hallmark of St. John Paul II's many foreign trips. Francis is due to deliver 12 speeches over four days, kicking off with a 6 a.m. flight to Budapest on Sunday and ending the day in the Slovakian capital, Bratislava, after nine separate events.

"Maybe in this first trip I should be more careful, because one has to recover completely," Francis said in the COPE interview. "But in the end it will be the same as the others, you will see."

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said no extra health care measures were being taken for the trip, "just the usual caution." Francis' personal doctor and nurses would be traveling with him in the Vatican delegation, as usual, he said.

Bruni, too, stressed that the main focus of the Hungary leg of the trip was spiritual and noted that Francis has made other quick trips for specific events without fulfilling the protocol trappings of a proper state visit. The pope went to Strasbourg, France, on a one-day visit in 2014 to deliver speeches at the European Parliament and Council of Europe, but didn't stay.

After the brief stop in Budapest, Francis heads to Slovakia where the highlight of the trip will be his visit Tuesday with members of the country's Roma minority, who were persecuted during World War II and continue to face racism, discrimination and abject poverty today.

The "pope of the peripheries" has long sought to visit the most marginal during his foreign trips, insisting on stops at slums, prisons or drug rehabilitation centers. His visit to the Lunik IX settlement in Slovakia's second city, Kosice, is in keeping with that: Parts of the settlement don't have running water, gas or electricity.

Francis will also meet with Slovakia's Jewish community and hear the testimony of a Holocaust survivor before he finishes up the visit with a Mass on Wednesday in Sastin, the site of an annual pilgrimage each Sept. 15 to venerate the patron of Slovakia, Our Lady of Sorrows.

Spike reported from Budapest, Hungary.

US pulls missile defenses in Saudi Arabia amid Yemen attacks

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The U.S. has removed its most advanced missile defense system and Patriot batteries from Saudi Arabia in recent weeks, even as the kingdom faced continued air attacks from Yemen's Houthi rebels, satellite photos analyzed by The Associated Press show.

The redeployment of the defenses from Prince Sultan Air Base outside of Riyadh came as America's Gulf Arab allies nervously watched the chaotic withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, including their last-minute evacuations from Kabul's besieged international airport.

While tens of thousands of American forces remain across the Arabian Peninsula as a counterweight to Iran, Gulf Arab nations worry about the U.S.'s future plans as its military perceives a growing threat in Asia that requires those missile defenses. Tensions remain high as negotiations appear stalled in Vienna over Iran's collapsed nuclear deal with world powers, raising the danger of future confrontations in the region.

"Perceptions matter whether or not they're rooted in a cold, cold reality. And the perception is very clear that the U.S. is not as committed to the Gulf as it used to be in the views of many people in decision-making authority in the region," said Kristian Ulrichsen, a research fellow at the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University.

"From the Saudi point of view, they now see Obama, Trump and Biden — three successive presidents — taking decisions that signify to some extent an abandonment."

Prince Sultan Air Base, some 115 kilometers (70 miles) southeast of Riyadh, has hosted several thousand U.S. troops since a 2019 missile-and-drone attack on the heart of the kingdom's oil production. That attack, though claimed by Yemen's Houthi rebels, appears instead to have been carried out by Iran, according to experts and physical debris left behind. Tehran has denied launching the attack, though a drill in January saw Iranian paramilitary forces use similar drones.

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Just southwest of the air base's runway, a 1-square-kilometer (third-of-a-square-mile) area set off by an earthen berm saw American forces station Patriot missile batteries, as well as one advanced Terminal High Altitude Area Defense unit, according to satellite images from Planet Labs Inc. A THAAD can destroy ballistic missiles at a higher altitude than Patriots.

A satellite image seen by the AP in late August showed some of the batteries removed from the area, though activity and vehicles still could be seen there. A high-resolution Planet Lab satellite picture taken Friday showed the batteries' pads at the site empty, with no visible activity.

A redeployment of the missiles had been rumored for months, in part due to a desire to face what American officials see as the looming "great powers conflict" with China and Russia. However, the withdrawal came just as a Houthi drone attack on Saudi Arabia wounded eight people and damaged a commercial jetliner at the kingdom's airport in Abha. The kingdom has been locked in a stalemate war with the Houthis since March 2015.

Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby acknowledged "the redeployment of certain air defense assets" after receiving questions from the AP. He said the U.S. maintained a "broad and deep" commitment to its Mideast allies.

"The Defense Department continues to maintain tens of thousands of forces and a robust force posture in the Middle East representing some of our most advanced air power and maritime capabilities, in support of U.S. national interests and our regional partnerships," Kirby said.

In a statement to the AP, the Saudi Defense Ministry described the kingdom's relationship with the U.S. as "strong, longstanding and historic" even while acknowledging the withdrawal of the American missile defense systems. It said the Saudi military "is capable of defending its lands, seas and airspace, and protecting its people."

"The redeployment of some defense capabilities of the friendly United States of America from the region is carried out through common understanding and realignment of defense strategies as an attribute of operational deployment and disposition," the statement said.

Despite those assurances, Saudi Prince Turki al-Faisal, the kingdom's former intelligence chief whose public remarks often track with the thoughts of its Al Saud ruling family, has linked the Patriot missile deployments directly to America's relationship to Riyadh.

"I think we need to be reassured about American commitment," the prince told CNBC in an interview aired this week. "That looks like, for example, not withdrawing Patriot missiles from Saudi Arabia at a time when Saudi Arabia is the victim of missile attacks and drone attacks — not just from Yemen, but from Iran."

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, on a tour of the Mideast in recent days, had been slated to go to Saudi Arabia but the trip was canceled due to what American officials referred to as scheduling problems. Saudi Arabia declined to discuss why Austin's trip didn't happen after the withdrawal of the missile defenses.

Saudi Arabia maintains its own Patriot missile batteries and typically fires two missiles at an incoming target. That's become an expensive proposition amid the Houthi campaign, as each Patriot missile costs more than \$3 million. The kingdom also claims to intercept nearly every missile and drone launched at the kingdom, an incredibly high success rate previously questioned by experts.

While Greece agreed in April to lend a Patriot missile battery to Saudi Arabia, the timing of the U.S. withdrawals comes amid wider uncertainty over the American posture in the region. Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab countries have renewed diplomacy with Iran as a hedge.

"I think we saw in Biden's statements on Afghanistan, the way he said things that he's clearly going to put U.S. interests first and obviously that came as quite a disappointment to partners and allies around the world who maybe hoped for something different after Trump," said Ulrichsen, the research fellow. "He sounds quite similar to an 'America First' approach, just sort of a different tone."

Associated Press writers Lolita C. Baldor in Washington and Aya Batrawy contributed to this report.

Follow Jon Gambrell on Twitter at www.twitter.com/jongambrellAP.

For World Trade Center cook, surviving 9/11 led to activism

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Twenty years after 9/11, Sekou Siby still feels the pangs of survivor's guilt. A cook and dishwasher at the World Trade Center's Windows on the World restaurant, Siby had swapped shifts that day with a co-worker who ended up dying in the terrorist attacks.

The tragedy sent Siby on a path he had never imagined he would take when he emigrated from the Ivory Coast in 1996: He made it his mission to advocate for higher pay and better working conditions for restaurant workers — a role that has gained importance as the restaurant industry has struggled more than most in the grip of the viral pandemic.

Siby, 56, is now the president of Restaurant Opportunities Center United, a nationwide advocacy group that emerged from the attacks.

The pandemic's calamitous impact on restaurant workers has raised the group's profile since last year's widespread shutdowns initially cost 6 million restaurant workers — nearly half the industry's total — their jobs. ROC United, using donated funds from foundations, responded by distributing \$10 million in cash payments to about 5,000 laid-off workers.

The money was a financial life-saver for people like Jazz Salm, 37, who lost her server job at a Sunrise, Florida, Chili's that closed in March 2020 when the pandemic erupted. The \$225 she received from ROC United enabled her to pay her mobile phone bill — her only connection to the internet, which she needed to file for unemployment aid.

Compounding her difficulties, Florida's unemployment aid system, like other states', was overwhelmed at the time.

"They were actually the first people to help me out," Salm said. "It was a month before I saw unemployment. They really saved my rear end."

ROC United helped keep its members informed during last year's debates over stimulus checks, supplemental unemployment aid, and other financial support. Salm, along with about 11,000 others, participated in a Facebook Live event with Sen. Elizabeth Warren in May 2020 discussing the Massachusetts Democrat's "Essential Workers Bill of Rights" that called for hazard pay, protective gear, and paid leave for essential workers, which includes food service workers.

The group has also been active in seeking changes in social policies, having marched on behalf of a higher minimum wage and for the elimination of the federal tipped minimum wage for restaurant waiters, which has remained \$2.13 for 30 years.

All the while, Siby has been driven by the memories of his 73 Windows on the World co-workers, many of them fellow immigrants, who died in the 9/11 attacks.

"Without 9/11, there wouldn't have been a ROC United," he said. "The fact that I was able to turn whatever anger I had to support other people who were more desperate than me, is what allowed me to turn the corner."

Windows on the World was a unionized workplace, and after the 9/11 attacks, its union donated money to an informal group that helped former employees who were out of work. In April 2002, that organization became ROC United, with Siby as its first member. He later worked as a community organizer for the organization, using his fluency in French and Spanish to connect with immigrants in New York City, before becoming executive director in 2017, and CEO last year.

Siby still keeps photos of co-workers he lost that day. One of them shows Abdoul Karim Troare, a fellow immigrant from Ivory Coast who had been Siby's roommate when he arrived in the United States in 1996.

Troare helped Siby find his job as a cook and dishwasher at Windows on the World. And it was Troare's wife, Hadidjatou Karamoko, who first alerted Siby to the Sept. 11 attacks. She called to say that Troare wasn't answering his phone.

Troare had left that morning at 4 a.m. for his other job, delivering newspapers, before heading to the Twin Towers at 7:30 that morning.

"I did not know that it was the last time I was going to see him and hear his voice," she said Wednesday

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in a virtual call organized by ROC, her first public comments about her husband.

Another photo captures Siby and Isidro Ottenwalder, who had just obtained his citizenship six months before the attacks, allowing him to travel to his native Dominican Republic to marry before returning to New York City.

And then there was Moises Rivas, who had asked Siby take his Sunday shift at Windows on the World. Rivas, 29, who was performing with his band that Saturday night, didn't want to work an early morning shift, which often began at 5 am. In return, he offered to work Siby's shift that Tuesday, Sept. 11. An immigrant from Ecuador, he left behind a wife and two children.

In the years that followed 9/11, ROC United began engaging with victims of other tragedies. After Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans in 2005, the group established its first chapter outside New York City. It now has 59 employees in 11 cities, including Los Angeles, Chicago and Minneapolis.

Just last month, Minnesota's attorney general, Keith Ellison, announced a \$230,000 settlement with a restaurant chain, the Bartmann Group, that hadn't paid final paychecks owed to workers who had been laid off, as well as overtime. ROC United had helped the workers bring the complaint and demonstrated outside the one of the chain's restaurants.

Still, the coronavirus pandemic represents a threat of an altogether different magnitude for U.S. restaurant workers. The industry still employs roughly 1 million fewer people than before the virus hammered the U.S. economy in the spring of 2020.

Some restaurant owners are experimenting with software and automation that can replace waiters and cashiers. "Ghost kitchens," which cook food in central locations for restaurants that deliver food but don't have actual storefronts, function with far fewer employees than traditional restaurants. They began before the pandemic but have spread more widely since.

Siby, though, retains an optimistic outlook for the industry. Automation may reshuffle some jobs, he says, but will never fully replace the ability of humans to provide top-notch restaurant service. And ghost kitchens can provide new opportunities for entrepreneurs as well as chefs and delivery workers.

Siby didn't want to work in restaurants after 9/11. The sights and smells of a commercial kitchen brought back too many painful memories. But now his oldest daughter, Fanta, born three weeks after the attacks, is in her third year of nursing school, and works at Starbucks after a previous job at Chipotle.

Asked what he would say to those struggling with the pandemic, Siby said: "At the time when you think you've reached a rock bottom in your life, there is always a light to look forward to. This is where I am, compared to 20 years ago. The light is out there, you just need to seek it."

Biden's vaccine rules ignite instant, hot GOP opposition

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's aggressive push to require millions of U.S. workers to get vaccinated against the coronavirus is running into a wall of resistance from Republican leaders threatening everything from lawsuits to civil disobedience, plunging the country deeper into culture wars that have festered since the onset of the pandemic.

In South Carolina, Gov. Henry McMaster says he will fight "to the gates of hell to protect the liberty and livelihood of every South Carolinian." South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a potential 2024 presidential candidate, says she is preparing a lawsuit. And J.D. Vance, a conservative running for a U.S. Senate seat in Ohio, is calling on businesses to ignore mandates he describes as Washington's "attempt to bully and coerce citizens."

"Only mass civil disobedience will save us from Joe Biden's naked authoritarianism," Vance says.

Biden is hardly backing down. In a visit to a school Friday, he accused the governors of being "cavalier" with the health of young Americans, and when asked about foes who would file legal challenges, he retorted, "Have at it."

The opposition follows Biden's announcement Thursday of a major plan to tame the coronavirus as the highly contagious Delta variant drives 1,500 deaths and 150,000 cases a day. Biden is mandating that all employers with more than 100 workers require their employees to be vaccinated or test for the virus

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weekly, affecting about 80 million Americans. Another 17 million workers at health facilities that receive federal Medicare or Medicaid also will have to be vaccinated, as will all employees of the executive branch and contractors who do business with the federal government.

The move brought Republican outrage from state capitals, Congress and the campaign trail, including from many who have supported vaccinations and have urged their constituents to take the shots.

"The vaccine itself is life-saving, but this unconstitutional move is terrifying," tweeted Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves.

Texas Rep. Dan Crenshaw, who has promoted the vaccines' safety to his constituents, said, "The right path is built upon explaining, educating and building trust, including explaining the risks/benefits/pros/cons in an honest way so a person can make their own decision."

More than 208 million Americans have received at least one vaccine dose, but some 80 million remain unvaccinated, driving infections. There are now about 300% more new daily COVID-19 infections, about two-and-a-half times the hospitalizations and nearly twice the number of deaths as at the same time last year.

While breakthrough infections do happen among the vaccinated, those cases tend to be far less severe, with the vast majority of deaths and serious illnesses occurring among those who have not received shots.

The pandemic is worsening in many of the states where governors are most loudly protesting the president's actions. South Carolina, for example, is averaging more than 5,000 new cases per day and has the nation's second-highest infection rate. A hospital system there started canceling elective surgeries this week to free staff to help with a crush of COVID-19 patients.

In a section of Idaho, overwhelmed hospitals have implemented new crisis standards to ration care for patients. And in Georgia, hospitals have been turning away ambulances bringing emergency or ICU patients.

"I am so disappointed that particularly some Republican governors have been so cavalier with the health of these kids, so cavalier with the health of their communities," Biden said during his school visit. "This isn't a game."

But Republicans and some union officials say the president is overreaching his constitutional authority. They take issue, in particular, with the idea that millions could lose their jobs if they refuse to take the shots.

"That's a ridiculous choice," said Mississippi Gov. Reeves.

Biden, however, says he's doing what needs to be done to fight resistance that has continued despite months of encouragement and incentives. In his White House speech announcing the new measures, he was visibly frustrated, criticizing the remaining holdouts and accusing some elected officials of "actively working to undermine the fight against COVID-19."

"Instead of encouraging people to get vaccinated and mask up, they're ordering mobile morgues for the unvaccinated dying from COVID in their communities," he said.

Court fights are sure to follow in a number of states.

Vaccine mandates are supported by a small majority of Americans. An August poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found majorities support requiring vaccinations for health care workers, teachers at K-12 schools and public-facing workers like those who work in restaurants and stores. Overall, 55% back vaccine mandates for government workers. And about half of working adults favor vaccine mandates at their own workplaces.

But the numbers are deeply polarized, with Democrats far more likely to support mandates than Republicans, who have also been less supportive when it comes to getting shots themselves.

While demand for vaccinations has risen over the summer, a persistent number of Americans have said they have no intention of ever receiving them.

GOP pollster Frank Luntz, who has held focus groups and worked with the Biden administration to try to combat vaccine hesitance, says that, without further measures, Biden is likely to see vaccinations top out at about 75% of the population.

"The only way to exceed that, which he needs to for herd immunity, is to mandate it," Luntz said. "It will make a lot of people angry and even more resistant, but those who are simply hesitant will act now."

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He's done the best he can under the circumstances."

Still, many Republicans are unmoving and unforgiving, especially those who are running for office and see the issue as one that could motivate Republican voters to turn out in next year's midterm elections.

Mike Gibbons, who is running for the U.S. Senate in Ohio, accused "Joe Biden and his Big Brother administration" of having "crossed into authoritarian territory."

"The American people have a right to assess the risks and benefits of the vaccine and make the decision on what is best for themselves and their families," he said. "That decision should be made by doctors and the individual, not the government."

With the midterms coming, Drew McKissick, South Carolina's GOP chairman, says he imagines Democrats in his state being tied to their party's "radical liberal" policies.

"South Carolinians don't take kindly to mandates. They never have," McKissick said, arguing the national political tenor is "going to put (Democrats) more in a corner."

But Steve Schale, a Democratic strategist who leads the pro-Biden super PAC Unite the Country, which has also done polling showing support for mandates, said he's not especially concerned about potential political backlash. He argued those who are most likely to be angered by the move are probably already Biden critics.

"Of all the things I worry about in the midterms," he said, "that doesn't scare me."

White House spokesperson Jen Psaki also dismissed the blowback.

"Yes, we do see some loud vocal opponents of what the president announced yesterday. That's not a surprise. It's unfortunate, it's disappointing, it's sad because, ultimately, these steps will save lives," she said, "but we remain confident in our ability to move the agenda forward."

___ Associated Press writers Meg Kinnard in Houston, Leah Willingham in Jackson, Mississippi, and Mary Clare Jalonick, Hannah Fingerhut, Alexandra Jaffe and Zeke Miller in Washington contributed to this report.

1 to go: Djokovic into US Open final, nears year Grand Slam

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — If Novak Djokovic does complete the first calendar-year Grand Slam for a man since 1969 — and he is headed to the U.S. Open final, just one victory away — he, and everyone else, will remember one particularly pivotal, and epic, game along the way.

It came at the conclusion of the third set of what eventually became a 4-6, 6-2, 6-4, 4-6, 6-2 victory over Tokyo Olympics gold medalist Alexander Zverev in the semifinals at Flushing Meadows on Friday night, making Djokovic 27-0 in major championships this season.

Beating No. 2 Daniil Medvedev on Sunday for the title will allow Djokovic to secure two significant milestones. He would add the 2021 U.S. Open trophy to those he won at the Australian Open in February, French Open in June and Wimbledon in July. And the 34-year-old from Serbia would collect his 21st Slam title in all, breaking the men's career mark he currently shares with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal.

"There's only one match left. ... All in. Let's do it," Djokovic said, spreading his arms wide, in an on-court interview. "I'm going to put my heart and my soul and my body and my head into that one. I'm going to treat the next match like it is the last match of my career."

That key game against Zverev featured one extended exchange after another, including a 53-shot, minute-plus point that was the longest of the tournament and actually was lost by Djokovic. Zverev delivered a forehand winner, then hunched over with his hands on his knees. Djokovic went to grab a towel. Both men were breathing heavily as most of Arthur Ashe Stadium's 21,139 spectators rose in unison on a cool, crisp evening.

But that one, tiny outcome didn't matter. Never seems to with Djokovic, especially in best-of-five-set matches on his sport's most prestigious stages. As usual, he used his superb returning and never-take-a-rest defense to wear down Zverev.

"I'm proud of the fight that I delivered," Djokovic said.

So, yes, Djokovic lost that point — which was preceded by others lasting 13, 19, 22 and 31 shots, and

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followed by one that went 16 — but he won that game, and that set with it. Just as he had lost the first set about 1 1/2 hours earlier but turned things around, with the help of a dip in level from the fourth-seeded Zverev. And just as, later, Djokovic lost the fourth set but immediately rebounded and was nearly untouchable while going ahead 5-0 in the fifth then held on.

Djokovic, who has spent more weeks at No. 1 in the ATP rankings than anyone, figures out what is required to emerge on top and does it. In each of his past four matches — and 10 in all at the Slams this year — he trailed by a set and won.

He equaled Federer by getting to a 31st career Slam final; Djokovic's total now includes a record nine in New York, where he has won three championships.

It will be Slam final No. 3 for Medvedev, a 25-year-old from Russia, who eliminated 12th-seeded Felix Auger-Aliassime of Canada 6-4, 7-5, 6-2 in the afternoon. Medvedev was defeated by Djokovic in this year's Australian Open final and by Nadal in the 2019 U.S. Open final.

"The more you lose something, the more you want to win it. The more you want to gain it and take it," said Medvedev, who has lost only one set over the past two weeks. "I lost two finals. I want to win the third one."

Djokovic is trying to go 4 for 4 at the majors over the course of one season, something last done in men's tennis by Rod Laver 52 years ago. It was also done by Laver in 1962 and Don Budge in 1938. Three women have completed what's known as a true Grand Slam, most recently Steffi Graf in 1988. Serena Williams' attempt in 2015 ended at the U.S. Open with a semifinal loss to Roberta Vinci.

"I'll be giving it all I possibly got in the tank to win this match. I'm focusing on recovery, recalibrating all the systems, basically, for Sunday," Djokovic said. "I'm not going to waste time or energy on anything that can just be a distraction and deplete me from the vital energy that I need."

As Friday night's semifinal began, the 81-year-old Laver was seated front and center behind a baseline in the President's Box at Ashe.

A year ago in New York, when fans were banned because of the coronavirus pandemic, Zverev came oh-so-close to collecting his first major, taking a two-set lead and getting within two points of a championship before frittering it all away and losing to Dominic Thiem in a fifth-set tiebreaker.

Zverev came into Friday on a 16-match winning streak, a run that includes beating Djokovic in the Summer Games semifinals on July 30. That was in a best-of-three-sets format, though, which changes everything when it comes to Djokovic. He is now 36-10 in matches that go five sets.

Here's the thing about Djokovic, who occasionally rubbed his lower back with his left hand or hit his legs with his racket: Whatever the outward signs seem to say, he never stresses and he waits for the other guy to slip.

"It's kind of a hurricane, a tornado, of emotions that you're going through in a sequence of one set or even one point. You are by yourself on the court, so there is no escape," Djokovic said. "You've got to find a way."

He usually does.

"Mentally, in the most important moments," Zverev said after his 3 1/2-hour loss, "I would rather play against anybody but him."

Against Zverev, things really came alive six games and 20 minutes in, thanks to a terrific 24-stroke point in which Djokovic tried a drop shot. Zverev got to it, replied at a seemingly impossible angle and — after Djokovic sprinted wide of the doubles alley and stretched to retrieve that, sneakers squeaking all the way — came up with a winner.

The crowd went wild. Zverev raised his right hand and wagged his fingers: "Louder!" Soon enough, Djokovic was shaking a ball off his frame and into the seats, and the set was Zverev's.

Zverev went from six unforced errors in that set to 13 in the second, and the match was even.

In the third, some loose play by Djokovic, and a backhand passing winner by Zverev, created a pair of break points. But Djokovic saved them and held to 3-2 with a forehand that clipped the baseline.

Zverev put a hand on his hip, disagreeing that the ball was in, but there is no recourse at the U.S. Open

this year: All rulings come via electronic line-calling and can't be disputed. There are no line judges to doubt or to argue with.

Last year, there were, and Djokovic was disqualified from Flushing Meadows in the fourth round when a ball he hit after losing a game inadvertently struck a line judge in the throat. At the following major tournament, the pandemic-delayed French Open, Djokovic lost in the final to Nadal.

Since then, there have been deficits in Grand Slam matches for Djokovic, but no defeats.

"It's great for the sport," Zverev said about Djokovic's pursuit. "Nobody thought that anybody would do it again. ... I do believe that he will do it."

More AP tennis: <https://apnews.com/hub/tennis> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Biden's vaccine rules to set off barrage of legal challenges

By ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's sweeping new vaccine requirements have Republican governors threatening lawsuits. His unapologetic response: "Have at it."

The administration is gearing up for another major clash between federal and state rule. But while many details about the rules remain unknown, Biden appears to be on firm legal ground to issue the directive in the name of protecting employee safety, according to several experts interviewed by The Associated Press.

"My bet is that with respect to that statutory authority, they're on pretty strong footing given the evidence strongly suggesting ... the degree of risk that (unvaccinated individuals) pose, not only to themselves but also unto others," said University of Connecticut law professor Sachin Pandya.

Republicans swiftly denounced the mandate that could impact 100 million Americans as government overreach and vowed to sue, and private employers who resist the requirements may do so as well. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott called it an "assault on private businesses" while Gov. Henry McMaster promised to "fight them to the gates of hell to protect the liberty and livelihood of every South Carolinian." The Republican National Committee has also said it will sue the administration "to protect Americans and their liberties."

Such cases could present another clash between state and federal authority at a time when Biden's Justice Department is already suing Texas over its new state law that bans most abortions, arguing that it was enacted "in open defiance of the Constitution."

The White House is gearing up for legal challenges and believes that even if some of the mandates are tossed out, millions of Americans will get a shot because of the new requirements — saving lives and preventing the spread of the virus.

Biden is putting enforcement in the hands of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which is drafting a rule "over the coming weeks," Jeffrey Zients, the White House coronavirus response coordinator, said Friday. He warned that "if a workplace refuses to follow the standard, the OSHA fines could be quite significant."

Courts have upheld vaccination requirements as a condition of employment, both before the pandemic — in challenges brought by health care workers — and since the coronavirus outbreak, said Lindsay Wiley, director of the Health Law and Policy Program at American University Washington College of Law.

Where Biden's vaccine requirements could be more open to attack is over questions of whether the administration followed the proper process to implement them, she said.

"The argument that mandatory vaccination impermissibly infringes on bodily autonomy or medical decision making, those arguments have not been successful and I don't expect that to change," Wiley said. "I think the challenges that are harder to predict the outcome of are going to be the ones that are really sort of the boring challenges about whether they followed the right process."

Emergency temporary standards — under which the rules are being implemented on a fast track — have been particularly vulnerable to challenges, Wiley said. But the risks presented by the coronavirus and the existence of a declared public health emergency could put this one "on stronger footing than any other ones past administrations have tried to impose that have been challenged in court," she said.

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Indeed, the question of whether the mandate is legally sound is separate from whether it will be upheld by judges, including by a conservative-majority Supreme Court which has trended toward generous interpretations of religious freedom and may be looking to ensure that any mandate sufficiently takes faith-based objections into account.

Vaccination "has become politicized and there are many Republican district judges who might be hostile to the regulation for political reasons," said Michael Harper, a Boston University law professor.

"I could imagine an unfortunate opinion that attempted to justify this political stance by rejecting the use of OSHA against infectious disease rather than against hazards intrinsic to the workplace," Harper wrote in an email.

The expansive rules mandate that all employers with more than 100 workers require them to be vaccinated or test for the virus weekly, affecting about 80 million Americans. And the roughly 17 million workers at health facilities that receive federal Medicare or Medicaid also will have to be fully vaccinated.

Biden is also requiring vaccination for employees of the executive branch and contractors who do business with the federal government — with no option to test out. That covers several million more workers.

Republican-dominated Montana stands alone in having a state law on the books that directly contradicts the new federal mandate. The state passed a law earlier this year making it illegal for private employers to require vaccines as a condition for employment.

But University of Montana constitutional law professor Anthony Johnstone said the federal rules would trump the state law. That means larger Montana businesses that previously couldn't require their employees to get vaccinated will now likely be required to, including hospitals that are some of the largest employers in the sparsely populated state.

Given that the rules are still being drafted and haven't been released, experts say the devil is in the details. It remains to be seen exactly what the rule will require employers to do or not do, and how it accounts for things such as other rights that unvaccinated employees may assert, such as the right to a disability accommodation, Pandya said.

For example — with the growing number of fully remote businesses and workers — if the rules are written to include people who don't have workplace exposure, "there certainly is room for an issue there," said Erika Todd, an employment attorney with Sullivan & Worcester in Boston.

Charles Craver, a labor and employment law professor at George Washington University, said the mandate presented a "close question" legally. But he said the Biden administration did have a legitimate argument that such a requirement was necessary for employers to protect the safety of workers, customers and members of the public.

The thornier question, though, is how employers — and courts — will sort through requests for accommodations for employees on religious or other grounds.

Though such accommodations may include having an employee work from home, "you can have a situation where someone has to be present and you can't provide an accommodation because of the danger involved," he added.

"I would not be a betting person if this went up before the Supreme Court," Craver said. "I could even picture the court divided 5-4, and I wouldn't bet which way it would go."

Richer reported from Boston. Reporter Iris Samuels contributed to this report from Helena, Montana. Samuels is a corps member for The Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

Unions split on vaccine mandates, complicating Biden push

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

The National Nurses Union applauded President Joe Biden's proposal to require that companies with more than 100 employees vaccinate their work force. The American Federation of Teachers once said vaccine

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mandates weren't necessary, but now embraces them. In Oregon, police and firefighter unions are suing to block a mask mandate for state workers.

The labor movement is torn over vaccine requirements — much like the country as a whole — wanting to both support its political ally in Biden and protect its members against infection but also not wanting to trample their workers' rights.

"Labor unions are a microcosm of the society we live in," said Patricia Campos-Medina, executive director of Cornell University's The Worker Institute. "The same political divide we have right now exists within the rank and file of unions."

That divide complicates matters for Biden as he tries to get the delta variant under control. Unions are a key part of the Democratic Party, and Biden has embraced them to burnish his blue-collar, middle-class image. Dissent in Biden's own coalition may make it especially hard for him to implement new vaccination requirements. Some unions representing federal workers already objected to his push for inoculation among the U.S. government workforce, saying such matters involving new workplace requirements and discipline need to be negotiated at the bargaining table.

In a sign of the importance of the issue to the Biden administration, the White House reached out to union presidents before Biden announced his new policy Thursday and will continue to check in with labor leaders, said an administration official, who insisted on anonymity to discuss forthcoming plans.

Biden will require companies with more than 100 workers to give their employees shots or test them weekly. He will also mandate shots for executive branch workers and federal contractors with no testing opt-out. The new requirements could cover 100 million Americans.

Momentum seems to be on the side of mandates. The AFL-CIO, the umbrella organization over much of the country's unions, praised mandates and Biden's plan in a statement released Friday. "The resurgence of COVID-19 requires swift and immediate action, and we commend President Biden for taking additional steps to help put an end to this crisis. Everyone should be vaccinated — as one step in stopping the pandemic," the organization's president, Liz Shuler, said in the statement.

The AFT two weeks ago mandated that its employees in its offices be vaccinated and has become a strong advocate of workplaces requiring vaccinations. "Safety and health have been our north star since the beginning of the pandemic," said Randi Weingarten, the union's president. The union's support for mandates, she added, "creates great cheer among two-thirds of our people and will create agita in one-third of the people."

Still, many labor leaders are hesitant to wade into the mandate issue. Many of the employers of the workers of the Laborer's District Council of Western Pennsylvania, like hospitals, have begun requiring vaccinations. Whenever members complain, the council's business manager, Phillip Ameris, tells them it's not the union's call.

"What we have said is, 'we encourage our members to get the vaccine,' but what we're telling everyone to do is to go to your physician," Ameris said. "We're trying to keep it nonpolitical. ... Go to your doctor and ask your doctor what is best for you."

Some of the most heated opposition has come from law enforcement unions. In Newark on Thursday, police and fire unions from across New Jersey protested against the mayor's vaccine mandate outside city hall. Police unions from Chicago to Richmond have pushed back against mandates in their cities. In Portland, Oregon, the local police union got its members exempted from the city's vaccine order and a group of police and firefighter unions are suing Gov. Kate Brown to block the state's vaccine requirement for its workers.

Simon Haeder, a political scientist who studies vaccine mandates at Penn State University, said it makes sense that the strongest resistance has come from police and firefighters. "The more conservative side of the labor movement, in terms of politics, are going to be the police and firefighter unions," he said, noting that response to the coronavirus has become highly polarized. "Yes, you're a union person and yes, you want the workplace to get back to normal, but the identity of being a Republican outweighs a lot of those things."

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Bill Johnson, executive director of the National Association of Police Organizations, said police officers are reacting like most Americans. "You've got, like in the rest of the country, really strong feelings on both sides," Johnson said.

Still, police unions can see the writing on the wall — and want any mandates to be negotiated through the collective bargaining process, Johnson said. "There's a sense from the union perspective that vaccination policy is pretty much going to be mandated," he said. "We want a place at the table when we discuss implementation."

Campos-Medina said mandatory vaccination is such an obviously important public health policy that she expects unions to ultimately accept it. She compared it to bans on indoor smoking, which rankled some unions years ago but is a subject which hardly ever comes up at the bargaining table today. "We will get there," she said.

Weingarten's union had initially, like Biden, opposed vaccine mandates and said persuading workers to get their shots was a better approach. But after the delta variant kicked caseloads higher this summer and filled up hospital beds, AFT reconsidered.

She, too, thinks unions will almost all ultimately coalesce behind a pro-mandate position. But, she notes, it will take time.

"The leadership in unions I talk to know that vaccines are really important," Weingarten said. "What they're trying to do is balance between all these different services and responsibilities we have to our members."

Associated Press writers Josh Boak in Washington and Marc Levy in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, contributed to this report.

AP FACT CHECK: Biden's goal for cleaner jet fuel may not fly

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

DALLAS (AP) — President Joe Biden and his team are promoting an agreement reached with the U.S. airline industry to cut aircraft greenhouse-gas emissions 20% by decade's end, but the deal might not fly.

In an announcement Thursday, the White House unveiled an array of measures to reduce climate-changing emissions. The administration is also setting a goal of replacing all of today's kerosene-based jet fuel with cleaner or "sustainable" fuel by 2050.

Climate experts say that while the effort is laudable, the administration's approach is aspirational and unrealistic. The targets are voluntary, and robust government support will be needed to offset the higher cost of sustainable fuel — up to three times more than regular fuel.

Airlines in fact have talked up sustainable jet fuel for years and even made small investments in it, but it may prove to be a vision beyond Biden's promised reach. Airline executives have expressed concern in particular that "flight shaming" — famously advocated by Swedish activist Greta Thunberg — could catch on in the U.S. if the companies are seen as uncaring about the environment.

WHITE HOUSE, touting Biden's steps to involve the government, aircraft makers, airlines and fuel suppliers to boost the use of cleaner fuels: The measures "will result in the production and use of billions of gallons of sustainable fuel that will enable aviation emissions to drop 20% by 2030 when compared to business as usual."

THE FACTS: That's a giant step that will be highly difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.

Only 2.4 million gallons of sustainable aviation fuel, or SAF, were produced in the United States in 2019, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. In contrast, airlines burned 21.5 billion gallons of regular fuel that year. That means just over 0.01% of the nation's supply currently comes from sustainable fuel.

The airline industry says bridging the gap will require bold steps including grants and tax credits for producers, government support for research, and more. Biden is seeking a SAF tax credit as part of a \$3.5 trillion spending bill being pushed in Congress by Democrats, but its outcome remains uncertain. Even with that money, it's not clear all those things would be enough to meet the administration's ambitious goals, according to aviation experts.

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"Aspirational goals like this don't move markets," says Dan Rutherford, who oversees aviation research at the International Council on Clean Transportation, an environmental group based in Washington.

Without a government mandate or "very strong incentives," Rutherford says, "I doubt that much SAF will be generated." He notes that the International Air Transport Association, a global trade group for airlines, had a voluntary goal of 10% sustainable fuel by 2017 and the federal government had a target of 1 billion gallons per year by 2018, "and neither came anywhere close."

Liz Jones, a climate-law attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity, says the administration plan "largely relies on biofuels aspirations that simply aren't based on reality."

Airlines have been announcing promises to become carbon neutral around the middle of the century, and some have invested in sustainable fuel as they defend against criticism over aviation's role in climate change. Airplanes produce only around 3% of the world's heat-trapping emissions, but their share is growing rapidly.

Jones says, however, that nothing in the administration's plan would force airlines to live up to their promises.

"And even the best-case scenario doesn't cut climate pollution fast enough," she says. "The Biden EPA needs to set strong airplane emissions standards now, not get mired in the myth of sustainable airline fuels."

The White House and airline trade groups are counting on tax credits to produce three billion gallons a year by 2030. Airline trade groups are pushing Congress to enact a tax credit of \$1.50 to \$2 per gallon, depending on how much the fuel reduces greenhouse gas emissions when burned.

Airlines for America, a trade group for the biggest U.S. airlines, had previously set a goal of producing 2 billion gallons of sustainable fuel in 2030. This week, the group agreed to back the White House goals.

The airline group's president, Nicholas Calio, said the airlines "are proud of our record on climate change, but we know the climate change challenge has only continued to intensify," and so it raised its goal for sustainable fuel.

Airlines are also placing orders and making investments in startups that are designing aircraft powered by electricity or hydrogen. Some of the manufacturers aim to have small electric planes of up to 19 seats in service by the end of the decade.

"We want to operate aircraft that are very good for the environment in the long run," Andrew Nocella, the chief commercial officer of United Airlines, said this week. "How they come to be and when they come to be is still a little bit TBD (to be determined)."

Associated Press writer Hope Yen contributed to this report.

EDITOR'S NOTE — A look at the veracity of claims by political figures.

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The Latest: Djokovic wins, takes Grand Slam chance to final

NEW YORK (AP) — The Latest on the U.S. Open tennis tournament (all times local):

11:10 p.m.

Novak Djokovic still has his Grand Slam chance.

Pushed to a fifth set by Alexander Zverev, the top-seeded Djokovic won it 6-2 to advance to Sunday's U.S. Open final.

Djokovic will play No. 2 seed Daniil Medvedev, with a victory making him the first man to win all four major tournaments in the same year since Rod Laver in 1969.

He broke Zverev's serve all three times in the final set after the No. 4 seed had won the fourth to even the match.

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10:30 p.m.

Novak Djokovic is going the distance in his quest to reach another Grand Slam final.

Alexander Zverev won the fourth set 6-4 to push their U.S. Open semifinal to a fifth set.

The top-seeded Djokovic has to win it to keep alive his hopes of becoming the first man to win all four major tournaments in the same year since Rod Laver in 1969.

Zverev came from behind to beat Djokovic in the Olympic semifinals and needs to do it again to extend his career-best, 16-match winning streak.

Djokovic is 3-0 this year in matches that went five sets. Zverev is 1-2 after losing last year's U.S. Open final in five sets.

The winner faces No. 2 seed Daniil Medvedev.

9:40 p.m.

Novak Djokovic has pulled ahead of Alexander Zverev after three sets of their U.S. Open semifinal.

Djokovic broke Zverev's serve in a grueling final game to win the set 6-4, putting him one set away from playing for a men's-record 21st major title.

Zverev won a 53-shot rally during the final game, resting his hands on his knees after hitting a winner. But Djokovic won the next point to take the lead.

He is trying to keep alive his chances of becoming the first man to win all four Grand Slam tournaments in one year since Rod Laver in 1969.

8:50 p.m.

Novak Djokovic and Alexander Zverev are tied at one set apiece in their U.S. Open semifinal.

After Zverev won the first set 6-4, when Djokovic never held a break point, the No. 1 seed broke the No. 4-seeded German's serve twice to take the second set 6-2.

Djokovic has lost the first set in his last four matches. He has so far not dropped another set in any of those matches.

8:15 p.m.

Alexander Zverev has won the first set against Novak Djokovic, who will have to come from behind for a fourth straight match at the U.S. Open.

Zverev took the lead when Djokovic double-faulted in the ninth game, then served it out to win the set 6-4.

Djokovic lost the first set against Kei Nishikori, American Jenson Brooksby and Wimbledon finalist Matteo Berrettini. He won the next three sets each time to keep alive his hopes of the first calendar-year Grand Slam in men's tennis since 1969.

In the Olympic semifinals last month, it was Zverev coming back after dropping the first set to beat Djokovic. The German went on to win the gold medal.

8:05 p.m.

American Robin Montgomery has reached the junior girls singles final.

The No. 7 seed from Washington beat Solana Sierra of Argentina 2-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Montgomery, who turned 17 on Sunday, will play No. 6 seed Kristina Dmitruk of Belarus in the final.

Montgomery and Ashlyn Krueger, seeded third, are also into the girls' doubles final.

Top-seeded Shang Juncheng of China and No. 3 Daniel Rincon of Spain will play for the boys' title.

7:35 p.m.

Novak Djokovic has to get past the hottest player on the men's tennis tour to keep alive his Grand Slam hopes.

The No. 1 seed is on the court in the U.S. Open semifinals against No. 4 seed Alexander Zverev, whose 16-match winning streak includes a victory over Djokovic in the semifinals of the Olympics.

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Djokovic needs two wins to become the first man to win all four Grand Slam tournaments in the same year since Rod Laver in 1969.

The Serb is trying to make his ninth U.S. Open final, which would move him past Pete Sampras and Ivan Lendl for most in the professional era.

Zverev reached the final last year, falling to Dominic Thiem in five sets.

5:20 p.m.

Daniil Medvedev is in the U.S. Open final for the second time in three years after beating Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-4, 7-5, 6-2.

Twice a point from losing the second set, the No. 2 seed from Russia won 10 of the final 12 games.

Medvedev, who lost to Rafael Nadal in the 2019 final, will play either No. 1 Novak Djokovic or No. 4 Alexander Zverev on Sunday in a bid for his first major title.

Djokovic is trying to become the first man to win all four Grand Slam tournaments since Rod Laver — who was in the crowd for Medvedev's victory — in 1969.

Auger-Aliassime, the No. 12 seed, was the first Canadian man to reach the U.S. Open semifinals. He was trying to join Leylah Fernandez and give his country a player in both the men's and women's final.

4:50 p.m.

Daniil Medvedev is a set away from another U.S. Open final after a late rally to seize the second set from Felix Auger-Aliassime.

Auger-Aliassime, the No. 12 seed from Canada, served for the second set at 5-3 and twice was a point away from evening the match. But Medvedev broke his serve en route to winning the next four games.

The No. 2 seed from Russia leads 6-4, 7-5.

Medvedev lost in the 2019 final to Rafael Nadal. He was stopped in the semifinals last year by eventual champion Dominic Thiem.

3:20 p.m.

The men's semifinals have started at the U.S. Open, with Daniil Medvedev playing in them for the third straight year.

The No. 2 seed from Russia is on the court against No. 12 Felix Auger-Aliassime, the first Canadian man to make a U.S. Open semifinal.

Medvedev reached the final in 2019, losing to Rafael Nadal in five sets. He was beaten in straight sets by eventual champion Dominic Thiem in last year's semifinals.

The winner will play top-seeded Novak Djokovic or No. 4 Alexander Zverev in Sunday's final.

2:50 p.m.

Coco Gauff and Caty McNally advanced to their first Grand Slam women's doubles title match when one of their U.S. Open semifinal opponents stopped playing and left the court in a wheelchair with a leg injury.

Luisa Stefani landed awkwardly near the net during a first-set tiebreaker, collapsed to the ground and was unable to continue. She and Gabriela Dabrowski were leading the tiebreaker 2-1 when the semifinal was halted.

Gauff called seeing what happened "heartbreaking" and said: "I don't want to win a match like this. ... I just wish her the best."

The American duo of Gauff and McNally will face Zhang Shuai of China and 2011 U.S. Open singles champion Sam Stosur of Australia in the doubles final.

Gauff is 17 and McNally is 19, adding to the teenage theme of the women's tournament at Flushing Meadows.

Emma Raducanu, 18, faces Leylah Fernandez, 19, in the singles final Saturday.

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2:10 p.m.

Rajeev Ram of the U.S. and Joe Salisbury of Great Britain have won the U.S. Open men's doubles championship for their second Grand Slam title as a team.

The fourth-seeded duo of Ram and Salisbury beat the seventh-seeded pair of Jamie Murray of Britain and Bruno Soares of Brazil 3-6, 6-2, 6-2 on Friday.

Ram and Salisbury add this trophy to the one they earned at the 2020 Australian Open. They were the runners-up at Melbourne Park this year.

Murray, whose younger brother Andy won three major singles championships, and Soares won two Grand Slam titles together in men's doubles in 2016, including the U.S. Open.

Soares also won the doubles at Flushing Meadows last year, when his partner was Mate Pavic.

12:30 p.m.

The men's doubles final has started a busy day at the U.S. Open that Novak Djokovic hopes to end with his Grand Slam hopes intact.

The No. 1 seed faces No. 4 Alexander Zverev under the lights at Arthur Ashe Stadium in the second men's semifinal. If Djokovic wins, he will be one victory away from a men's-record 21st major title, along with the first calendar-year Grand Slam by a man since Rod Laver in 1969.

The first semifinal in the afternoon has No. 2 Daniil Medvedev against No. 12 Felix Auger-Aliassime, the first Canadian man to reach the last four in the U.S. Open.

They play after the completion of the men's doubles final, which has the fourth-seeded team of Rajeev Ram and Joe Salisbury against No. 7 Jamie Murray and Bruno Soares.

The women's doubles semifinals also are Friday, with American teenagers Coco Gauff and Caty McNally playing in one of them.

More AP tennis: <https://apnews.com/hub/tennis> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Biden's vaccine rules ignite instant, hot GOP opposition

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's aggressive push to require millions of U.S. workers to get vaccinated against the coronavirus is running into a wall of resistance from Republican leaders threatening everything from lawsuits to civil disobedience, plunging the country deeper into culture wars that have festered since the onset of the pandemic.

In South Carolina, Gov. Henry McMaster says he will fight "to the gates of hell to protect the liberty and livelihood of every South Carolinian." South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a potential 2024 presidential candidate, says she is preparing a lawsuit. And J.D. Vance, a conservative running for a U.S. Senate seat in Ohio, is calling on businesses to ignore mandates he describes as Washington's "attempt to bully and coerce citizens."

"Only mass civil disobedience will save us from Joe Biden's naked authoritarianism," Vance says.

Biden is hardly backing down. In a visit to a school Friday, he accused the governors of being "cavalier" with the health of young Americans, and when asked about foes who would file legal challenges, he retorted, "Have at it."

The opposition follows Biden's announcement Thursday of a major plan to tame the coronavirus as the highly contagious Delta variant drives 1,500 deaths and 150,000 cases a day. Biden is mandating that all employers with more than 100 workers require their employees to be vaccinated or test for the virus weekly, affecting about 80 million Americans. Another 17 million workers at health facilities that receive federal Medicare or Medicaid also will have to be vaccinated, as will all employees of the executive branch and contractors who do business with the federal government.

The move brought Republican outrage from state capitals, Congress and the campaign trail, including from many who have supported vaccinations and have urged their constituents to take the shots.

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"The vaccine itself is life-saving, but this unconstitutional move is terrifying," tweeted Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves.

Texas Rep. Dan Crenshaw, who has promoted the vaccines' safety to his constituents, said, "The right path is built upon explaining, educating and building trust, including explaining the risks/benefits/pros/cons in an honest way so a person can make their own decision."

More than 208 million Americans have received at least one vaccine dose, but some 80 million remain unvaccinated, driving infections. There are now about 300% more new daily COVID-19 infections, about two-and-a-half times the hospitalizations and nearly twice the number of deaths as at the same time last year.

While breakthrough infections do happen among the vaccinated, those cases tend to be far less severe, with the vast majority of deaths and serious illnesses occurring among those who have not received shots.

The pandemic is worsening in many of the states where governors are most loudly protesting the president's actions. South Carolina, for example, is averaging more than 5,000 new cases per day and has the nation's second-highest infection rate. A hospital system there started canceling elective surgeries this week to free staff to help with a crush of COVID-19 patients.

In a section of Idaho, overwhelmed hospitals have implemented new crisis standards to ration care for patients. And in Georgia, hospitals have been turning away ambulances bringing emergency or ICU patients.

"I am so disappointed that particularly some Republican governors have been so cavalier with the health of these kids, so cavalier with the health of their communities," Biden said during his school visit. "This isn't a game."

But Republicans and some union officials say the president is overreaching his constitutional authority. They take issue, in particular, with the idea that millions could lose their jobs if they refuse to take the shots.

"That's a ridiculous choice," said Mississippi Gov. Reeves.

Biden, however, says he's doing what needs to be done to fight resistance that has continued despite months of encouragement and incentives. In his White House speech announcing the new measures, he was visibly frustrated, criticizing the remaining holdouts and accusing some elected officials of "actively working to undermine the fight against COVID-19."

"Instead of encouraging people to get vaccinated and mask up, they're ordering mobile morgues for the unvaccinated dying from COVID in their communities," he said.

Court fights are sure to follow in a number of states.

Vaccine mandates are supported by a small majority of Americans. An August poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found majorities support requiring vaccinations for health care workers, teachers at K-12 schools and public-facing workers like those who work in restaurants and stores. Overall, 55% back vaccine mandates for government workers. And about half of working adults favor vaccine mandates at their own workplaces.

But the numbers are deeply polarized, with Democrats far more likely to support mandates than Republicans, who have also been less supportive when it comes to getting shots themselves.

While demand for vaccinations has risen over the summer, a persistent number of Americans have said they have no intention of ever receiving them.

GOP pollster Frank Luntz, who has held focus groups and worked with the Biden administration to try to combat vaccine hesitance, says that, without further measures, Biden is likely to see vaccinations top out at about 75% of the population.

"The only way to exceed that, which he needs to for herd immunity, is to mandate it," Luntz said. "It will make a lot of people angry and even more resistant, but those who are simply hesitant will act now. He's done the best he can under the circumstances."

Still, many Republicans are unmoving and unforgiving, especially those who are running for office and see the issue as one that could motivate Republican voters to turn out in next year's midterm elections.

Mike Gibbons, who is running for the U.S. Senate in Ohio, accused "Joe Biden and his Big Brother administration" of having "crossed into authoritarian territory."

"The American people have a right to assess the risks and benefits of the vaccine and make the decision on what is best for themselves and their families," he said. "That decision should be made by doctors and

the individual, not the government.”

With the midterms coming, Drew McKissick, South Carolina’s GOP chairman, says he imagines Democrats in his state being tied to their party’s “radical liberal” policies.

“South Carolinians don’t take kindly to mandates. They never have,” McKissick said, arguing the national political tenor is “going to put (Democrats) more in a corner.”

But Steve Schale, a Democratic strategist who leads the pro-Biden super PAC Unite the Country, which has also done polling showing support for mandates, said he’s not especially concerned about potential political backlash. He argued those who are most likely to be angered by the move are probably already Biden critics.

“Of all the things I worry about in the midterms,” he said, “that doesn’t scare me.”

White House spokesperson Jen Psaki also dismissed the blowback.

“Yes, we do see some loud vocal opponents of what the president announced yesterday. That’s not a surprise. It’s unfortunate, it’s disappointing, it’s sad because, ultimately, these steps will save lives,” she said, “but we remain confident in our ability to move the agenda forward.”

___ Associated Press writers Meg Kinnard in Houston, Leah Willingham in Jackson, Mississippi, and Mary Clare Jalonick, Hannah Fingerhut, Alexandra Jaffe and Zeke Miller in Washington contributed to this report.

At least 1 dead, 10 missing in landslide near Mexico City

By MARÍA VERZA Associated Press

TLALNEPANTLA, Mexico (AP) — A section of mountain on the outskirts of Mexico City gave way Friday, plunging rocks the size of small homes onto a densely populated neighborhood and leaving at least one person dead and 10 others missing.

Firefighters scaled a three-story pile of rocks that appeared to be resting on houses in Tlalneptla, which is part of Mexico state. The state surrounds the capital on three sides.

As rescuers climbed the immense pile of debris, they occasionally raised their fists in the air, the familiar signal for silence to listen for people trapped below. Firefighters and volunteers formed bucket brigades to pass 5-gallon containers of smaller debris away as they excavated.

“In this moment our priority is focused on rescuing the people who unfortunately were surprised at the site of the incident,” said Tlalneptla Mayor Raciél Pérez Cruz in a video message. Authorities had evacuated surrounding homes and asked people to avoid the area so rescuers could work.

Rescuers carried a body on a stretcher covered with a sheet past AP journalists. The Mexico state Civil Defense agency said in a statement that at least 10 people were reported missing.

Among the volunteers were 30-year-old construction worker Martín Carmona, 30, and his 14-year-old son. “They organized us in a chain to take out buckets of sand, stone and rubble,” Carmona said. “A co-worker lives there. He has a wife and two young children under the debris.”

Carmona and his son arrived to the pile before government rescuers and his friend was already there digging for his wife and kids.

Neighbors began to complain that they need more help and organization.

Carmona said rescuers heard children, but after two hours of removing debris, authorities told volunteers to leave the area. Only relatives stayed to help the rescuers.

Search dogs clambered over the rubble with their handlers.

Ana Luisa Borges, 39, said she lives just three houses down from those hit by the landslide.

“It thundered horribly,” she said of the sound of the slide. “I grabbed my youngest son and ran out (of the house). Then came a very big cloud of dust.” Fortunately, her other four children were in school.

“There are a number of houses there,” she said of the slide area. “There was a building, but they tell us there are people there and children. I saw one person come out with head injury.”

Borges said they have been warned that another rock could come down and that she didn’t know where they were going to sleep tonight.

“They’ve only told us that we have to leave (our homes),” she said.

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Tlalnepantla officials announced they were opening several shelters for displaced residents. The neighborhood is a heap of jumbled houses climbing the mountainside, many with corrugated tin roofs, separated in places by just a steep staircase.

One massive boulder stopped against a two-story house barely its equal, knocking out the front wall and spilling the home's contents into the street. A path of destruction traced uphill.

Maximinio Andrade, who lives with his parents and siblings — 14 family members in all — near the slide walked down the steep street pushing a flat-screen television on a hand cart. He had not been home at the time of the landslide, but feared thieves would enter now that the surrounding homes had been evacuated.

"They've already started stealing from the destroyed homes," he said.

National Guard troops and rescue teams carrying lengths of rope made their way through narrow streets. Images from the area showed a segment of the steep, green side of the peak known as Chiquihuite sheared off above a field of giant rubble with closely packed homes remaining on either side.

Mexico state Gov. Alfredo del Mazo said via Twitter that local, state and federal authorities were coordinating to secure the zone in case of more slides and to remove rubble to locate possible victims.

The landslide follows days of heavy rain in central Mexico and a 7.0-magnitude earthquake Tuesday night near Acapulco that shook buildings 200 miles (320 kilometers) away in Mexico City.

While visiting the scene later Friday, Del Mazo said authorities believe four homes were destroyed in the landslide and another 80 were evacuated as a precaution.

"It's likely the earthquake and the intense rain we have had in recent days have affected (the area) and for this came the landslide and the break up of the mountain," he said.

US gives 1st public look inside base housing Afghans

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Report for America/Associated Press

FORT BLISS, Texas (AP) — The Biden administration on Friday provided the first public look inside a U.S. military base where Afghans airlifted out of Afghanistan are being screened, amid questions about how the government is caring for the refugees and vetting them.

"Every Afghan who is here with us has endured a harrowing journey and they are now faced with the very real challenges of acclimating with life in the United States," Liz Gracon, a senior State Department official, told reporters.

The three-hour tour at Fort Bliss Army base in El Paso, Texas, was the first time the media has been granted broad access to one of the eight U.S. military installations housing Afghans.

But even so, reporters, including those with The Associated Press, were not allowed to talk with any evacuees or spend more than a few minutes in areas where they were gathered, with military officials citing "privacy concerns."

Nearly 10,000 Afghan evacuees are staying at the base while they undergo medical and security checks before being resettled in the United States. The operation was described by officials at the Department of Homeland Security and Department of State as a "historic" and "unprecedented" effort to facilitate the relocation of a huge number of refugees in less than a month's time.

On Friday, Afghan children with soccer balls and basketballs played outside large white tents. Families walked down a dirt driveway with stacks of plastic food containers piled under their chins and Coca-Cola cans under their arms. One young girl, still wearing dirty clothing, cried in the middle of the road after her food spilled and soldiers attempted to help her. Inside the containers, which refugees had spent around 15 minutes in line for in the blistering sun, were traditional Afghan meals of basmati rice and hearty stew.

The U.S. government spent two weeks building what it calls a village to house the Afghans on the base. It is a sprawling area with scores of air-conditioned tents used as dormitories and dining halls on scrubby dirt lots, a landscape that in some ways resembled parts of the homeland they fled.

Under the program called "Operation Allies Welcome," some 50,000 Afghans are expected to be admitted to the United States, including translators, drivers and others who helped the U.S. military during the 20-year war and who feared reprisals by the Taliban after they quickly seized power last month.

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Nearly 130,000 were airlifted out of Afghanistan in one of the largest mass evacuations in U.S. history. Many of those people are still in transit, undergoing security vetting and screening in other countries, including Germany, Spain, Kuwait and Qatar.

Members of Congress have questioned whether the screening is thorough enough. Many of the Afghans who worked for the U.S. government have undergone years of vetting already before they were hired, and then again to apply for a special immigrant visa for U.S. allies.

After they are released from the base, they will be aided by resettlement agencies in charge of placing the refugees. The agencies give priority to places where the refugees either have family already in the United States or there are Afghan immigrant communities with the resources to help them start a new life in a foreign land. Those with American citizenship or green cards are able to leave once arriving at the base, according to a State Department representative.

If other evacuees — whose release is dependent on completing health protocols mandated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — choose to leave prior to the full resettlement period, that may be used against them.

So far, no one at Fort Bliss has been released for resettlement.

The Pentagon has said all evacuees are tested for COVID-19 upon arriving at Dulles International Airport outside Washington.

The Biden administration is also using the base to house thousands of immigrant children, mostly from Central America, who have been crossing the U.S.-Mexico border in record numbers on their own, without adults. The children are housed there until they can be reunited with relatives already in the United States or with a sponsor, usually a family friend, or sent to a licensed facility.

Associated Press writer Julie Watson contributed to this report from San Diego.

Farnoush Amiri is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

Louisiana police boss says he's open to federal oversight

By MELINDA DESLATTE, JIM MUSTIAN and JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — The head of the Louisiana State Police said Friday he wants to know why 67% of his agency's uses of force in recent years have been directed at Black people, and would welcome a U.S. Justice Department "pattern and practice" probe into potential racial profiling if that is deemed necessary.

"If the community is concerned about that, obviously I am concerned about that," Col. Lamar Davis told The Associated Press in an interview. "I'm a Black male. I don't want to feel like I'm going to be stopped and thrown across a car just because of that, and I don't want anyone else to feel that way."

Davis' comments came a day after an AP investigation identified at least a dozen cases over the past decade in which state police troopers or their bosses ignored or concealed evidence of beatings, deflected blame and impeded efforts to root out misconduct. It included several newly obtained body camera videos of violent arrests that had been locked away for years.

"It challenged me emotionally, not just from a law enforcement perspective but as a citizen," Davis said of viewing the footage. "But I have to put my emotions in check and understand what my duties are."

"I don't want the community thinking we're going to 'get them.' Those are the types of things I'm trying to get to the root of."

At an earlier news conference in Baton Rouge, Davis pointed to a series of reforms he has pushed through during his 11 months as state police superintendent, including new policies and practices for how his agency handles cases of excessive force. He also said he's looking to hire an outside agency to carry on the work of a secret panel the state police had set up to determine whether troopers systematically abused Black motorists. He acknowledged the panel was shut down in July following leaks about its work.

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Davis, in the interview, said he did not believe excessive force has become widespread enough among state troopers to warrant a pattern and practice investigation by the Justice Department. However, he said he wants the opportunity to correct the agency's issues before federal authorities intervene, pointing to the benefits of hiring an outside firm to conduct a comparable review.

"With regards to the Justice Department, if they decide that they're going to come in and assess us on that then I welcome it," Davis said in the news conference. "I'm not going to wait on them. I'm already in contact with other organizations to look at my agency and help us become better."

Soon after Davis's news conference, U.S. Rep. Troy Carter joined a growing chorus of officials and activists calling on Attorney General Merrick Garland to intervene. The Justice Department launched pattern and practice investigations earlier this year in Minneapolis, Louisville and Phoenix but has not said whether it's considering a similar probe in Louisiana.

"It is clear that the LSP will not clean up its own house ... I have no faith they are capable of policing themselves," Carter, a New Orleans Democrat, said in a statement.

The state police have been under intense scrutiny since May when the AP published previously unreleased body camera footage of the fatal 2019 arrest of Ronald Greene on a north Louisiana roadside, a death troopers initially blamed on injuries from a car crash. The footage showed troopers stunning, punching and dragging the Black motorist and leaving him prone on the ground for more than nine minutes.

Davis also confirmed Friday that an internal investigation resulted in no discipline against Lt. John Clary, the highest ranking official at the scene of Greene's death, who was accused of denying the existence of his own body camera video for nearly two years. Davis said the agency "could not say for sure whether" he "purposefully withheld" the footage.

State police this week also removed Clary from the duty of escorting the Louisiana Tech football coach at games as the FBI investigates the role in Greene's deadly arrest.

Clary served in the unpaid role for at least nine years, according to the university, and escorted the Bulldogs' head coach Skip Holtz on Saturday during a televised game against Mississippi State. His appearance at the game, first reported by WBRZ-TV, drew criticism from civil rights activists who accused Louisiana Tech of overlooking the severity of the allegations Clary faces.

Clary and his attorney did not return messages seeking comment.

Davis also sought to play down a meeting on May 20 — the day after AP published graphic footage of Greene's death -- in which state police brass traveled to Ruston to review the long-concealed body camera video with John Belton, the Union Parish district attorney. Belton became so concerned with the circumstances of Greene's death two years ago that he referred the case to federal authorities, who began a civil rights investigation.

The command staff made the case during the meeting that the troopers' actions had been justified during Greene's arrest, according to several people familiar with the meeting, which itself has become the subject of a federal investigation into possible obstruction of justice. But Davis on Friday insisted he had not asked Belton "or any other official to not pursue charges on any of my employees" in Greene's death.

"I would never do that," Davis said. "I have never done that."

Bleiberg reported from Dallas and Mustian from New York.

Woman is 2nd to admit role in death of 8 members of a family

By JOHN SEEWER and KANTELE FRANKO Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — An Ohio woman pleaded guilty Friday to helping plan the killings of eight members of a family, becoming the second member of her own family to admit to a role in a shocking crime prosecutors say stemmed from a dispute over custody of her granddaughter.

Angela Wagner, 50, pleaded guilty in southern Ohio's Pike County to conspiracy to commit aggravated murder, along with burglary, evidence tampering and other charges.

In exchange for the plea, prosecutors dropped aggravated murder charges against her and recommended

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that she serve a 30-year prison sentence. Her agreement to testify against other remaining defendants was also part of the deal, they said.

She didn't make any statements during the hearing.

Her husband and their two adult sons also were charged in the 2016 slayings of seven adults and a teenage boy from the Rhoden family. Wagner's plea comes nearly five months after her son Edward "Jake" Wagner pleaded guilty to aggravated murder and other charges and agreed to testify against the other three in a deal that would help all four avoid potential death sentences.

George "Billy" Wagner III and George Wagner IV have pleaded not guilty.

The fatal shootings at three trailers and a camper near Piketon in April 2016 terrified residents in a stretch of rural Ohio and launched one of the state's most extensive criminal investigations, which led to the Wagners' arrest more than two years later.

The Wagners spent months planning the killings and targeted some of the victims, but "some sadly were killed because they happened to be there," said special prosecutor Angela Canepa.

Most of the victims were repeatedly shot in the head, and some showed signs of bruising. Three young children at the scenes were unharmed.

The victims were 40-year-old Christopher Rhoden Sr.; his ex-wife, 37-year-old Dana Rhoden; their three children, 20-year-old Clarence "Frankie" Rhoden, 16-year-old Christopher Jr., and 19-year-old Hanna; Clarence Rhoden's fiancée, 20-year-old Hannah Gilley; Christopher Rhoden Sr.'s brother, 44-year-old Kenneth Rhoden; and a cousin, 38-year-old Gary Rhoden.

Prosecutors say the Wagner family planned the killings for months, motivated by a dispute over custody of the daughter Jake Wagner had with Hanna Rhoden.

The Wagners used guns with homemade silencers, allowing them to kill their victims as they slept, according to the prosecutors.

Angela Wagner was fully aware of the plans and bought several items used to carry out the killings, including "phone jammers" that would have prevented the victims from calling for help, Canepa said.

She also forged custody documents and monitored some of the victims' social media accounts before the killings, Canepa said. Wagner approached prosecutors about a deal and gave them new information after her son pleaded guilty, Canepa said.

Jake Wagner pleaded guilty in April on the fifth anniversary of the slayings and said in court that he was "deeply and very sorry." He hasn't been sentenced, but his lawyer said he understood that he would spend his life in prison.

Christopher Rhoden Sr.'s brother, Tony Rhoden Sr., has said the family was grateful for the first plea as "some semblance of justice."

He also has sued the Wagners. That case is pending.

Seewer reported from Toledo.

Measles cases halt US-bound flights of Afghan evacuees

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

The U.S. on Friday halted U.S.-bound flights of Afghan evacuees, pulling some off planes, after discovering a few cases of measles among new arrivals in the United States.

A U.S. government document viewed by The Associated Press warned the development would have a severe impact on an evacuation that since Aug. 15 has moved many thousands of people out of Taliban-held Afghanistan, but also been grindingly drawn out for Afghan evacuees and Americans alike, and was plagued by attacks and other deadly violence.

The decision was made by U.S. Customs and Border Protection on the recommendation of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. White House press secretary Jen Psaki said the halt stemmed from discovery of measles among four Afghans who had arrived in the United States. It was not immediately clear from Psaki's remarks whether the stop applied to flights from all transit sites overseas, or only two

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of the biggest ones, in Qatar and in Germany.

Customs and Border Protection spokespeople did not immediately respond to questions, including how long the halt would last.

The development had American officials overseas Friday removing from planes Afghan families who already had struggled through a grueling, dangerous escape to safety after Kabul fell to the Taliban on Aug. 15. Afghans faced Taliban checkpoints and crushing crowds to enter the Kabul airport. A suicide attack at an airport gate killed 169 Afghans and 13 U.S. military members.

A government document viewed by The Associated Press said the halt would "severely impact" operations at Ramstein Air Base in Germany, one of the biggest transit sites. It also said U.S.-bound flights would stop from the U.S. al-Udeid base in Qatar.

Many thousands of Afghan evacuees airlifted out of Kabul are still en route to new homes in the United States. Some face relocation for further screening in Kosovo.

The government document said the flight halt announced Friday would have an "adverse effect" on the nearly 10,000 evacuees at Ramstein. It noted many have been there more than 10 days and are increasingly fatigued.

Germany had set a 10-day limit for Afghans to stay at the U.S. base, but the time has appeared more as a guideline than a hard deadline. Some German politicians and media grumbled when some Afghans asked for asylum after reaching Germany.

Germany and Qatar, along with Italy, Spain, Kosovo, Kuwait and other countries, agreed to temporarily host U.S. processing sites for evacuees after Kabul fell, after allies initially balked over worries of getting stuck with U.S. security problems. Refugee groups have criticized the Biden administration for not bringing the Afghan evacuees to U.S. territory for screening.

Processing at many of the transit sites largely appears to be taking place in a peaceful and orderly fashion.

It was not clear Friday if the halt would affect evacuation flights from Kabul itself. Friday was only the second day that the Taliban have allowed evacuation flights to leave the country, after the frantic U.S. military-led airlifts ended with the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan on Aug. 30.

National Security Council spokeswoman Emily Horne said Friday that 32 Americans and U.S. green-card holders had left Afghanistan on Friday, 19 on a Qatar Airways flight and 13 others by land.

The U.S. government believes about 100 American citizens remain in Afghanistan, a State Department spokeswoman, Jalina Porter, said.

It was the same number the U.S. had given before this week's evacuation flights took out Americans. Porter said she could not immediately explain why the number had not changed.

Vaccination campaigns prevent major measles outbreaks in the United States, but measles can be a deadly disease for adults and children in countries where violence or other obstacles block immunization. Hundreds of Afghan children have died of measles in some recent years.

Psaki said the United States was requiring measles vaccinations for entry to the United States, and that Afghans were receiving other immunizations at U.S. military bases before heading to new homes around the country. Officials were exploring vaccinating people while still overseas, she said.

Frank Jordans in Berlin contributed to this report.

CDC finds unvaccinated 11 times more likely to die of COVID

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

New U.S. studies released Friday show the COVID-19 vaccines remain highly effective against hospitalizations and death even as the extra-contagious delta variant swept the country.

One study tracked over 600,000 COVID-19 cases in 13 states from April through mid-July. As delta surged in early summer, those who were unvaccinated were 4.5 times more likely than the fully vaccinated to get infected, over 10 times more likely to be hospitalized and 11 times more likely to die, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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"Vaccination works," Dr. Rochelle Walensky, CDC's director, told a White House briefing Friday. "The bottom line is this: We have the scientific tools we need to turn the corner on this pandemic."

But as earlier data has shown, protection against coronavirus infection is slipping some: It was 91% in the spring but 78% in June and July, the study found.

So-called "breakthrough" cases in the fully vaccinated accounted for 14% of hospitalizations and 16% of deaths in June and July, about twice the percentage as earlier in the year.

An increase in those percentages isn't surprising: No one ever said the vaccines were perfect and health experts have warned that as more Americans get vaccinated, they naturally will account for a greater fraction of the cases.

Walensky said Friday that well over 90% of people in U.S. hospitals with COVID-19 are unvaccinated.

CDC released two other studies Friday that signaled hints of waning protection for older adults. One examined COVID-19 hospitalizations in nine states over the summer and found protection for those 75 and older was 76% compared to 89% for all other adults. And in five Veterans Affairs Medical Centers, protection against COVID-19 hospitalizations was 95% among 18- to 64-year-olds compared to 80% among those 65 and older.

It isn't clear if the changes seen over time are because immunity is waning in people first vaccinated many months ago, that the vaccine isn't quite as strong against delta -- or that much of the country abandoned masks and other precautions just as delta started spreading.

But U.S. health authorities will consider this latest real-world data as they decide if at least some Americans need a booster, and how soon after their last dose. Next week, advisers to the Food and Drug Administration will publicly debate Pfizer's application to offer a third shot.

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Woman who admitted to Slender Man attack to be freed Monday

By TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — A Wisconsin woman who admitted to helping stab a classmate to please online horror character Slender Man will be freed Monday from a mental health institution under strict conditions, a judge ruled Friday.

Anissa Weier, 19, will be released after spending almost four years at the Winnebago Mental Health Institute in Oshkosh. A conditional release plan calls for her to live with her father, submit to around-the-clock GPS monitoring and receive psychiatric treatment, among other things. She won't be allowed to use the internet except at home, and the state Department of Corrections will monitor her online activity.

Weier and a friend, Morgan Geysler, both were committed to Winnebago after pleading guilty to attacking Payton Leutner when they were all 12 years old. Geysler stabbed Leutner multiple times as Weier urged her on. Leutner suffered 19 stab stab wounds — including one that narrowly missed her heart — and barely survived.

Waukesha County Judge Michael Bohren said the conditions of Weier's release were fair and the plan "provides for the protection of the community" as well as for Leutner and for Weier herself.

Weier, dressed in a dark suit and smiling occasionally, said nothing during the 20-minute proceeding. The judge delayed her release until Monday after her attorney, Maura McMahon, said the mental health facility would be able to better process her release after the weekend.

"She looks forward to moving on into a productive life," McMahon told the judge.

Leutner's family declined to speak during the hearing. Leutner declined to comment when reached by phone later Friday afternoon.

As part of Weier's release conditions, a case manager will monitor her medication for post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and a personality disorder. Her cellphone won't be able to access the internet, and she won't be allowed to use social media at all. She also won't be allowed to consume alcohol or drugs,

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enter a bar, possess a weapon or have any contact with Leutner or her family.

Deputy District Attorney Ted Szczupakiewicz said he had no objections to the release conditions.

The attack happened in May 2014, after Weier and Geysler invited Leutner to a sleepover. The next day they lured Leutner into the woods at a Waukesha park. Weier and Geysler left Leutner for dead, but she managed to crawl out of the woods and a passing bicyclist found her.

Police found Weier and Geysler later that day walking on Interstate 94 in Waukesha. They told investigators said they attacked Leutner because they thought it would make them Slender Man's servants and prevent him from killing their families. After the stabbing they began walking to Slender Man's mansion, they said.

The Slender Man character grew out of internet stories. He's depicted as a spidery figure in a black suit with a blank white face. Sony Pictures released a movie about Slender Man stalking three girls in 2018. Weier's father, Bill, blasted the film as an attempt to capitalize on a tragedy.

Weier eventually pleaded guilty to attempted second-degree intentional homicide. Bohren sentenced her to 25 years at Winnebago in December 2017.

In her petition for conditional release, she argued that she had exhausted all her treatment options at the facility and needed to rejoin society. She vowed she'd never let herself "become a weapon again." Bohren ruled in July that Weier no longer posed a threat and ordered state officials to draw up a release plan.

Geysler pleaded guilty to attempted first-degree intentional homicide. Bohren sentenced her to 40 years in a mental health facility in February 2018. She has argued that her case should have been heard in juvenile court, but an appellate court ruled last year the case was properly heard in adult court.

Her trial attorney, Anthony Cotton, said Friday that Geysler has not filed a petition for release and declined further comment. Court records show that during her sentencing, Bohren ruled that conditional release would "pose a significant risk of bodily injury" to Geysler or others.

Associated Press writer Doug Glass in Minneapolis contributed to this report.

Follow Todd Richmond on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/trichmond1>

20th anniversary of terrorist attacks marked by NY teams

NEW YORK (AP) — Todd Zeile thought back 20 years, to the night baseball returned in New York following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"We put a small Band-Aid on a big wound for a couple of hours," the retired Mets infielder said Friday. "To put the smiles on the faces of the people who were hurting and just make them relax for a couple hours and watch the national pastime come back, play ball, that made me feel that it was the right time to do it."

The Mets will mark the 20th anniversary of the attacks before Saturday night's Subway Series game against the Yankees. They will wear caps from the New York City Police Department, Fire Department of the City of New York, Port Authority Police Department and New York City Department of Correction to honor first responders. The Mets will have "New York" rather than "Mets" on their jerseys, and American flags and "9-11-01" will be on the right sleeves.

Bobby Valentine, manager of the 2001 Mets, will throw a ceremonial first pitch to Joe Torre, manager of the 2001 Yankees. The Mets have at least 14 former players and coaches planning to attend, including Hall of Famer Mike Piazza, whose two-run, eighth-inning homer off native New Yorker Steve Karsay led the Mets over Atlanta 3-2 in the emotional first game back that Sept. 21.

"We all had fear. We had fears in our hearts that one, maybe we'd be attacked, and two, maybe we were doing the wrong thing," Valentine said, "There was so much uncertainty and doubt."

Saturday's ceremony will include the New York Police and Fire Widows' & Children Benefit Fund, a group created by late Mets star Rusty Staub, The Feel Good Foundation that assists people afflicted by 9/11-related illnesses, and Mets employees who lost loved ones and people who worked at Shea Stadium during the relief effort. Police and fire department honor guards will participate.

The New York police and children's chorus will sing "The Star-Spangled Banner," Jazz artist Anais Reno will sing "America the Beautiful" and New York firefighter Regina Wilson "God Bless America."

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In Pittsburgh, families of Flight 93 passengers will be recognized on the field along with military and first responders before the Pirates host the Washington Nationals.

Toronto will wear caps recognizing the U.S. and Canada, and all other on-field personnel, including umpires, will have a silhouetted ribbon with "We Shall Not Forget," which also will be used on lineup cards, bases and throughout ballparks. MLB's royalties from licensed sale of the caps will be donated to the National September 11 Memorial & Museum.

Major League Soccer's New York Red Bulls, home against D.C. United, are hosting a day of remembrance as part of 11 days of service. Both teams will wear remembrance patches, there will be a moment of silence and match-worn memorabilia will be auctioned to benefit Answer the Call, which provides financial assistance to the families of police and firefighters killed while on duty.

EXPLAINER: Biden administration takes on Texas abortion law

By JESSICA GRESKO and PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The Biden administration is suing Texas over a new state law that bans most abortions, arguing that it was enacted "in open defiance of the Constitution" and asking a judge to quickly declare the law invalid. The case filed Thursday by the Department of Justice is almost certainly destined to reach the Supreme Court, perhaps within a matter of weeks.

The high court has already been asked to weigh in on the law once. The justices voted 5-4 not to intervene to prevent it from taking effect, but they said further challenges were possible.

Here are some questions and answers about the law and the case:

WHAT EXACTLY DOES TEXAS' LAW DO?

Texas' law, Senate Bill 8, prohibits abortions once medical professionals can detect cardiac activity, usually around six weeks. That's before some women know they're pregnant. Courts have blocked other states from imposing similar restrictions, but Texas' law is different because it leaves enforcement up to private citizens through civil lawsuits instead of criminal prosecutors. That novel wrinkle made the law hard to challenge before it went into effect.

The law allows any private citizen to sue Texas abortion providers who violate it, as well as anyone who assists a woman getting the procedure, including someone who just drives her to a clinic. Patients themselves, however, cannot be sued.

The law offers no exceptions in cases of rape or incest, which Republican Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has defended by falsely saying women still have "at least six weeks" to get an abortion. Six weeks of pregnancy does not mean a woman has six weeks to make a decision.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT SO FAR?

Just the threat of being sued for violating the law has meant some abortion providers in Texas have stopped offering abortions altogether, even those before six weeks. Other providers have continued to offer abortions but only those that comply with the law. That means they've had to turn patients away who are further along in their pregnancies or try to get them assistance outside of the state. Clinics in neighboring Oklahoma, and in nearby Kansas, have reported an influx of patients from Texas.

At a Trust Women clinic this week in Oklahoma City, around two-thirds of patients were from Texas, spokesman Zack Gingrich-Gaylord said. And Texas patients accounted for half of the 40 appointments this week at another location farther away in Wichita, Kansas. Appointments are booked through September.

Texas Right to Life, a group that helped push the law and set up a tip line to receive information about potential violations, said they've received no credible information that anyone is violating the law.

WHAT DOES THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT WANT?

The Justice Department wants a federal judge to declare the law invalid and prohibit its enforcement. That would allow clinics to return to the situation before the law took effect where they could provide abortions after the six-week mark.

The judge assigned to the case is Robert Pitman, who was appointed by President Barack Obama. Pitman got assigned the case because he had previously presided over a challenge to the law filed by abortion

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rights activists. That case was still at a preliminary stage when it was appealed and reached the Supreme Court. Pitman can be expected to rule quickly.

WHY DID THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT GET INVOLVED?

Pressure had been mounting on the Justice Department from the White House and Democrats to take action in Texas. Attorney General Merrick Garland said the enforcement model in the Texas law could set a troubling precedent where states "empower any private individual to infringe on another's constitutionally protected rights."

The model of Senate Bill 8 is essentially a massive scale up of local abortion bans that began popping up in small Texas cities starting in 2019. But those bans had little immediate impact in most places that passed them because most weren't cities with abortion providers. Other Republican-led statehouses are already moving to follow Texas' lead.

The lawsuit marks the most aggressive involvement by the Justice Department during a decade of Texas passing increasingly strict anti-abortion measures. The most sweeping one in 2013 — which put stringent regulations on Texas abortion clinics — was ultimately overturned by the Supreme Court. But not before more than half of Texas' 40-plus abortion clinics wound up shuttering. Today, the state has roughly two dozen clinics.

WHEN WILL THE PUBLIC KNOW WHETHER THE TEXAS LAW CAN STAND?

Pitman is far from the last word on the law. The case can be appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit, where a three-judge panel would weigh in, and then on to the Supreme Court. The case could move quickly, possibly reaching the Supreme Court within weeks.

In the previous challenge to the law before Pitman, the appeals court halted proceedings before he could decide whether the law should be barred from taking effect. The Supreme Court, for its part, declined to disturb the appeals court's actions.

The high court, where conservatives hold a 6-3 majority, already planned to tackle the issue of abortion when the justices return from their summer break and begin hearing cases again in October. The court had previously agreed to hear a case out of Mississippi in which the state is asking to be allowed to ban most abortions at the 15th week of pregnancy. That ban looks modest by comparison to the Texas law.

HAS THE LAWSUIT HAD AN IMPACT?

Abortion rights groups have been among those cheering the Biden administration's decision to step in, but the filing of the lawsuit hasn't changed anything on the ground. Without any additional court action at this point, the law remains in effect.

Judge loosens Apple's grip on app store in Epic decision

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Reporter

SAN RAMON, Calif. (AP) — A federal judge ordered Apple to dismantle a lucrative part of the competitive barricade guarding its closely run iPhone app store, but rejected allegations that the company has been running an illegal monopoly that stifles competition and innovation.

The ruling issued Friday continues to chip away at the so-called "walled garden" that Apple has built around its crown jewel, the iPhone, and its app store, without toppling it completely.

The 185-page decision from U.S. District Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers also provided Apple with some vindication. The judge didn't brand Apple as a monopolist or require it to allow competing stores to offer apps for iPhones, iPads and iPods.

Those were two of the biggest objectives sought by Epic Games, the maker of the popular Fortnite video game that filed what it would hoped would be a landmark antitrust case last year after brazenly defying an exclusive payment system that funnels 15% to 30% of all in-app digital transactions on iPhones to Apple.

Such transactions can include everything from Netflix or Spotify subscriptions to the sale of digital items such as songs, movies or virtual tchotchkes for video games. Epic cast that highly lucrative fee as a price-gouging tactic that wouldn't be possible if competing stores were allowed to offer iPhone apps.

While parts of her decision raised questions about whether Apple's fees were driving up prices for consumers, Gonzalez Rogers left the fee structure intact and upheld the company's right to block other stores

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from offering apps for its iPhone. She sided with Apple on every other key point of the case.

But the judge did conclude Apple has been engaging in unfair competition under California law, prompting her to order the company to allow developers throughout the U.S. to insert links to other payment options besides its own within iPhone apps. That change would make it easier for app developers to avoid paying Apple's commissions, potentially affecting billions of dollars in revenue annually.

The prospect of Apple taking a hit to its lofty profit margins rattled investors, causing the company's stock price to fall by more than 3% in Friday's trading. That downturn delivered an \$80 billion blow to Apple's market value.

Yet Apple did its best to frame the decision as a complete victory, even as it acknowledged it may appeal the portion of the ruling that will make it easier for app developers sidestep Apple's commissions.

"We are very pleased with the court's ruling and we consider this a huge win for Apple," said Kate Adams, the company's general counsel. "This decision validates that Apple's 'success is not illegal,' as the judge said."

Gonzalez Rogers also dealt Epic a blow by ruling that the game maker breached its contract with Apple when Fortnite added a non-Apple payment system to its app. That defiance prompted Apple to oust Fortnite from its app store 13 months ago, triggering Epic's lawsuit. She ordered Epic to pay Apple nearly \$3.7 million, or 30% of the revenue it collected while violating Apple's commissions.

Epic CEO Tim Sweeney denounced the ruling in a tweet, writing that it "isn't a win for developers or for consumers."

He said Fortnite will return to Apple's app store once it can offer competitive in-app payments. "We will fight on," he added in a subsequent tweet.

"It's a bit of a mixed bag," said Stanford University law professor Mark Lemley. "I think on balance, it's a win for Apple. They dodged the biggest threat to them."

The ruling caps a trial that spent the entire month of May focused on Apple's app store, one of the pillars holding up its \$2 trillion empire.

Since that trial ended, Apple has taken two steps to loosen some of its app store rules — one to settle a lawsuit and another to appease Japanese regulators without altering its commissions. Those concessions make it easier for many apps to prod their users to pay for digital transactions in ways that avoid triggering Apple's fees.

As part of a deal with Japanese regulators announced last week, Apple had agreed to allow what it dubs "reader" apps — those that sell subscriptions to digital music, video and publications — to insert links steering users to other places to sign up for accounts and, in theory, pay for services.

Now Gonzalez Rogers is ordering Apple to go even further by allowing links for non-Apple payment options directly within all apps, something Apple has steadfastly resisted.

"Loosening the restrictions will increase competition," Gonzalez Rogers wrote. For instance, it would expose Apple to rival payment services charging lower commissions.

Another Apple antagonist, Spotify, cheered the increased ease with which consumers could choose other payment options. The company, which has been among the most strident critics of Apple's commission system, called for lawmakers and regulators to do even more to break down the walls protecting Apple's app store.

A bill introduced in Congress earlier this year proposes to obliterate Apple's commission system and open up the market to more competition. "Much more must be done," said Sen. Amy Klobuchar, a Democrat from Minnesota pushing for app store reforms.

Chris Hoofnagle, a law professor in residence at the University of California, Berkeley, views the decision as a major victory for app developers, although he is worried that the greater freedom to post in-app links will weaken privacy and security, as Apple has warned.

App developers are "going to have more opportunities to use different forms of payment and to contact people in different ways," Hoofnagle said. "If developers choose bad payment mechanisms and if they use this decision as an opportunity to kind of open the spam floodgates, you might regret this outcome."

In a research note, Cowen Washington Research Group analyst Doug Creutz said the inclusion of in-app

links to other payment options could increase the pressure on Apple to lower its commissions.

"Apple will obviously have to respond to this to try to retain people in its payment system," Creutz wrote.

Although the figures were kept confidential during the trial, analysts have estimated that Apple's app store division brings in \$15 billion to \$18 billion annually, helping to fuel the company's rapidly growing services division. That division's revenue has swelled from \$24 billion in 2016 to \$54 billion last year.

Apple CEO Tim Cook had warned that losing control over iPhone apps would create "a toxic kind of mess" during his testimony on the witness stand at the end of a four-week trial in Oakland, California.

Biden presses states to require vaccines for all teachers

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

Hoping to prevent another school year from being upended by the pandemic, President Joe Biden visited a Washington middle school Friday to push his new COVID plan, accusing some Republican governors of being "cavalier" with the health of children.

Biden's plan, announced a day earlier, would require vaccinations for up to 100 million Americans and seek to ramp up virus testing. With those measures in place, he said, schools should present little risk for transmission of the coronavirus.

"I want folks to know that we're going to be OK," Biden said during an appearance at Brookland Middle School, a short drive from the White House. "We know what it takes to keep our kids safe and our schools open."

But as the surging COVID-19 delta variant casts uncertainty over the start of a new school year — in some cases prompting schools to shut down after a few days — it's unclear whether Biden's plan will go far enough to prevent mass disruption. Biden has little direct authority over most schools, which are generally governed at the local level, and his plan faces sharp resistance from Republicans.

Under his expanded vaccine mandate, all employers with more than 100 workers must require them to get shots or test for the virus weekly. A separate provision requires vaccines for workers in Head Start programs and at schools operated by the federal government, affecting about 300,000 workers.

The plan does not explicitly require vaccines for teachers in locally governed schools, but some education leaders believe the employer rule will effectively amount to a teacher vaccine requirement in many states.

That part of the plan is being enacted through a forthcoming rule from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. And in states with OSHA plans, teachers will be among those required to get the vaccine or face testing, according to an interpretation by AASA, an association of school superintendents.

It's expected to apply to 26 states, including several with Republican governors who opposed Biden's plan, such as South Carolina, Tennessee and Arizona.

Biden did not address that aspect of his plan on Friday. Instead, he urged states to issue their own vaccine requirements for school workers.

"About 90% of school staff and teachers are vaccinated — we should have that at 100%," Biden said. "I'm calling on all of the governors to require vaccination for all teachers and staff."

Governors in a few states have already ordered teachers to get vaccinated, including in California, Oregon, New Jersey and New York. But most leave it up to school districts, and some Republican-led states have barred vaccine mandates.

Biden on Friday rebuked Republican governors who vowed to fight his new rules.

"I am so disappointed that, particularly, some Republican governors have been so cavalier with the health of these kids, so cavalier with the health of their communities," he said. "We're playing for real here. This isn't a game."

But most of his remarks struck a more conciliatory tone than a Thursday speech in which Biden vented his own frustrations with those who remain unvaccinated. He returned to a message of unity on Friday, insisting that "we've got to come together" to beat the virus.

Speaking to students at Brookland, Biden applauded those who had already been vaccinated. If all of them get shots, Biden promised to invite them to a special visit at the White House.

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He also held up Washington, D.C., as a model. The city has hosted vaccine clinics at its public schools, and 65% of children age 12 to 17 have gotten at least their first shot, a rate that Biden said is among the highest in the nation.

In a plea to America's families, Biden urged parents to get teenagers and other eligible children vaccinated as soon as possible. He argued that it's no different than standard vaccinations for measles, mumps, rubella and other diseases.

Among the greatest threats to his plan, however, is the large population of children who are still too young to get the shot. Most elementary and middle schools have children below age 12 who have not been approved to receive the coronavirus vaccines.

Speaking to those concerns, Biden said he supports an "independent" scientific process to review the shots but he also promised to make them available to younger children as soon as it's safe.

"I will do everything within my power to support the Food and Drug Administration in its efforts to do the science as safely and as quickly as possible," he said.

The expanded vaccine mandate does not apply to students, but some districts have moved to require shots for students. The Los Angeles district this week became the first major district to enact a mandate for students ages 12 and up.

In addition to vaccines, Biden's plan aims to ramp up virus testing in schools.

Testing policies vary widely by school and state. Some districts regularly test all students, including in the Los Angeles district, while some forgo any testing. And for many, it's getting harder to find testing supplies amid a nationwide shortage in rapid tests.

As part of the White House plan, the government is working to increase the supply of virus tests and make them available at retailers including Walmart and Amazon. Biden said it will lead to 300 million more coronavirus tests, including some for schools.

"I want all schools setting up regular testing programs to make sure we detect and isolate cases before they can spread," Biden said.

The plan drew support from the country's two largest teachers unions, the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers. Both groups have also endorsed vaccine mandates for all teachers and school staff.

Other education groups that support the plan include the National School Boards Association, which said it comes at an "extremely critical time." The group said it welcomes Biden's support even as education leaders face "threats, abuse and harassment" over their public health measures.

Speaking alongside Biden on Friday, first lady Jill Biden praised educators as "heroes" for their work over the past year. A longtime community college professor, the first lady said Americans have a duty to protect students as they return to the classroom.

"We owe them a promise to keep their schools open as safe as possible," she said. "We owe them a commitment to follow the science — we owe them unity so that we can fight the virus, not each other."

EXCERPT: On 9/11, reporting from Taliban-controlled Kabul

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

The following account from Kathy Gannon, now news director for Afghanistan and Pakistan for The Associated Press, is excerpted from the book "September 11: The 9/11 Story, Aftermath and Legacy," an in-depth look at AP's coverage of 9/11 and the events that followed. On that day, Gannon, reporting in the Afghan capital, received a call from her boss that changed her world forever.

In the late afternoon of Sept. 11, 2001, I received a phone call from New York, where it was morning. It was Sally Jacobsen, my boss and the AP's international editor. A plane had hit one of the World Trade Center towers, she told me. It might be an accident, but ...

Before she could finish her thought, a second plane flew into the second tower. She hung up.

I was in Kabul, the Afghan capital, where six Christian aid workers, including two young American

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women, were in jail, arrested by the Taliban for proselytizing. Two days earlier, two suicide bombers had killed Ahmad Shah Masood, who had been fighting the Taliban since they ousted his government in 1996.

In Taliban-run Afghanistan, there were no televisions. They had been outlawed along with music. Radios were the only source of news. Thirty minutes after that call from New York, my Afghan colleague Amir Shah came into our small office on the second floor of the AP house. Another plane had smashed into the Pentagon. What was going on? It had become clear that the first thoughts by AP editors in New York were correct: This was terrorism. And al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden, who had been living in Afghanistan since May 1996, even before the Taliban took power, was the mastermind.

It seemed just minutes later when Amir Shah said a fourth plane had, unbelievably, crashed into a field. Without a television, with only a crackly broadcast spitting out the most horrific of news, we didn't know what to think. Amir was worried. Was bin Laden behind the attacks? If he was, Amir was sure of one thing: "Afghanistan will be set on fire."

It wasn't until we stopped at the United Nations Guest House where the American parents of the two imprisoned Christian charity workers were staying that I saw the horrifying images of the planes slamming into the towers.

Within 24 hours, the parents would be forced to leave Afghanistan. Was an attack by the United States imminent, I wondered? We had no way to know it would be Oct. 7, nearly a month later, before the assault called Operation Enduring Freedom would begin.

It was nighttime in Kabul, then a city of about 1.5 million people, when the attacks in America happened. Electricity was scarce. The streets were mostly quiet. Small, single-bulb lights illuminated the few shops still open.

Inside, we talked to residents. They couldn't tell you where New York was or what the World Trade Center Towers were. But they understood war, fear and loss. They were sad for America but, like Amir Shah, they feared they would pay the price. They were afraid.

On Sept. 12, Taliban Foreign Minister Wakil Ahmad Muttawakil held a press conference in Kabul's Intercontinental Hotel overlooking the city. He didn't know where bin Laden was, he told reporters. "I just know he is not here," he said with a grin.

In Kabul's well-off Wazir Akbar Khan neighborhood, where The AP office was located, there were several houses with Arabic-speaking men from Middle Eastern and north African countries. The breakaway republic of Chechnya had a consulate office in the region; members of Pakistani militant groups like Jaish-e-Mohammad, which would be linked in March 2002 to the death of American journalist Daniel Pearl, lived close by.

By Sept. 15, the Taliban ordered all foreigners out of Afghanistan, even the Red Cross. From our office in Kabul, I had been booking hotel rooms for the army of AP reporters I knew would be descending on Pakistan, which was also about to close its border with Afghanistan.

I left.

The bombing began on Oct. 7, 2001. The U.S.-led coalition, along with its so-called Northern Alliance allies, a collection of warlords-turned-anti-Taliban fighters who would later be handed power in Kabul, launched an offensive to oust the Taliban.

In the mountains around Kabul, the Taliban had placed anti-aircraft weapons, their only defense against the world's most powerful air force and army. The lights were turned off at night because the Taliban believed that the Americans couldn't hit what they couldn't see, a notion they came to understand was dead wrong.

Amir Shah would call each night and whisper the latest news to me in Islamabad. He would cover the satellite phones — the only communication source — so the neighbors, most of whom were Taliban leaders, would not see the light from the devices. We couldn't call him for fear the ringing would be heard. We feared the Taliban would interpret the communication from an American news agency as U.S. spies directing the aircraft fire.

It was Oct. 23 when Amir got permission for me and AP photographer Demitri Messinis to enter Kabul.

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We were the only Western journalists allowed into Taliban-controlled areas. Hundreds of journalists were camped out in neighboring Pakistan or in Tajikistan waiting to move with the Northern Alliance, but no western journalist was in Taliban-controlled areas until we arrived.

Kabul became a city of fear. During the day, there was less bombing and people would venture out. But as darkness settled and the bombing intensified, the streets were deserted but for the occasional Taliban patrol and the howling of what seemed like an army of stray dogs.

Then the B-52 bombers began to circle in low. We moved to the basement. The bombing had gotten closer and closer to the city. One night, the B-52s pounded the hills behind the AP house that were imperious to the anti-aircraft weapons but were home to some of Kabul's poorest citizens. The next morning, we discovered some of the bombs had hit civilian homes that jut out across the hills.

We went to one home where five children had died as they slept. They were still in their beds when we got there. Amir Shah held back the tears. Like him, the children were ethnic Hazaras, perhaps the least prosperous of Afghanistan's ethnic groups.

"They could have been my children," he said.

On Nov. 13, 2001, two months and two days after the 9/11 attacks, the Taliban finally fled Kabul. The night before, a 2,000- pound bomb had slammed into a home that sat kitty corner to The AP house. It blew me across the room, destroying the window and door frames.

We fled the house soon after and headed to the Intercontinental Hotel. It was a scary ride through darkened streets. The Taliban knew the city was all but lost. They were jittery, shouting commands. Arabs on motorcycles roared past. We worried because we knew U.S. drones were taking aim; one slammed into a pickup truck not far from us. Later, we learned four Arabs were killed.

Perched on the hilltop, the Intercontinental seemed the perfect vantage point to watch the city. It wasn't yet 5 a.m. when we ventured out on Nov. 13. The sun had just begun to rise over the Hindu Kush Mountains.

The Taliban were gone.

Ground zero: A selfie stop for some, a cemetery for others

By MARK LENNIHAN, JOHN MINCHILLO and JULIE JACOBSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Twenty years after terrorists flew two planes into the World Trade Center, the memorial at ground zero has its own routine, not much different from many city tourist sites.

Visitors from around the world come and go. They snap selfies as they browse the nearly 3,000 names engraved into the parapets that frame two reflecting pools. Docents give tours. Tourists glance at their watches, decipher subway maps and check off a box. Then they leave.

But for those who live and work close to the memorial, the site is both a part of their daily routine and hallowed ground. The names on the parapets are more than mere engravings on bronze, and the 55,000 gallons of water recycling through the reflecting pools is more than a social media post. It is a constant reminder of that infamous day. It is a cemetery.

After the plaza empties around the reflecting pools each evening, Kevin Hansen pulls on blue work gloves, grabs his torch and begins his nightly work of repairing and maintaining the long, bronze parapets with the names of the dead.

Hansen was 8 and in elementary school on Long Island in 2001.

"You just remember everyone getting phone calls and teachers not knowing what was going on. And then parents were coming to school to pick kids up," he said.

Of his work, Hansen says, "It's important to me."

"This is a sign that we all came together back in 2001. This is my giveback of patriotism and this (event) cannot be forgotten," he said. "I believe this place brings people to see that there is evil in the world, but it can be overcome."

While patrolling his beat around the World Trade Center, NYPD officer Mike Dougherty keeps an atten-

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tive eye on the memorial, often cleaning grime from the parapets and answering questions for tourists. "If we see something on the panel we'll make sure to wipe it off, and I see their names and I'll touch them. I'm here looking over them, basically. Try to relay that to people that don't understand what this is all about," he said.

"I get that, a lot of questions sometimes, you know: 'What is this area?' And I don't take offense to it. I like explaining to them where the buildings stood. What this is all about. Just to keep the memory of everyone in your life when you tell somebody who doesn't have that connection."

The 25-year NYPD veteran started as an apprentice electrician working inside the World Trade Center before becoming a police officer. He was on patrol in Brooklyn when the planes hit the towers.

When he patrols the memorial plaza now, he sometimes stops in his tracks.

"I'll just be walking around the side or in one of the particular security pools, and sometimes something will just hit me. I just start staring out at the plaza. So, I'll take a couple of minutes to compose myself."

"It's a privilege to be here. I'm at the end of my career, towards the end of it anyway. And I couldn't think of a better place for me to finish up," he said.

After moving to Battery Park City in 1998, the World Trade Center was a part of Joan Mastropaolo's daily life. She not only lived across the street, but also worked two blocks east of the twin towers and shopped in the mall below.

"It was my front lawn. Every time I walked out of my apartment building and I crossed over, I came through the World Trade Center," she said.

But on the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, "This vibrant community became nothing in a matter of 102 minutes."

"After everything happened here, I was completely shut out from this situation for a couple of years. I wasn't a rescue recovery worker or a volunteer. So, I couldn't get on the site, and I felt like a big part of my life was robbed from me," she said. "When they started bringing the trees back to this site, for me, that was a symbol of returning life back to the site."

Mastropaolo now volunteers as a docent at the 9/11 Tribute Museum, where she given more than 800 walking tours.

"I try to explain to them the magnitude of the loss."

Michael Keene has been an owner of O'Hara's Restaurant and Pub for 35 years. A popular watering hole for firefighters at a station a block away and for area office workers, O'Hara's shut down for seven months after the attacks.

Its clientele changed when it reopened, becoming popular with crews working at ground zero. Keene now still offers Guinness on tap to the firefighters. Visitors to the memorial also frequent his pub.

"It's special now, because the people that come over to the site after they've gone through the museum, and it's tough to go through the museum. People that come over here are very respectful. And just to be in a place that was destroyed then and rebuilt, you know, there is something special about that."

When the plaza around the reflecting pools closes, James Maroon dons waders and a headlamp and begins the deliberate task of vacuuming the floors of the giant fountains.

"We try and make it a place where people believe their families are being watched and taken care of," said Maroon, an engineer for the National September 11 Memorial & Museum.

In 2001, Maroon was working at the New York Mercantile Exchange just west of the World Trade Center. He was crossing West Street when the first plane hit. Maroon knew many of the brokers who died in the attacks.

"Sometimes when we're outside I look at the panel that their names are on. And one of them, Elkin Yuen, his daughter was due to be born. Now she's going to be 20 years old. And never met her father."

For more AP coverage of the 9/11 anniversary from New York and around the globe, visit our hub at <https://apnews.com/hub/9-11-a-world-changed>.

FDA official hopeful younger kids can get shots this year

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

The Food and Drug Administration's vaccine chief said Friday the agency will rapidly evaluate COVID-19 vaccinations for younger children as soon as it gets the needed data — and won't cut corners.

Dr. Peter Marks told The Associated Press he is "very, very hopeful" that vaccinations for 5- to 11-year-olds will be underway by year's end. Maybe sooner: One company, Pfizer, is expected to turn over its study results by the end of September, and Marks say the agency hopefully could analyze them "in a matter of weeks."

In the U.S., anyone 12 and older is eligible for COVID-19 vaccines. But with schools reopening and the delta variant causing more infections among kids, many parents are anxiously wondering when younger children can get the shots.

Pfizer's German partner BioNTech told weekly Der Spiegel Friday that it was on track "in the coming weeks" to seek approval of the companies' COVID-19 vaccine for 5- to 11-year-olds. Moderna, which makes a second U.S. vaccine, told investors this week to expect its data on that age group by year's end. Both companies also are testing their vaccines down to age 6 months, but those results will come later.

FDA's Marks spoke with the AP Friday about the steps involved in clearing pediatric vaccines. The conversation has been edited for clarity and length.

Q: Many parents had hoped for vaccines for children under 12 by the time schools reopened. Why is it taking so long?

A: Before you can actually approve something in an age range, you actually have to study in that age range. ... Children under the age of 12, they're not little adults, they're not. And so one does actually have to study this and even change perhaps the dose that's being given — and in fact, that's had to happen, change the dose.

We have to then be able to look at the data at FDA when it gets submitted to us. We'll look at it very rapidly and feel confident that when we that we've looked through the data that these are going to be safe and effective and that we can reassure parents that the benefits of their child getting one of these vaccines certainly outweighs any risks.

Q: The American Academy of Pediatrics cited delta's growing threat to children in urging a faster decision, after FDA requested expanded child studies. Why does FDA want that extra data?

A: I'm not sure that there's much disagreement. We clearly want to see children in the age range 5 to 11 vaccinated as soon as possible. But the difference between the smaller dataset and the larger dataset is not very much in terms of time, because there were enough willing participants here — parents who were very interested in having their 5- to 11-year-olds vaccinated — that it didn't take that much longer.

We'll be able to give people I think a much better sense that these vaccines are indeed safe and effective for their children.

Q: Could 5- to 11-year-olds be vaccinated by the end of the year?

A: I am very hopeful in that regard. Very, very hopeful in that regard.

Q: How fast can FDA act once the companies submit their data?

A: Pfizer made a public statement that they intended to give us their data by the end of September. ... We're going to do a thorough job on that as quickly as we can so that at the end of the day, hopefully within a matter of weeks rather than a matter of months, we'll be able to come to some conclusion -- again, barring some finding that we're not expecting.

Q: How will the trials show effectiveness for kids?

A: In the 12- to 15-year-olds, we saw an immune response that was actually as good or better — in this case, it was for the Pfizer vaccine — it was actually better than in 16 and up. And so we'd want to see something similar to that.

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Q: Will the trials give information about very rare side effects like the heart inflammation sometimes seen in teens and young adults?

A: We'll know at least that it's not ... happening at some much higher rate in younger children. That we can rule out. And we'll also make sure that there aren't any other side effects that we haven't seen in the older age range.

Q: Two of FDA's top vaccine reviewers recently announced they're leaving. The agency also is evaluating booster shots for adults. Is that making a child vaccination decision more difficult?

A: I'm not worried that we're going to suffer any delays because of that. ... We will be parallel processing.

Q: There are reports that some parents are seeking adult vaccines for their kids. What's your advice?

A: My strongest advice is please don't do that. Please let us do the evaluation that we need to do to ensure that when you do vaccinate your child, you vaccinate the child with the right dose and in a manner that's safe.

If you want to do something now for your child, make sure that you're vaccinated, that your household is vaccinated, that all the people that come in contact with your children are vaccinated and that your child knows how to wear a mask.

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Wigged out: A Venezuelan spymaster's life on the lam

By ARITZ PARRA and JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Wigs, a fake moustache, plastic surgery and a new safe house every three months — these are just some of the tools of deception authorities in Spain believe a former Venezuelan spymaster relied on to evade capture on a U.S. warrant for narcoterrorism.

The two-year manhunt for Gen. Hugo Carvajal ended Thursday night when police raided a rundown apartment in a quiet Madrid neighborhood where they found the fugitive in a back room holding a sharp knife in what they described as a last desperate attempt to evade arrest.

Nicknamed "El Pollo" ("The Chicken"), Carvajal has been a thorn in the side of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration since 2014, when he was arrested in Aruba on a U.S. warrant only to go free after President Nicolás Maduro's government pressured the small Dutch Caribbean island to release him.

He returned to Caracas an anti-imperialist hero but was quickly relegated to a minor role in the ruling socialist party. Then in 2019 he broke with Maduro amid a wave of antigovernment unrest, urging fellow members of the military to switch allegiance to Juan Guaidó, the opposition leader the U.S. had just recognized as Venezuela's legitimate president.

He resurfaced in Europe months later, greeted at Madrid's airport by two Spanish intelligence officers after traveling there with a false passport, The Associated Press has previously reported. From there, he had hoped to continue plotting against Maduro.

But he was forced underground a second time after Spain's National Court in 2019 ruled that he should be extradited to New York to face federal charges that he worked with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, to "flood" the U.S. with cocaine.

While on the lam, he was rumored to be in Portugal, then a hideout in the Caribbean. Some Venezuelans — always up for a good conspiracy — believed he was already on U.S. soil spilling secrets about the Venezuelan military's involvement in drug trafficking, or had returned to Caracas to make amends with the government he had vowed to overthrow. Others speculated he was being protected by Spain's leftist government, which has strayed from the U.S.' hardline policy seeking to isolate Maduro.

The reality was much simpler: The 61-year-old had never left Madrid. His last hideout was a mere 2.5 kilometers (1.5 miles) from the headquarters of the National Police.

"If they actually manage to extradite him this time, it will be a spectacular way to show how justice is winning over diplomacy and intelligence operations," said Dick Gregorie, who as a federal prosecutor in

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Miami also indicted Carvajal on drug charges.

Gregorie compared Carvajal to another spymaster he investigated, former Panamanian strongman Gen. Manuel Noriega. Both men, he said, were capable of cutting deals on all sides while scuttling the pursuit of justice.

"He could've been sent here a number of times but for various reasons that are undisclosed he was allowed to go," said Gregorie, who is now retired. "But he is probably the most knowledgeable defendant with regards to all of the corruption and dirty deeds that went on in Venezuela for a decade."

Carvajal's capture appears to have been made possible thanks to intelligence provided by the DEA in June, according to a document published Friday by Spain's El Mundo newspaper. In the two-page confidential letter, Dustin Harmon, a DEA attache in Madrid, provided police with the name and contact details for a Venezuelan woman he said owned and lived in the apartment where Carvajal was hiding.

Harmon's letter also alerted Spanish authorities that Carvajal was known to use wigs and other disguises, as well as undergo plastic surgery, to avoid detection. The DEA declined to comment.

Spanish police said a dog was Carvajal's constant companion in what was otherwise a very lonely, restricted life.

"He changed hideouts every three months, using properties in which he lived cloistered, without going out into the streets, for fear he would be recognized publicly," police said in a statement.

Steeped in spy craft, he changed phones often and relied on others to deliver food. He breathed fresh air only at night, when he would step onto his apartment's plant-covered balcony in disguise.

Video released by Spain's National Police on Friday showed special forces breaking into the apartment, where the fugitive's presence had gone unnoticed even by those sharing the 12-story building.

The U.S. had offered \$10 million for Carvajal's arrest, repeatedly advertising the reward as bait in the hopes that someone from Carvajal's inner circle would betray him.

But it's not immediately clear if somebody snitched. His wife Angélica Flores, who lived in Madrid with the couple's five children and other relatives, provided little insight.

"I'm prepared for either situation, the good or the bad," she told the AP when contacted by phone with the news. "It's up to him and others to give statements. This case will continue and we'll see how it ends."

The case against Carvajal in New York centers on a DC-9 jet from Caracas that landed in southern Mexico in 2006 with 5.6 tons of cocaine packed into 128 suitcases. He faces incriminating evidence from phone records, drug ledgers and the testimony of at least 10 witnesses, among them former members of the so-called "Cartel of the Suns" comprised of corrupt Venezuelan military officers deep into the narcotics trade, according to an affidavit accompanying the indictment.

The New York indictment also repeats an accusation that Carvajal provided Colombian rebels with automatic weapons and protection inside Venezuela.

"Carvajal is the key link that can explain the business dealings between Colombian guerrillas, Mexican drug cartels and other criminal organizations in the U.S. and Europe," said Martin Rodil, a Washington-based security consultant for U.S. law enforcement who has worked on multiple Venezuelan investigations. "He was the hinge between all those groups."

The former general has scoffed at the allegations. He says his contacts with the FARC — designated a terrorist organization by the U.S. — were authorized by Chávez and limited to securing the release of a kidnapped Venezuelan businessman and paving the way for peace talks with the Colombian government. He also maintains that judicial probes in Venezuela and Mexico never linked him to the cocaine-laden plane and that the aircraft's owner backs his alibi.

The extradition order against Carvajal followed a back-and-forth legal battle in which Spain's National Court reversed an earlier ruling by a high court magistrate throwing out the U.S. warrant for being politically motivated. In the interim, Carvajal was released and fled when he was tipped off he would be rearrested. He wasn't heard from again except when he said last year that he was going underground to protest what he viewed as political interference in his case.

He resurfaced on social media earlier this month, posting what could be a preview of his eventual de-

fense: a statement accusing former Colombian President Álvaro Uribe, who was for years the U.S.' main caretaker in the war on drugs, of "fabricating" evidence against him and the Chávez government even as it was cooperating with U.S. prosecutors to arrest Colombian narcos hiding inside Venezuela

"It's a lie that will eventually collapse," Carvajal wrote. "I've always trusted that the truth will prevail."

Goodman reported from Miami.

UN raises alarm on Taliban crackdown on dissent, journalists

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The United Nations on Friday sounded the alarm over Taliban crackdowns on peaceful protests, many of them by women demanding equal rights, and journalists covering such events.

In one case, two Afghan video journalists were beaten with iron rods.

Tagi Daryabi said he and a colleague were covering a protest earlier this week by women demanding their rights from Afghanistan's new Taliban rulers. Taliban fighters stopped the two journalists, bound their hands and dragged them away to a police station in Kabul's District Three.

The 22-year-old photographer told The Associated Press that the first thing he heard in the station were screams from a nearby room. Several fighters then began beating him and his colleague, 28-year-old Neamatullah Naqdi.

At one point, Daryabi said he was beaten non-stop for 10 minutes. "I couldn't think. I didn't know if I would be killed or if I would live," he said, his face and body still bearing the scars.

"We call on the Taliban to immediately cease the use of force toward, and the arbitrary detention of, those exercising their right to peaceful assembly and the journalists covering the protests," the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights said in a statement Friday.

It said reports point to an increasing use of force by the Taliban "against those involved in or reporting on the demonstrations."

Uncowed, Daryabi said he would return to the street to cover another protest.

"It's very dangerous for me to stand up to them. The Taliban say the media is free, but how can they say that when they are beating me and my colleagues?" he said. "We cannot just stop our work."

Daryabi and Naqdi work for the small, privately owned Etilaat Roz newspaper, which also broadcasts video news on a YouTube channel.

In the chaotic days following the Taliban's takeover of Kabul on Aug. 15, thousands of people, including women and young journalists, rushed to the Kabul airport desperate to escape the militants' rule.

In the weeks since, women have held multiple protests for their rights, almost all of them broken up violently by Taliban fighters. Two men were killed last week when Taliban opened fire on a women's rights protest in the western city of Herat. Journalists have been harassed at the rallies, including another cameraman who was beaten.

Despite the abuse at the hands of the Taliban, Daryabi said he wasn't ready to give up on his homeland.

"I will see if the Taliban continues like this, but if they change and bring a face that protects the media, I will live here. My life is in Afghanistan. But I don't know, because today I can't guarantee anything," he said.

Daryabi's newspaper and other media houses say it's not clear whether the heavy handedness of some local police commanders is sanctioned by the Taliban's media wing. That office has shown a more engaging side, welcoming foreign journalists, and allowing some women presenters to remain on the air at the country's most popular TV station, TOLO TV.

"My own feeling is that there seems to be a disconnect between the leadership and...the rank-and-file type commanders, who are doing this on the ground," said Saad Mohsini, executive director of Moby Media Group, which owns TOLO TV. "The way they behave reflects perhaps, not the official Taliban media policy, but more the attitude of that particular commander."

Etilaat Roz chief editor Khaadim Karimi, who went to the police station to rescue his reporters, said one Taliban fighter tried to stop the beating of the two journalists by his comrades.

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"I saw his humanness. He tried to help," Karimi said. Daryabi and Naaqdi were freed after about four hours.

Mohsini said the media needs guarantees and protection. He called for a commission including both the Taliban information ministry officials and representatives of the media to hear complaints from both sides.

Mohsini, whose TOLO TV employs hundreds, says he has stayed engaged with the Taliban leadership as it navigates its way forward.

Governments around the world are deeply skeptical. In their eyes, the new interim all-Taliban Cabinet defied the movement's promises to be inclusive. Instead, the militants appear to have embraced the leadership of the 1990s, when their harsh interpretation of Islam denied women rights and severely restricted the media.

One difference now is that those leaders have a global exposure they didn't have during their earlier time in power.

Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, for example, rarely left the movement's former heartland, Kandahar in the south, when they last ruled. In recent years, he was the Taliban chief negotiator, stood on the same stage as world leaders, worked out a deal with the U.S. heavily weighted in the Taliban's favor and now is the deputy premier.

It was Baradar who helped ensure the departure from Kabul on Thursday and Friday of American citizens and Afghan green card holders on the first commercial flights.

Still, hundreds of Afghans in the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif are waiting to leave the country. But the Taliban have refused to allow their aircraft to depart, demanding their documents. The Taliban say only Afghans with proper travel documents will be allowed to leave.

The Afghans stranded in Mazar-e-Sharif, many of whom have worked for the U.S. and German military, fear they will be forgotten.

DoorDash, Grubhub, Uber Eats sue NYC over pandemic fee caps

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writer

Three of the nation's largest food delivery companies are suing New York City over a limit on fees it put in place during the pandemic to protect restaurants devastated by the forced closure of their dining rooms.

The city has continued to extend those caps even as vaccinations allow more indoor dining which, according to the companies, cost them millions of dollars over the summer.

In the suit filed late Thursday the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, DoorDash, Grubhub and Uber Eats call the fee caps government overreach. The companies say they were "instrumental in keeping restaurants afloat and food industry workers employed" after investing millions of dollars in relief for those businesses.

They are filing for an injunction that would prevent the city from enforcing an extension on the fee caps adopted in August.

The companies are seeking unspecified monetary damages as well as a jury trial.

New York Law Department spokesman Nicholas Paolucci said in an email that the city's initiative is legally sound and will be defended in court.

The city of New York first enacted the price cap in May 2020 in response to the pandemic, limiting the rate that third-party platforms could charge restaurants at 15% of an online order for delivery services, and 5% for all other services, including marketing.

Last month, New York City Council passed a handful of bills it said would help small restaurants, like prohibiting some third-party delivery service charges and mandating that their phone numbers are listed on those delivery sites.

It also pushed forward an extension on the fee caps that would not expire until at least early next year.

Food delivery services, Grubhub, DoorDash and Uber Eats among them, that experienced explosive growth during the pandemic are increasingly clashing with local governments who say restaurants and consumers are getting hit with exorbitant fees and high costs.

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Last month Chicago officials accused DoorDash and Grubhub of harming the city's restaurants and their customers by charging high fees and through other deceptive practices. Delivery companies have been the target of legal authorities in other cities and states before, but those efforts have targeted specific policies compared to Chicago's attack on numerous elements of the companies' operations. The companies called Chicago's lawsuits baseless.

San Francisco's district attorney has accused delivery companies of violating California law by classifying drivers as contractors. And Washington, D.C., reached a settlement with DoorDash in 2019 after alleging the company misled customers about how much drivers received in tips.

The Massachusetts attorney general's office in July filed a lawsuit accusing Grubhub of charging restaurants illegally high fees during the pandemic. The state had capped fees for much of 2020.

In the lawsuit filed late Thursday, Grubhub, DoorDash and Uber Eats argue that New York city has continually pushed back the expiration date of the price caps and that now there's no date at all, making them permanent. They also claim that the law has cost them "hundreds of millions of dollars" through July.

"The ordinance is unconstitutional because, among other things, it interferes with freely negotiated contracts between platforms and restaurants by changing and dictating the economic terms on which a dynamic industry operates," the lawsuit states.

Food delivery companies, despite soaring revenues, have delivered mixed economic results even as they were transformed into a critical service during the pandemic.

Orders handled by DoorDash reached unprecedented levels during its most recent quarter and while revenue growth slowed from the height of the pandemic, the company said last month that sales were still up an astounding 83%, to \$1.24 billion.

Yet the company lost \$102 million. Start-ups have to invest large sums to grow and delivery start-ups say that has grown worse as they are forced to spend more to lure new drivers as infections rise. DoorDash said that fee caps cost it \$26 million during the most recent three-month reporting period.

In a prepared statement Friday, DoorDash said putting caps on fees can lead to higher prices for customers and hurt drivers if rising prices reduce orders overall.

"Imposing permanent price controls is an unprecedented and dangerous overreach by the government and will limit the options small businesses rely on to compete in an increasingly competitive market," the company said.

DoorDash has already filed suit to block a cap on fees put into effect by San Francisco.

Post-9/11, Europe's weak spots make it a jihadist target

By BARRY HATTON Associated Press

LISBON, Portugal (AP) — In the 20 years since the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, a mixture of homegrown extremists, geography and weaknesses in counterterrorism strategies have combined to turn Europe into a prime target for jihadists bent on hurting the West.

Europe watched open-mouthed as the 9/11 attacks unfolded across the Atlantic. Life on the Old Continent, too, would be transformed by those events, with hundreds of people killed and thousands injured at the hands of Islamic extremists in the following years.

Since 9/11, Europe has witnessed many more jihadist attacks on its soil than the United States. Why? A variety of reasons, analysts say.

Over the past decade or so, "what we've seen in Western Europe is an unprecedented jihadist mobilization," says Fernando Reinares, director of the program on Violent Radicalization and Global Terrorism at the Elcano Royal Institute in Madrid.

Evidence of that, he says, is not only the bombings, vehicle rammings and stabbings that have tormented Western Europe in recent times, but also the tens of thousands of European Muslims who felt compelled to join insurgent terrorist groups during recent wars in Syria and Iraq.

Western Europe has struggled to integrate significant Muslim populations into mainstream society. Many Muslims are disadvantaged and feel disenfranchised, and some harbor grievances against the countries

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where they live.

"There is a sense of alienation and a sense of frustration (that) jihadists are often latching onto," says Peter Neumann, a professor of Security Studies at King's College London.

"That's not the same in the United States," says Neumann, the principal adviser on security policy for candidate Armin Laschet in the current German election campaign. "American Muslims are much less hostile toward their own country than European Muslims, and they're much better integrated."

And in recent years, amid the growing influence of the Islamic State group propaganda and promises, the soldiers returning from Syria and Iraq have felt inspired to target their home countries in Europe, sowing alarm among European governments.

As it turned out, 2001 was a watershed year for jihadist terror activity in the United States and Europe. At the turn of the century, the United States "was the big prize for al-Qaida, not Europe," says Olivier Guitta, managing director of GlobalStrat, an international security and risk consultancy firm in London.

But once the United States toughened its security after 9/11, he says, al-Qaida went hunting for easier targets. In Europe, it took an opportunistic approach, recruiting networks of supporters in Muslim communities to stage spectacular attacks.

That strategy brought some grim milestones for Europe. In 2004, train bombings in Madrid killed 193 people and injured more than 2,000. A year later London bombings, sometimes referred to as 7/7, featuring coordinated suicide bomb attacks targeting the public transport system that killed 52 people and injured more than 700.

Later, the Islamic State group became the chief menace. It claimed responsibility for a string of notorious attacks, including one in Paris in 2015 that killed 130 people and wounded hundreds of others — France's deadliest violence since World War II. In 2016, nail bombs went off in Brussels, killing 32 people as well as the three perpetrators and injuring more than 300 people. Later the same year, a truck drove into crowds in Nice, France, killing 86 people and injuring 434.

Some critics have blamed that violence on weak links in the continent's defense. Intelligence capabilities differ widely among the European Union's 27 member countries.

Daniel Benjamin, formerly the senior counterterrorism adviser to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and now president of the American Academy in Berlin, says that problem is hard to avoid in such a patchwork of countries of varying size and wealth.

"Inevitably," he says, "there are going to be stronger and weaker law enforcement and intelligence communities among such a varied a set of countries as you find in Europe, especially ones with such varied resources."

Even so, Guitta of GlobalStrat says that counterterrorism cooperation among EU countries has improved considerably since the 2015 Paris attacks.

That may prove precious in coming times. Reinares, of Spain's Elcano Royal Institute, predicts that al-Qaida and the Islamic State group, rivalling for prominence, "will compete to stage large attacks in the West." And Europe must be on guard because it is an easier target than North America or Australia, he told an online conference Thursday.

The continent, Reinares says, lies closer to the jihadist bases and is more permeable, whether internally through the absence of border checks across 26 countries or through migrant routes used by tens of thousands of people each year.

Queen's London representative says royals back BLM movement

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Queen Elizabeth II and the royal family back the Black Lives Matter movement, one of her senior representatives said in a television interview to be broadcast Friday.

Philanthropist Kenneth Olisa, the first Black Lord Lieutenant of Greater London, told Channel 4 News that he had discussed the issue with members of the royal family since George Floyd died in police custody in the United States last year, sparking global protests over racial injustice.

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Asked if they supported the movement, the philanthropist and businessman who is the monarch's personal representative in Greater London said: "The answer is easily yes."

"I have discussed with the Royal Household this whole issue of race, particularly in the last 12 months since the George Floyd incident," he said in excerpts from the interview released before the broadcast. "It's a hot conversation topic. The question is what more can we do to bind society to remove these barriers. They (the royals) care passionately about making this one nation bound by the same values."

The comments come as Buckingham Palace struggles to combat suggestions of racism raised by the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, also known as Prince Harry and Meghan, during a March interview with Oprah Winfrey.

Meghan, who is biracial, said an unidentified member of the royal family had raised "concerns" about the color of her baby's skin before she gave birth to her first child. The couple also alleged that Meghan was the victim of callous treatment during her time as a working royal.

Prince William, Harry's older brother, was forced to respond after reporters shouted questions at him during a visit to an East London school.

"We're very much not a racist family," William said as his wife, Kate, walked by his side.

Harry and Meghan stepped away from royal duties earlier this year and moved to California.

20 years later, fallout from toxic WTC dust cloud grows

By DAVID B. CARUSO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The dust cloud caught Carl Sadler near the East River, turning his clothes and hair white as he looked for a way out of Manhattan after escaping from his office at the World Trade Center.

Gray powder billowed through the open windows and terrace door of Mariama James' downtown apartment, settling, inches thick in places, into her rugs and children's bedroom furniture.

Barbara Burnette, a police detective, spat the soot from her mouth and throat for weeks as she worked on the burning rubble pile without a protective mask.

Today, all three are among more than 111,000 people enrolled in the World Trade Center Health Program, which gives free medical care to people with health problems potentially linked to the dust.

Two decades after the twin towers' collapse, people are still coming forward to report illnesses that might be related to the attacks.

To date, the U.S. has spent \$11.7 billion on care and compensation for those exposed to the dust -- about \$4.6 billion more than it gave to the families of people killed or injured on Sept. 11, 2001. More than 40,000 people have gotten payments from a government fund for people with illnesses potentially linked to the attacks.

Scientists still can't say for certain how many people developed health problems as a result of exposure to the tons of pulverized concrete, glass, asbestos, gypsum and God knows what else that fell on Lower Manhattan when the towers fell.

Many people enrolled in the health program have conditions common in the general public, like skin cancer, acid reflux or sleep apnea. In most situations, there is no test that can tell whether someone's illness is related to the Trade Center dust, or a result of other factors, like smoking, genetics or obesity.

Over the years, that has led to some friction between patients who are absolutely sure they have an illness connected to 9/11, and doctors who have doubts.

"Most people thought I was crazy back then," Mariama James says.

She initially had a hard time persuading doctors that the chronic ear infections, sinus issues and asthma afflicting her children, or her own shortness of breath, had anything to do with the copious amounts of dust she had to clean out of her apartment.

Years of research have produced partial answers about 9/11 health problems like hers. The largest number of people enrolled in the federal health program suffer from chronic inflammation of their sinus or nasal cavities or from reflux disease, a condition that can cause symptoms including heartburn, sore

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throat and a chronic cough.

The reasons for this are not well understood. Doctors say it could be related to their bodies getting stuck in cycles of chronic inflammation initially triggered by irritation from the dust.

Post-traumatic stress disorder has emerged as one of the most common, persistent health conditions, afflicting about 12,500 people enrolled in the health program. Nearly 19,000 enrollees have a mental health problem believed to be linked to the attacks. More than 4,000 patients have some type of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, a family of potentially debilitating breathing problems.

Time has helped heal some physical ailments, but not others. Many first responders who developed a chronic cough later had it fade, or disappear entirely, but others have shown little improvement.

About 9% of firefighters exposed to the dust still report a persistent cough, according to Fire Department research. About 22% report experiencing shortness of breath. About 40% still have chronic sinus problems or acid reflux.

Tests on Fire Department personnel who spent time at ground zero found that their lung function declined 10 to 12 times greater than the rate normally expected due to aging in the first year after 9/11.

On the encouraging side, doctors say their worst fears about a possible wave of deadly 9/11 cancers haven't come true.

Not yet, at least.

Nearly 24,000 people exposed to trade center dust have gotten cancer over the past two decades. But for the most part, it has been at rates in line with what researchers expect to see in the general public. The largest number have skin cancer, which is commonly caused by sunlight.

Rates of a few specific types of cancer — including malignant melanoma, thyroid cancer and prostate cancer — have been found to be modestly elevated, but researchers say that could be due to more cases being caught in medical monitoring programs.

"We really don't have the tremendous elevations in cancer I was afraid of," says Dr. Michael Crane, director of the World Trade Center health clinic at Mount Sinai. "I was terrified that we were going to have epidemic lung cancer."

One study showed that cancer mortality rates have actually been lower among city firefighters and paramedics exposed to Trade Center dust than for most Americans, possibly because frequent medical screenings caught cancers early.

Beneficiaries of that screening include people like Burnette, who initially started getting treatment at the Mount Sinai clinic for a lung disease — hypersensitivity pneumonitis with fibrosis — that she developed after spending three weeks in the swirling dust at ground zero.

During one of those visits in 2017, a scan wound up detecting lung cancer.

"Had I not been in the program, or not seen Dr. Crane, I don't know that they would have found it," Burnette says. Since then she has had two rounds of chemotherapy. It hasn't cured her, but it has kept the cancer at bay.

In the federal health program's early years, many people enrolling were police officers, firefighters and other people who worked on the debris pile. More recently, though, a majority of applications have been from people who worked or lived in Lower Manhattan -- folks like Carl Sadler, who was in Morgan Stanley's 76th floor office in the Trade Center's south tower when it was struck and rocked by a hijacked aircraft.

"There were millions of pieces of paper flying out. Credenzas. Computers," Sadler says. "We saw chairs flying by that looked like they had people in them."

He worked his way down stairwells and escalators to the street, then moved away with the crowd. "As we got to Water Street, just a block away from the Fulton Fish Market, there was a huge explosion and the clouds and everything just turned black ash and gray and we were covered with soot," he says.

Initially, Sadler's health seemed fine. But a few years after the attacks, he started to get winded while exercising and suffering from recurring bronchitis. In his 60s, he had to give up some outdoor pursuits like skiing and soccer.

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"I just had breathing problems," he says, "but I never knew what they were."

Now 80, he has been diagnosed over the years with acid reflux disease, asthma, and also thyroid cancer and skin melanoma, for which he was successfully treated. He figured it was all just part of getting older until around 2017, when a friend suggested he register with the World Trade Center health program.

"He said, 'You have a lot of health issues. You've had a lot of health issues. You should register,'" Sadler says.

Last year another 6,800 people joined the health program. Not all its members are currently sick. Many have signed up in case they get cancer in the future. Some have had their conditions clear up. Last year, about 1,000 people in the program got in-patient treatment and around 30,400 got outpatient treatment, according to program statistics.

The victim compensation fund, which makes payments to people with illnesses linked to the attacks, has an unlimited budget from Congress, but the medical program has grown so much it might run out of money. Members of Congress have introduced a bill that would provide an additional \$2.6 billion over 10 years to cover an expected funding gap starting in 2025.

Under the program, anyone who worked or lived in Lower Manhattan or a small slice of Brooklyn is eligible for free care if they develop certain illnesses. The list includes about a dozen types of airway or digestive disorders, 10 different psychological disorders and at least two dozen types of cancer.

Research is also underway to possibly add to the list of covered conditions. The program's administrator, Dr. John Howard, says conditions being studied now include autoimmune diseases, like rheumatoid arthritis.

One early estimate was that as many as 490,000 people could wind up being covered, in part because people don't have to prove their sickness is related to the Sept. 11 attacks to qualify. If a person has a condition on the list, they are presumed to be eligible.

"We cover lung cancer, regardless of attribution issues," Howard says. "If you have lung cancer, we don't go through an analysis of how many pack years of smoking you engaged in."

Viewed through the lens of public health, what might the next 20 years after 9/11 hold for people who were there on that morning, and on the days and weeks that followed?

The average age of enrollees in the federal health program is now around 60, and Dr. Jacqueline Moline, director of the World Trade Center health clinic at the Northwell Health medical system, is concerned that people's health problems will worsen as they age. Cancer caused by asbestos, she noted, can take as long as 40 years to develop after exposure.

"We are just getting to the point where we might start seeing stuff," Moline says. She's also deeply concerned about the long-term effect of post-traumatic stress.

In addition to the psychological harm, there are fears that the constant jolts of adrenaline and other stress hormones that come with PTSD could worsen heart problems or weaken the immune system. And with that, the emotional and physiological ripples of one day in September 20 years ago could collide in new and debilitating ways.

Crane, who has been treating ground zero responders since the beginning, says one thing is clear based on the continuing stream of new patients: The issue isn't going away.

"They keep on coming," he says. "They keep on coming in the door."

David Caruso, New York City news editor for The Associated Press, has covered the aftermath of 9/11 for more than a decade. Follow him on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/dcarusoAP>

At scene of Ethiopia's new killings, some fight, some flee

Associated Press undefined

CHENNA TEKLEHAYMANOT, Ethiopia (AP) — The smell of death lingered for days after the killings. The bodies, more than a dozen in the uniforms of fighters, others in civilian clothing, were still scattered on the muddy ground.

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In a nearby churchyard, many more were already buried — at least 59 people killed by forces from Ethiopia's northern Tigray region, residents alleged. Six bodies of priests were laid to rest inside the church itself. In their rush to flee to safer areas of the Amhara region, residents said at times they placed multiple bodies in single graves.

At the scene of one of the deadliest battles of Ethiopia's 10-month Tigray conflict, witness accounts reflected the increasingly blurred line between combatant and civilian after the federal government weeks ago urged all capable citizens to stop the Tigray forces "once and for all."

When the Tigray fighters captured the village of Chenna Teklehaymanot in the Amhara region on Aug. 31, shortly after a military division defending the area left for unknown reasons, "our (local) defense forces confronted them. Ordinary people here also joined with whatever they could," said 66-year-old Dagnew Hune. He told The Associated Press he witnessed the ensuing killings and helped to bury the dead.

About 100 people are still missing, Dagnew said on Thursday, walking past what he said were fresh graves in the churchyard covered with tree branches and stones.

Local officials have said as many as 200 people in all may have been killed over several days of fighting, with the worst of it on Sept. 4 in Chenna Teklehaymanot after Ethiopian forces reportedly blocked an attempt by Tigray fighters to seize the city of Gondar.

The Tigray forces have since retreated north, residents said, leaving survivors to check the pockets of dead fighters for clues to their identities. And some questioned why the division of Ethiopian soldiers had left them alone, with only local militia and residents to defend them.

Since retaking much of their embattled home region from Ethiopian forces in June, the Tigray fighters have brought the war into the country's neighboring regions of Afar and Amhara, where Chenna Teklehaymanot is located. The Tigray forces say they are pressuring Ethiopia's government to lift a blockade on Tigray that has left millions of people without telecommunications, electricity, banking services and almost all humanitarian aid.

Now a massive humanitarian crisis that already affects millions inside Tigray is spreading as hundreds of thousands of people flee the Tigray fighters, fearing their retaliatory attacks. The Tigray forces have said they are not attacking civilians.

But grieving witnesses and survivors in Chenna Teklehaymanot said the Tigray forces arrived demanding food, then killed people who tried to resist when the fighters killed their animals or looted their properties.

"Many of the innocent civilians here have lost their lives," said local priest Yared Adamu. Holding a cross, he walked inside the damaged church, where bullet casings were scattered on the ground.

Spokesman for the Tigray forces Getachew Reda, speaking with the AP on Friday, called allegations that Tigray fighters had targeted civilians in the village "absolutely, absolutely false." He accused Amhara regional special forces of forcing civilians to fight, and "of course they will be caught in the crossfire."

Told that residents had not reported being forced to fight, Getachew replied, "Whatever they told you was staged drama." He also denied allegations that the Tigray forces were retreating.

Ethiopia's widening war, with atrocities reported on all sides, has led to urgent calls by the United Nations, United States and others for an immediate cease-fire and a path to dialogue. But there is little peace in sight.

Ethiopia's government this year declared the Tigray People's Liberation Front, which long dominated the national government before Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took office, a terrorist group. That designation can't be lifted until a new federal government is formed, likely in early October, his spokeswoman told reporters on Thursday.

What began as a political dispute has killed thousands since November. Now in the Amhara region, as in Tigray, some outraged civilians have joined the fight.

Resident Kibret Bidere described himself as a member of the Amhara militia called the Fano. He told the AP his sister and her 1-year-old son had been killed, and his father was missing.

"Even today we are looking for the lost ones from morning to evening, but we haven't found any," he said, nursing an injured arm from previous fighting.

The village's traditional homes of grass and mud were emptying as residents departed through the mist,

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searching for safety elsewhere. Many had bundles on their backs. One, a gun propped on his shoulder. "Our home was attacked by heavy artillery," said Senait Ambaw, who was leaving with her husband, clutching a chicken. "All the people of Chenna have no home now. It's over."

In the nearby town of Dabat, Amhara militia riding by on a truck fired their guns skyward in victory. Children ran after them, collecting the bullet casings from the ground.

Cara Anna in Nairobi, Kenya contributed.

US producer prices jump an unprecedented 8.3% in August

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Inflation at the wholesale level climbed 8.3% last month from August 2020, the biggest annual gain since the Labor Department started calculating the 12-month number in 2010.

The Labor Department reported Friday that its producer price index — which measures inflationary pressures before they reach consumers — rose 0.7% last month from July after increasing 1% in both June and July.

Inflation has been stirring as the economy recovers from last year's brief but intense coronavirus recession. Supply chain bottlenecks and a shortage of workers have pushed prices higher. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell has called the price spikes temporary and has warned of the dangers of the central bank raising its benchmark interest rate (now near zero) prematurely, potentially stalling the economy's comeback.

"Since the pandemic, supply chains have never been the same and likely won't normalize for at least six months," said a report by Contingent Macro Advisors. "Only then will we (and, more importantly, the Fed) get a true sense of the trend rate of producer inflation."

Excluding volatile food and energy prices, so-called core producer prices rose 0.6% from July and 6.7% from a year earlier. Food prices were up 2.9% last month after falling in July. Over the past year, wholesale food prices have climbed 12.7%, including surges of 59.2% for beef and 43.5% for shortening and cooking oil. Energy prices rose 0.4% from July and are up 32.3% over the past year.

The economy's brisk recovery appears to have hit a late summer lull as COVID-19's highly contagious delta variant discourages Americans from shopping in stores or going out to restaurants. Retail sales dropped in August, and employers added just 235,000 jobs last month, a third of what economists were expecting, and a sharp drop from June and July, when about 1 million jobs were added each month.

The Labor Department's report on August consumer prices comes out Tuesday. Economists expect them to have moderated slightly from July's 5.4% annual uptick, according to a survey by the data firm FactSet.

Americans less positive about civil liberties: AP-NORC poll

By MEG KINNARD and EMILY SWANSON Associated Press

Ten years after the 9/11 attacks, Americans were reasonably positive about the state of their rights and liberties. Today, after 20 years, not as much.

That's according to a poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research that builds on work conducted in 2011, one decade after the pivotal moment in U.S. history. Some questions were also asked on polls conducted in 2013 and 2015.

Americans were relatively united around the idea that the government did a good job protecting many basic rights a decade after the terrorist attacks, which produced a massive overhaul of the country's intelligence services and the creation of agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security. Along with those changes came a creeping concern about government overreach, although Americans as a whole remained fairly positive.

That attitude has eroded in the years since, with far fewer people now saying the government is doing a good job protecting rights including the freedom of speech, the right to vote, the right to bear arms and others.

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For example, the poll finds that 45% of Americans now say they think the U.S. government is doing a good job defending freedom of speech, compared with 32% who say it's doing a poor job and 23% who say neither. The share saying the government is doing a good job is down from 71% in 2011 and from 59% in 2015.

Dee Geddes, 73, a retiree in Chamberlain, South Dakota, said she was frustrated at the government's apparent lack of ability to safeguard the amount of private information available, especially online.

"It bothers me when I can go on the internet and find pretty much anything about anybody. It makes me feel sort of naked," said Geddes, who identifies as a Republican. "It does bother me how much the government knows about us, but that goes back to the fact that there's so much out there period. It's discouraging."

About half now say the government is doing a good job protecting freedom of religion, compared with three-quarters who said the same in 2011.

More Americans now think the government is doing a poor job than a good one at protecting the right to equal protection under the law, 49% to 27%. In 2011, opinions were reversed, with more people saying the government was doing a good job than a poor one, 48% to 37%.

The poll also finds that 54% of Americans say it's "sometimes necessary for the government to sacrifice some rights and freedoms to fight terrorism," compared with 64% a decade ago. Now, 44% say that's never necessary at all.

A majority of Democrats say it's sometimes necessary, which is largely consistent with previous AP-NORC polls. But Republicans are now closely divided, with 46% saying it's sometimes necessary and 53% saying it's never necessary. In 2011, 69% of Republicans said it was sometimes necessary, and 62% said the same in 2015.

Brandon Wilson, 23, a business and animation student at College of DePage in Glen Ellyn, Illinois who described himself as a conservative, said he understood that steps taken after Sept. 11 may have initially seemed to constrain Americans' rights, but that he ultimately felt the actions had been for the greater good.

"I think it's a good idea," Wilson said of measures such as increased airline passenger screening. "The government is helping the general public and, overall, trying to make people's lives better."

On the whole, though, Americans have grown more wary of government surveillance in the name of national security, the poll shows.

The poll asked about a variety of rights and liberties, including many of those outlined explicitly in the Constitution's Bill of Rights, as well as several protected by laws and court rulings.

It finds 44% now say the government is doing a good job protecting the freedom of the press, compared with 26% who think the government is doing a poor job. In both 2011 and 2015, about 6 in 10 said the government was doing a good job.

Americans are about equally divided on how the government is doing at protecting the freedom from unreasonable search and seizure. About one-third say it's doing a good job and about one-third say it's doing a poor job. In 2011 and 2015, views were slightly more positive than negative, though less than half of Americans said the country was doing a good job.

Tony Gay, 60, a retiree who lives in Cincinnati, said that he generally supported the government's moves to protect civil liberties. He said his 10 years of Army service helped reinforce his opinion that sacrifice is sometimes necessary to safeguard freedoms.

"You can't have your freedom 24/7 if there's no one there to protect it," Gay said. "So when they put restrictions on travel, I'm all for that, because it's to make sure that I'm safe, and make sure that the person next to me is safe."

Forty-three percent of Americans think the U.S. government is doing a good job protecting the right to vote, while 37% say it's doing a poor job. By comparison, 70% said it was doing a good job in 2015 and 84% said the same in 2011.

Americans also are now divided on whether the government is doing a good or poor job protecting the right to bear arms, 35% to 36%, but in 2011, more said it was doing a good job than a poor one, 57% to 27%.

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Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say the government is doing a good job of protecting several rights and freedoms, including the freedom of religion, the freedom of speech, the freedom of the press and the right to keep and bear arms.

But Democrats are somewhat more likely than Republicans to say the government is doing a poor job enforcing equal protection under the law, 54% to 46%. Views among Democrats and Republicans are largely similar on how well the government is protecting the right to vote, and the views among both have become notably less positive than in the earlier polls.

Even if he's relatively comfortable with the government's protection of basic civil liberties, Gay said he feels periodic review of the policies, and those making them, should be necessary.

"It's like when you're in politics, you have free rein," Gay said. "It gives me mixed feelings about who is watching over us."

Meg Kinnard can be reached at <http://twitter.com/MegKinnardAP>.

The AP-NORC poll of 1,729 adults was conducted Aug. 12-16 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3.2 percentage points.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Sept. 11, the 254th day of 2021. There are 111 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 11, 2001, nearly 3,000 people were killed as 19 al-Qaida hijackers seized control of four jetliners, sending two of the planes into New York's World Trade Center, one into the Pentagon and the fourth into a field in western Pennsylvania.

On this date:

In 1789, Alexander Hamilton was appointed the first U.S. Secretary of the Treasury.

In 1814, an American fleet scored a decisive victory over the British in the Battle of Lake Champlain in the War of 1812.

In 1936, Boulder Dam (now Hoover Dam) began operation as President Franklin D. Roosevelt pressed a key in Washington to signal the startup of the dam's first hydroelectric generator.

In 1941, groundbreaking took place for the Pentagon. In a speech that drew accusations of anti-Semitism, Charles A. Lindbergh told an America First rally in Des Moines, Iowa, that "the British, the Jewish and the Roosevelt administration" were pushing the United States toward war.

In 1967, the comedy-variety program "The Carol Burnett Show" premiered on CBS.

In 1973, Chilean President Salvador Allende (ah-YEN'-day) died during a violent military coup.

In 1985, Pete Rose of the Cincinnati Reds cracked career hit number 4,192 off Eric Show (rhymes with "how") of the San Diego Padres, eclipsing the record held by Ty Cobb. (The Reds won the game, 2-0).

In 2003, actor John Ritter died six days before his 55th birthday at Providence St. Joseph Medical Center in Burbank, California — the same hospital where he was born in 1948.

In 2006, in a prime-time address, President George W. Bush invoked the memory of the victims of the 9/11 attacks as he staunchly defended the war in Iraq, though he acknowledged that Saddam Hussein was not responsible for the attacks.

In 2008, presidential candidates John McCain and Barack Obama put aside politics as they visited ground zero together on the anniversary of 9/11 to honor its victims.

In 2012, a mob armed with guns and grenades launched a fiery nightlong attack on a U.S. diplomatic outpost and a CIA annex in Benghazi, Libya, killing U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans.

In 2015, a crane collapsed onto the Grand Mosque in Mecca, killing 111 people ahead of the annual hajj

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pilgrimage. Roberta Vinci stunned Serena Williams to end her Grand Slam bid in one of the greatest upsets in tennis history; the 43rd-ranked Italian won 2-6, 6-4, 6-4 in the U.S. Open semifinals.

Ten years ago: The nation and the world marked the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In New York, a tree-covered memorial plaza at ground zero opened to the families of the victims for the first time. President Barack Obama, after visiting the sites where terrorists struck, declared: "It will be said of us that we kept that faith; that we took a painful blow, and emerged stronger."

Five years ago: The U.S. marked the 15th anniversary of 9/11 with the solemn roll call of the dead at ground zero. Hillary Clinton abruptly left after feeling "overheated," according to her campaign, and hours later her doctor disclosed that the Democratic presidential nominee had pneumonia. Stan Wawrinka wore Novak Djokovic (NOH'-vak JOH'-kuh-vich) down and beat the defending champion 6-7 (1), 6-4, 7-5, 6-3 for his first U.S. Open title and third Grand Slam trophy overall.

One year ago: President Donald Trump and Democratic challenger Joe Biden observed the 19th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks as commemorations were altered or scaled back by the coronavirus; Biden approached those who'd lost loved ones at ground zero and shared the pain of his own losses, while Trump vowed that "America will always rise up, stand tall and fight back." Bahrain agreed to normalize relations with Israel, becoming the latest Arab nation to do so as part of a broader diplomatic push by the Trump administration to ease the Jewish state's relative isolation in the Middle East. Smoke pollution from wildfires raging in California and across the Pacific Northwest worsened in San Francisco, Seattle and Portland, Oregon, giving those cities and others in the region some of the world's worst air quality. Toots Hibbert, one of reggae's founders and most beloved stars, died in Jamaica at 77.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Earl Holliman is 93. Comedian Tom Dreesen is 82. Movie director Brian De Palma is 81. Singer-actor-dancer Lola Falana is 79. Rock musician Mickey Hart (The Dead) is 78. Guitarist Leo Kottke is 76. Actor Phillip Alford is 73. Actor Amy Madigan is 71. Rock singer-musician Tommy Shaw (Styx) is 68. Sports reporter Lesley Visser is 68. Actor Reed Birney is 67. Former Homeland Security Secretary Jeh (jay) Johnson is 64. Musician Jon Moss (Culture Club) is 64. Actor Scott Patterson is 63. Rock musician Mick Talbot (The Style Council) is 63. Actor/director Roxann Dawson is 63. Actor John Hawkes is 62. Actor Anne Ramsay is 61. Actor Virginia Madsen is 60. Actor Kristy McNichol is 59. Musician-composer Moby is 56. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is 56. Business reporter Maria Bartiromo is 54. Singer Harry Connick Jr. is 54. Actor Taraji (tuh-RAH'-jee) P. Henson is 51. Actor Laura Wright is 51. Rock musician Jeremy Popoff (Lit) is 50. Blogger Markos Moulitsas is 50. Singer Brad Fischetti (LFO) is 46. Rock musician Jon Buckland (Coldplay) is 44. Rapper Ludacris is 44. Rock singer Ben Lee is 43. Actor Ryan Slattery is 43. Actor Ariana Richards is 42. Country singer Charles Kelley (Lady A) is 40. Actor Elizabeth Henstridge is 34. Actor Tyler Hoechlin (HEK'-lihn) is 34. Actor Mackenzie Aladjem is 20.