

Groton Daily Independent

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Upcoming Events

Monday, Sept. 27

- Boys golf at Madison Golf Course
- 4 p.m.: Cross Country meet at Olive Grove Golf Course, Groton.
- 4 p.m.: Junior high football at Aberdeen Roncalli
- 5 p.m.: Junior Varsity football at Aberdeen Roncalli Volleyball hosting Faulkton Area (C match at 5 p.m., JV at 6 p.m., Varsity to follow)
- 7 p.m.: School Board Meeting

Tuesday, Sept. 28

- Volleyball vs. Florence/Henry at Henry High School. (7th at 3 p.m., 8th at 4 p.m., C at 5 p.m., JV at 6 p.m. with varsity to follow).

Wednesday, Sept. 29

- NE Region Land & Range Contest in Webster

Thursday, Sept. 30

- Fall Planning Day and Career Expo at Northern State University for juniors
- 4 p.m.: Cross Country at Sisseton Golf Course
- 4:30 p.m.: Junior High Football at Redfield Volleyball hosting Hamlin (C match at 5 p.m. followed by JV and Varsity)

Friday, Oct. 1

- 7 p.m.: Football vs. Dakota Hills Coop at Waubay



Saturday, Oct. 2

- 2 p.m.: Boys soccer hosts Freeman Academy
- 3 p.m.: Girls soccer at Dakota Valley with JV game at 1 p.m.

Monday, Oct. 4

- State Boys Golf Meet at Madison
- Oral Interp at Milbank Invitational
- 5 p.m.: Junior Varsity Football hosts Sisseton (re-scheduled from 9-20-21)

Tuesday, Oct. 5

- State Boys Golf Meet at Madison
- Soccer Playoffs for boys and girls
- Junior High Volleyball at Redfield (7th at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m.)

Thursday, Oct. 7

- 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.: Flu Shot Clinic at Groton Area
- 1 p.m.: NEC Cross Country Meet at Webster
- 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.: Parent/Teacher Conferences
- 5 p.m.: Junior High Football hosting Webster Area

Friday, Oct. 8 - NO SCHOOL

- 8 a.m. to Noon: Parent/Teacher Conferences
- 10 a.m.: Lake Region Marching Festival in Groton
- Noon to 3:30 p.m: Faculty Inservice



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting

September 27, 2021 – 7:00 PM – GHS Library Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Program Overview Presentations
 - a. Mathematics...R. Adams, G. Kjellsen, J. Kjellsen
 - b. Social Sciences...S. Wanner, S. Thorson
3. Continued discussion and necessary action on District response to COVID-19.
 - a. Local COVID-19 Update
4. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Approve FY2022 district budgets with amendments and authorize Business Manager to file tax request with county auditor.
2. Discussion with possible action on Board Education.
3. Receive Department of Health Food Service Inspection Reports from 9/20/2021 [Elem 100/100; MS/HS 100/100].
4. Appoint Delegate to ASBSD Delegate Assembly scheduled for Friday, November 19 at 1:00 PM in Pierre, SD.
5. Appoint Doney Field Improvement Committee Membership.

ADJOURN

Help Wanted: Ken's in Groton
Cashiers, stockers and deli
Apply at store



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Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

It was good to be back home in Minnesota. It all kicked off with the legend Jim Marshall narrating a story about Odin, the Viking God of War. As the story was being told, snowflakes began falling from the rafters, and then another Viking legend, Randall McDaniel, got the crowd pumped up with the skol chant and the sounding of the Gjallarhorn. All was right in the land of US Bank Stadium.

First Half:

For the first time all year, the Vikings' offense did not start with the ball. Instead, their defense was the first group to step on the field, having to face the Russell Wilson-led Seahawks. Initially, the Vikings' defense appeared to be a step behind every play. On the first drive alone, Russell Wilson and his favorite wide receiver, DK Metcalf, were able to connect on 3 passes for a total of 55 yards and a touchdown, giving the Seahawks a 7-0 lead. However, the Vikings quickly answered with an impressive drive themselves, ending in a Tyler Conklin touchdown and a tie game at 7-7.

Nevertheless, the Seahawks didn't appear to be slowing down. They put together an 11-play drive that ended in a field goal and—after the Vikings went 3-and-out in their next drive—gained a 17-7 lead thanks to a 30-yard touchdown run from running back Chris Carson. It appeared early that it was going to be a long day for the Vikings' defense.

By the 10:00 mark of the Second Quarter, the Vikings' offense found themselves looking at a 10-point deficit and a 3rd & 3 at their own 22-yard line. As Kirk Cousins dropped back to pass, he was quickly sacked by a blitzing Seahawks' defense. However, the Seahawks were flagged for defensive holding, giving the Vikings an automatic first down and a clear shift in momentum in their favor. The Vikings capitalized on the help from the refs by successfully driving down the field and into the Seahawks' red zone there the Vikings saw themselves in another tough 3rd down situation, this time a 3rd & 13 at the Seahawks' 15-yard line. Needing to get a touchdown to get back in the game, Kirk Cousins fired a pass into the hands of Adam Thielen for a touchdown, cutting the Seahawks lead to 17-14.

After Seahawks' kicker, Jason Myers, missed a 44-yard field goal, the Vikings got the ball back with a little over 3:00 left in the first half. The Vikings decided to put the ball in the hands of running back Alexander Mattison, who got the start because of Dalvin Cook's ankle injury. Thanks to some heavy-hitting runs by Mattison, the Vikings meticulously drove down the field, concluding in a Justin Jefferson touchdown with just 20 seconds remaining in the half, giving the Vikings the lead 21-17 into halftime.

Second Half:

The story of the second half was about time of possession. The Vikings received the ball to start the second half and put together a lengthy 8:26 drive, ultimately ending in a field goal and giving them a lead of 24-17 over the Seahawks. The Seahawks immediately went 3-and-out, having the ball for only 2:46. Again, the Vikings made a concerted effort to chew up the clock in their next drive. With the help of a balanced running attack and clutch throws from Kirk Cousins, the Vikings drove down the field for another field goal, this time using up 5:01 of the game clock.

Facing a tough 27-17 deficit, Russell Wilson and the Seahawks' explosive offense we had seen in the first half was nowhere to be found. On top of that, the Vikings' defense started to figure out how to stifle the Seahawks' offense. The defensive line started to pressure Russell Wilson, and when they couldn't get to him, the secondary picked up the slack. In all, Seattle's offense was unable to score any points in the second half. It didn't help either that they only had the ball for 7:20 out of a possible 30:00 in the second half.

The Vikings move to 1-2 on the season thanks to a 30-17 victory over the Seattle Seahawks.

Statistical Leaders:

Kirk Cousins: 30 for 38, 323 yards, 3 TDs

Alexander Mattison: 26 carries for 112 yards rushing, 0 TDs

Justin Jefferson: 9 catches for 118 yards, 1 TD

The highlight of the day:

Vikings' offense goes 9/14 on 3rd down because of multiple clutch 3rd down throws by Kirk Cousins throughout the game.

The irony of the day:

When Zimmer's defenses were top 5 in the league the past few years, opposing offenses averaged only 17 points per game during the entire season. Today's final score is just what the Zimmer ordered: 30-17.

Next game:

The Vikings remain at home for a Week 4 matchup against the Cleveland Browns. Head Coach Kevin Stefanski returns home after 15 years with the Viking organization. Cleveland brings a tough defense to Minnesota lead by all-pro Myles Garret at right defensive end. The offense is manned by Baker Mayfield at quarterback and the return of Odell Beckham Jr. at wide receiver. US Bank will need to once again be rocking to keep the momentum going.

Bates Township Weed Notice

BATES TOWNSHIP WEED NOTICE:

OWNERS & TENANTS of Bates Township are hereby notified and required, according to law, to cut all weeds and grass in road ditches adjacent to their property or tenanted by them within Bates township on or before October 1, 2021 or same will be hired done by the township board and assessed property taxes at the rate of \$300 per half mile.

Bates Township Board of Supervisors reminds all landowners and tenants that the road right-of-way extends 33 feet from the center of the township road. This ditch is to be maintained and mowed. Any crops planted in the road right-of-way will be mowed and charged to the landowner. Landowner is responsible for spraying all noxious weeds.

Bates Township Board of Supervisors
Betty Geist
Township Clerk

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*Product Price - Actual retail prices are set by dealer and may vary. Taxes, freight, setup and handling charges may be additional and may vary. Models subject to limited availability. Specifications and programs are subject to change without notice. Images may not reflect dealer inventory and/or unit specifications. †† As rated by Kohler, all power levels are stated in gross horsepower at 3600 RPM per SAE J1940 as rated by engine manufacturer. **See your local Cub Cadet Independent Dealer for warranty details. © 2021 Cub Cadet 3PV_Q_ECOMMERCE

Alcoholism...Start the Conversation

Alcoholism, and addiction overall, isn't a character flaw, or a weakness of self-control. It's a disease. And, if you are like most of us, you've probably been affected by it. Maybe you struggle with alcohol consumption yourself or have a friend or family member who does. I rarely talk with anyone who doesn't have a personal story about how addiction has affected their life.



Matthew Stanley, DO

In fact, about 14 million adults have an alcohol use disorder and there are about 95,000 alcohol related deaths every year in this country.

Unfortunately, we don't think of it like any other medical illness, so we don't usually talk to our primary care doctor about it. But that is one of the best places to start the conversation, during your yearly checkup, when you're talking about health goals it is okay to say, "I think I have a drinking problem."

Some of the warning signs to look for in yourself or a loved one include sacrificing family bonds for your addiction such as missing a child's ball game, concert, or graduation. Things that you were once passionate about fall by the wayside. You're fatigued and foggy; barely able to get up in the morning. You have cravings for the substance. You're counting down the time until you can get off work and have a drink. You are in danger of losing your job or important relationships, or you've gotten in trouble with the law. You tell yourself and others that you could easily quit and will; but you never do.

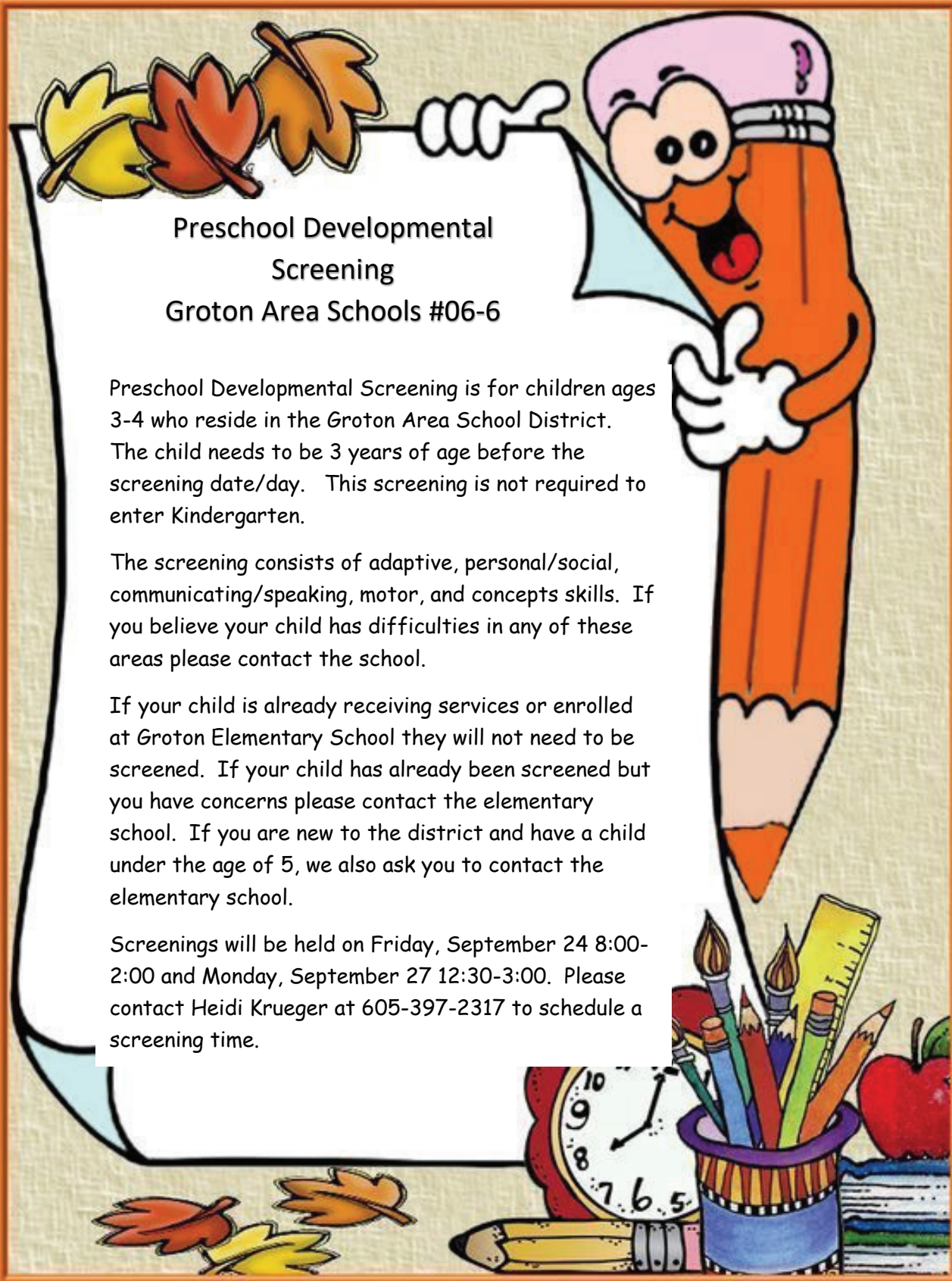
By starting the conversation, you will have a clearer path toward the help you need. Your doctor can guide you to outpatient counseling or support groups, or perhaps treatment at a facility.

There is overlap between behavioral health and addiction in terms of risk factors. Much like behavioral health, addiction has an approximate 60 percent genetic heritability. Mental health conditions and a history of trauma put you at greater risk of addiction. And like so many health conditions the earlier you start the worse the disease. Those who begin drinking before age 15 have a five times greater risk of developing an alcohol use disorder.

I've spent my career talking about and treating addiction. I see that the conversation is changing, and I'm heartened by it. There is a rising social consciousness about addiction. More and more we're willing to have candid and productive conversations about it.

The next time your doctor asks you about alcohol consumption, take that as a prompt to have an honest conversation.

Matthew Stanley, D.O., a psychiatrist in Sioux Falls, South Dakota is a contributing Prairie Doc® columnist and guest host this week on the Prairie Doc® television show. For free and easy access to the entire Prairie Doc® library, visit www.prairiedoc.org and follow Prairie Doc® on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show streaming on Facebook and broadcast on SDPB most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



Preschool Developmental Screening Groton Area Schools #06-6

Preschool Developmental Screening is for children ages 3-4 who reside in the Groton Area School District. The child needs to be 3 years of age before the screening date/day. This screening is not required to enter Kindergarten.

The screening consists of adaptive, personal/social, communicating/speaking, motor, and concepts skills. If you believe your child has difficulties in any of these areas please contact the school.

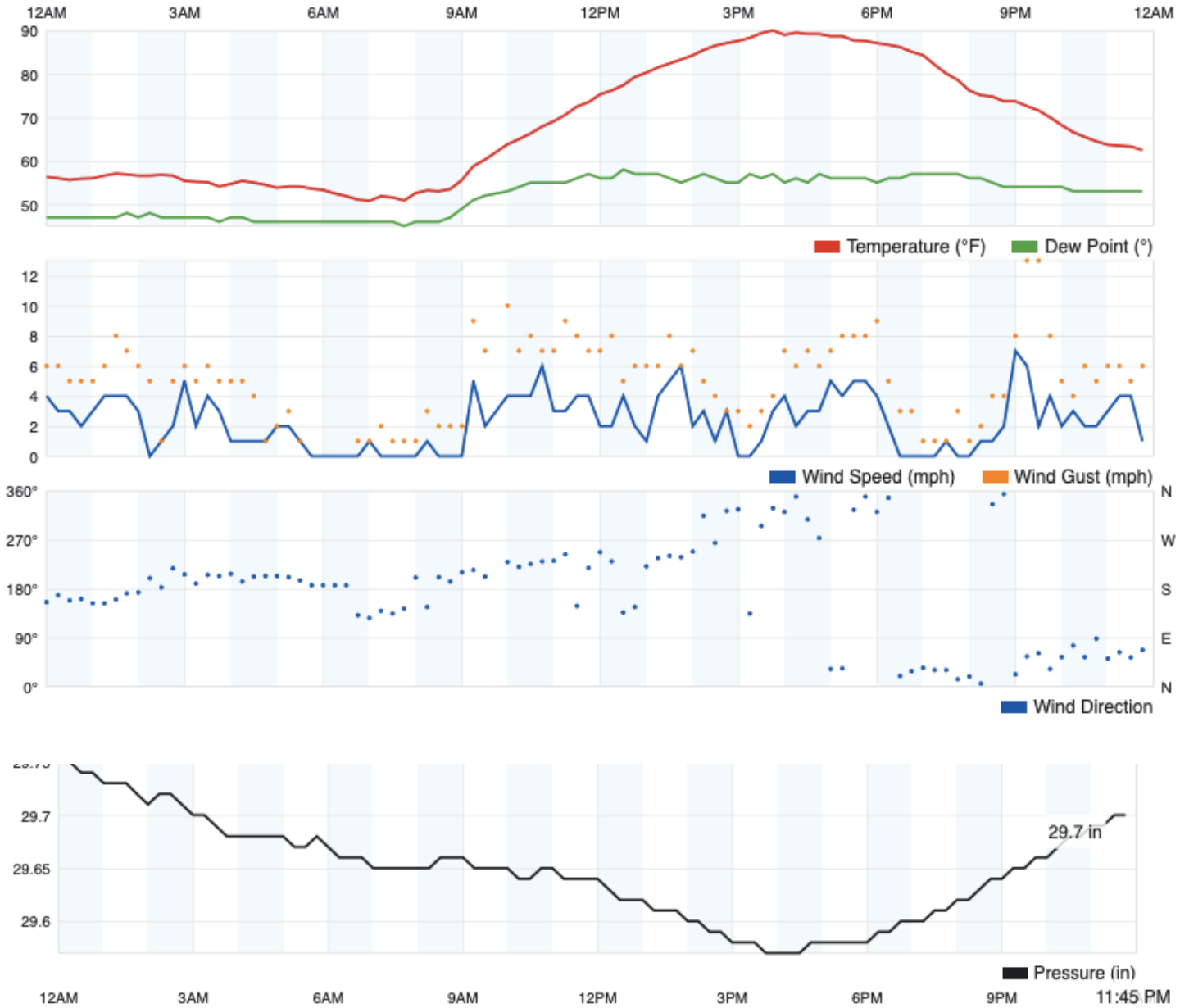
If your child is already receiving services or enrolled at Groton Elementary School they will not need to be screened. If your child has already been screened but you have concerns please contact the elementary school. If you are new to the district and have a child under the age of 5, we also ask you to contact the elementary school.

Screenings will be held on Friday, September 24 8:00-2:00 and Monday, September 27 12:30-3:00. Please contact Heidi Krueger at 605-397-2317 to schedule a screening time.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



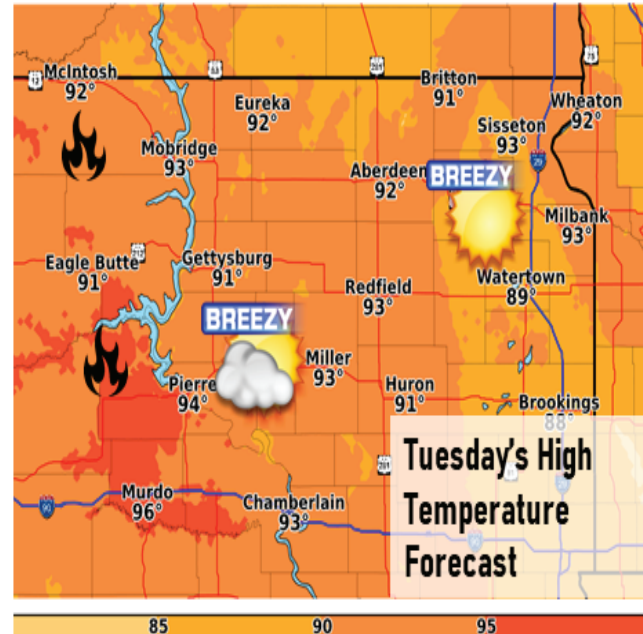
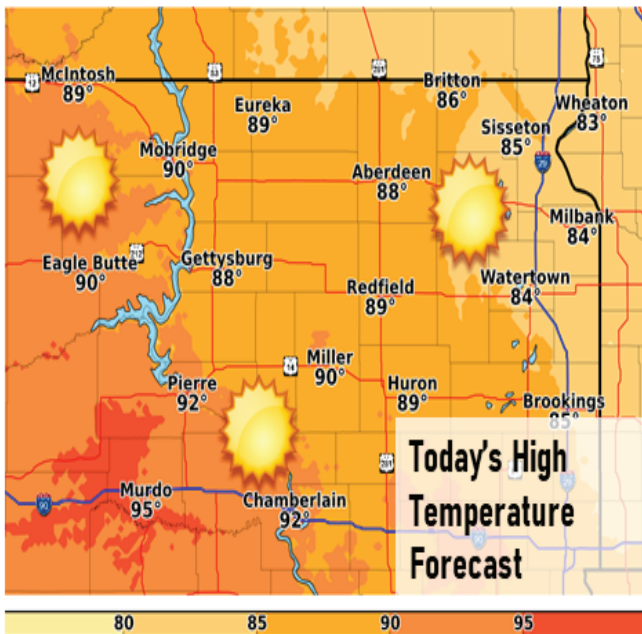
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Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
Areas Fog then Sunny	Mostly Clear	Hot	Increasing Clouds	Chance Showers then Showers Likely
High: 88 °F	Low: 58 °F	High: 92 °F	Low: 63 °F	High: 79 °F

Summer-Like Temperatures Peak Tuesday

Much above average temperatures today may become record-breaking Tuesday. **Very High grassland fire danger is forecast on Tuesday** west of the Missouri River, due to breezy south winds and low humidity.



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

Updated: 9/27/2021 5:06 AM Central

Much above average temperatures today may become record-breaking Tuesday. Very High grassland fire danger is forecast on Tuesday west of the Missouri River, due to breezy south winds and low relative humidity.

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Today in Weather History

September 27, 1983: Lightning caused a grass fire which burned 25,000 acres northwest of Reliance during the evening hours. At its peak, the fire was four miles wide by ten miles long.

September 27, 1985: Snow fell across south-central South Dakota from the evening of the 27th until the early afternoon of the 28th. Three to five inches of snow occurred with up to 18 inches reported around Winner. Eight to 12 inches fell around Gregory and Burke.

1816 - A black frost over most of New England kills unripened corn in the north resulting in a year of famine. (David Ludlum)

1822: Using various documents and meteorological observations determined a hurricane moved ashore on this day in South Carolina. One account from Bull Island, South Carolina records the eye passing directly over that location.

1906: The second September storm of 1906 was one of great violence. On the 27th the hurricane reached the central Gulf Coast with destructive winds and unprecedented tides. At Pensacola, FL, the tide was 10 feet above normal. At Mobile, AL property damage was severe. An estimated 134 lives were lost from Pensacola, FL to Mississippi from this storm.

1911: The earliest photograph of a tornado in Australia occurred on this day. The estimated F3 tornado tore through Marong, Victoria, or about 150 km from Melbourne.

1959 - A tornado 440 yards in width traveled twenty miles from near Hollow, OK, to western Cherokee County KS. Although a strong tornado, it was very slow moving, and gave a tremendous warning roar, and as a result no one was killed. (The Weather Channel)

1959: Typhoon Vera was the strongest and deadliest typhoon on record to make landfall on the islands of Japan. Damage totals from this typhoon are estimated at \$4.85 billion (USD 2015). An estimated 4,000 deaths occurred from Typhoon Vera. This Category 5 Typhoon first made landfall on September 26 near Shionomisaki on Honshu. Vera transitioned to an extratropical cyclone on September 27, which continued to affect the island for an additional two days.

1970 - Afternoon highs of 103 degrees at Long Beach, CA, and 105 degrees at the Los Angeles Civic Center were the hottest since September records were established in 1963. Fierce Santa Ana winds accompanying the extreme heat resulted in destructive fires. (The Weather Channel)

1985: Hurricane Gloria swept over the Outer Banks then rushed across Long Island, New England, and Canada. It was the first significant hurricane to hit New England in twenty-five years and brought heavy rains and high winds to the Mid-Atlantic states as well.

1985 - A record early season snowstorm struck the Central High Plains Region. The storm left up to nineteen inches of snow along the Colorado Front Range, and as much as a foot of snow in the High Plains Region. (Storm Data)

1987 - While those at the base of Mount Washington, NH, enjoyed sunny skies and temperatures in the 70s, the top of the mountain was blanketed with 4.7 inches of snow, along with wind gusts to 99 mph, and a temperature of 13 degrees. Severe thunderstorms developed along a cold front in the south central U.S. A thunderstorm west of Noodle TX produced golf ball size hail and wind gusts to 70 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced large hail in southeastern Wyoming during the afternoon, with tennis ball size hail reported at Cheyenne. Strong winds ushering the cold air into the north central U.S. gusted to 59 mph at Lander WY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Freezing temperatures were reported in the Great Lakes Region and the Ohio Valley. Houghton Lake MI reported a record low of 21 degrees. Thunderstorms in the western U.S. produced wind gusts to 50 mph at Salt Lake City UT, and gusts to 58 mph at Cody WY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2014: A squall line impacted central Arizona, including the Phoenix Metro area.

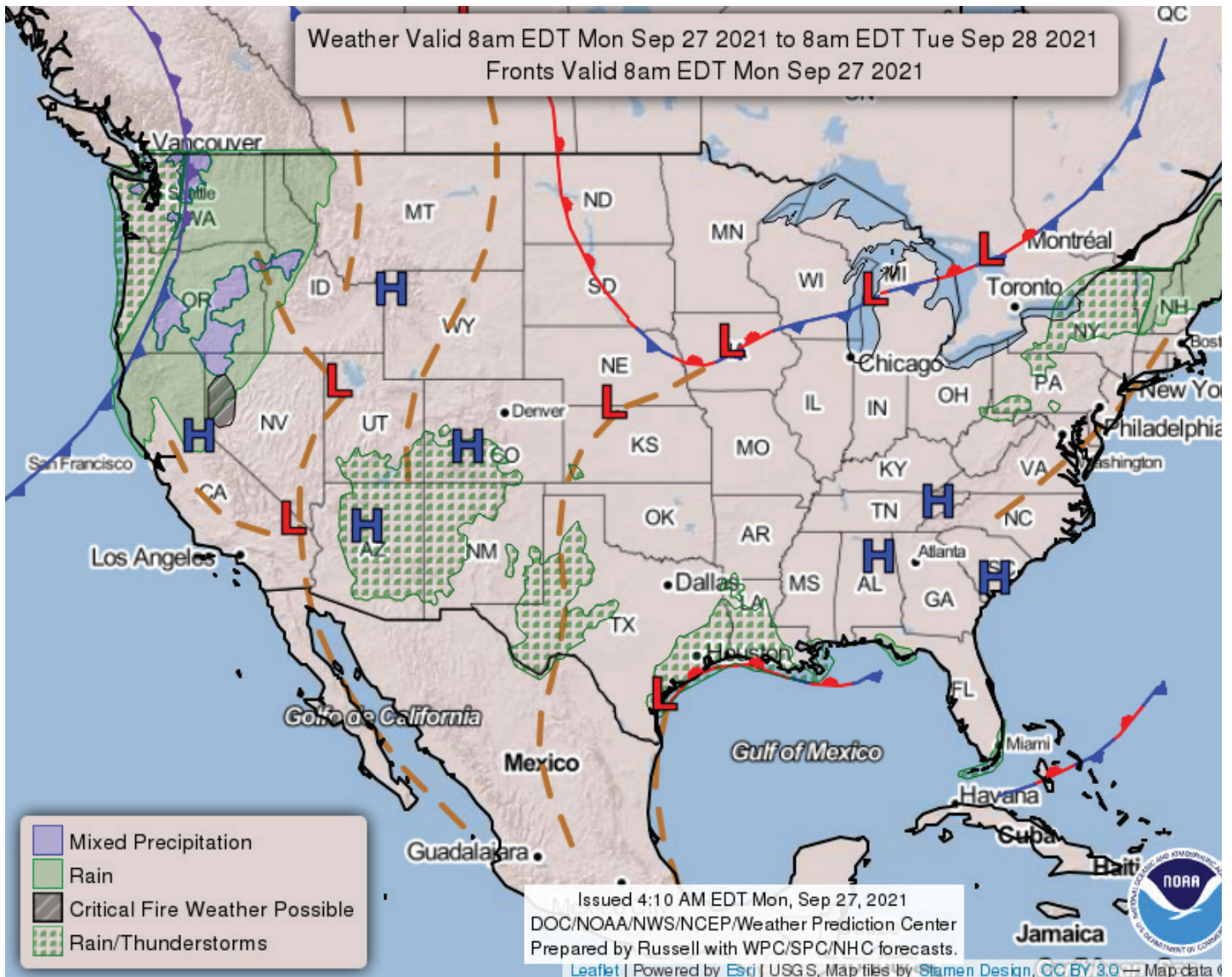
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 90.0 °F at 3:45 PM
Low Temp: 50.8 °F at 7:00 AM
Wind: 13 mph at 9:15 PM
Precip: 0.00

Record High: 95° in 1952
Record Low: 22° in 1900
Average High: 70°F
Average Low: 42°F
Average Precip in Sept.: 1.79
Precip to date in Sept.: 2.58
Average Precip to date: 18.13
Precip Year to Date: 15.42
Sunset Tonight: 7:21:35 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:26:03 AM



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CELEBRATE!

It is a day I will always remember. It was hot and humid, and the black gowns and colorful "hoods" provoked more sweat than satisfaction. It was a day that brought three long and difficult years of study to a conclusion, and I was now going to be identified as "Doctor Guido!"

As I stood in a line with my classmates who had struggled with me, we could not help but wonder what changes the degree would make in our lives. A new day had dawned. Things would be different for us from that day forward. We would have new opportunities and new status. People would look at us differently. It was time to celebrate. We believed that we had earned it! But only if we could find it!

Psalm 98 begins with a call to celebrate: "Sing to the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things." This call to celebrate was not for anything that the people did or had accomplished. It was indeed a call for celebration. But it was a call to celebrate the "marvelous things" that God had done for them. This phrase "marvelous things" refers to God's direct, supernatural interventions in the life of "His people." It refers to God's power and authority, His protection and care, His interest in the well-being of His people on His earth. And as important as those gifts of God are, they cannot compare to the gift of His salvation and hope.

There are many special events and days in our lives and the life of our nation that give us reasons to celebrate. But nothing provides a greater cause or reason for us to celebrate than the hope we have in Christ our Lord!

Prayer: Lord, fill our hearts with this "New Song." May we find a song of joy to celebrate Your gift of salvation! May we enjoy our life in You. In Jesus' Name, AMEN!

Scripture For Today: Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. Psalm 98:1

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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

News from the Associated Press

Aberdeen police handling 3 missing person cases, 1 from 1979

By ALEXANDRA HARDLE Aberdeen American News

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — There are currently 94 missing people in South Dakota, with 62 of those people, or about 65%, being Native Americans.

The numbers demonstrate an epidemic of missing Indigenous people, especially from reservations.

Three missing-person cases are currently being handled by the Aberdeen Police Department. The people have been missing anywhere from a few months to decades, the Aberdeen American News reported.

Luzahan Belt is a 16-year-old Native American male who went missing on April 24. He is presumed to be a runaway, according to police.

Aberdeen Police Department Capt. Tanner Jondahl said juveniles are presumed to be runaways based on the information that is available at the time they went missing. That includes details as social media activity.

However, Jondahl said, most juvenile runaway cases are resolved within a few days, and it is unusual for a juvenile runaway to be missing for as long as Belt has.

Pah Pow is a 35-year-old Thai woman who went missing on April 17, 2016. She was 30 at the time of her disappearance. Pow's husband, Sah Doe, said he last saw her was when he took their son to a park in Aberdeen. When he returned, she was gone.

The couple's older son was 10 years old at the time of her disappearance and said that he saw her get in the car with a man who he recognized, but he did not know the man's name. That was the last known sighting of Pow.

Later that year, Doe told the American News that he and Pow had been arguing leading up to her disappearance. He also said that she had a boyfriend after getting a job at DemKota Ranch Beef, where she worked for about three months before she went missing. Pow had blocked Doe on Facebook, he said at the time.

Authorities have determined that Pow was not with her boyfriend. But no new information is available, according to Aberdeen police.

Stanley Strole is a 79-year-old white man who disappeared in 1979 when he was 37. Strole was a Type 1 diabetic and, according to documents provided by the Aberdeen Police Department, was last seen at the Palm Garden after he had left his house without his insulin.

Police documents show that his sister, Vicky Opp, said he frequently threatened to run away.

Strole was not reported missing until June 1979, according to the police paperwork. In a document from 1986, Lt. T.J. "Bud" Schaffer of the Aberdeen Police Department wrote that he spoke with Opp and she said Strole got into an argument with their other sister because she would not buy him beer due to Strole's being a diabetic.

Strole then left, withdrew all of his money from his bank account and went to the Palm Garden. Opp told police that an employee at the Palm Garden said Strole began flashing his money around and drinking beer.

Schaffer also spoke with Gary Jasmer, the Palm Garden employee who supposedly saw Strole flashing his money around. In that interview, Jasmer told the officer that's not what he said.

According to 2010 police documents, Opp told officer Eric Duven in 2009 once more that Jasmer told her Strole was last seen in Palm Garden flashing around his money. This time she added that he got into a red pickup with three other men.

There is no new information about Strole's whereabouts, according to police.

Through the years, there have a few instances in which bodies were recovered that law enforcement thought might be Strole, but DNA and fingerprint scans haven't been a match, according to documents provided by the police department.

All four of Strole's sisters are dead, according to online obituaries.

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South Dakota lawmakers to weigh whether seek AG impeachment

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Legislature will consider whether to try to impeach Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg for a car crash last year that killed a pedestrian, a House leader said.

Republican Speaker Spencer Gosch said Saturday that there is enough support in the state House to discuss impeachment. The state Senate had already gathered enough signatures to do so.

The impeachment discussions will take place when lawmakers are in Pierre for a special session that starts Nov. 9 to address the redrawing of the state's 10-year electoral maps.

The move does not necessarily mean Ravnsborg, a Republican, will face impeachment proceedings, Gosch said. Once in session, lawmakers will have to decide on whether to consider a separate resolution to form a select committee to review evidence from the Sept. 12, 2020, crash, the Argus Leader reported.

Ravnsborg pleaded no contest to a pair of traffic misdemeanors for the crash that killed Joseph Boever, who was walking on the shoulder of a rural highway late at night. Ravnsborg was driving home from a Republican fundraiser, and he didn't return to the crash scene until the next day, telling investigators he thought he had struck a deer.

Ravnsborg avoided jail time and was sentenced to fines totaling over \$4,500 for making an illegal lane change and using a cellphone while driving.

Republican Gov. Kristi Noem has repeatedly called on Ravnsborg to resign. He has insisted that he will not, though, and that he can perform the duties of his office.

Leaders of the Republican-led Legislature decided that the names of the lawmakers who signed the petitions would not be made public.

Is John Hinckley, who shot Reagan, no longer a threat?

By BEN FINLEY Associated Press

Lawyers are scheduled to meet in federal court on Monday to discuss whether John Hinckley Jr., the man who tried to assassinate President Ronald Reagan, should be freed from court-imposed restrictions including overseeing his medical care and keeping up with his computer passwords.

Since Hinckley, 66, moved to Williamsburg, Virginia, from a Washington hospital in 2016, the court-imposed conditions have included doctors and therapists overseeing his psychiatric medication and deciding how often he attends individual and group therapy sessions. Hinckley also can't have a gun. And he can't contact Reagan's children, other victims or their families, or actress Jodie Foster, who he was obsessed with at the time of the 1981 shooting.

A status conference is scheduled for Monday before U.S. District Judge Paul L. Friedman in Washington.

Attorney Barry Levine has asked for unconditional release, saying Hinckley no longer poses a threat. A 2020 violence risk assessment conducted on behalf of Washington's Department of Behavioral Health concluded that Hinckley would not pose a danger.

The U.S. government opposed ending restrictions as of a May court filing, and retained an expert to determine whether or not Hinckley would pose a danger to himself or others if unconditionally released. Findings from such an examination have not been filed in court.

Hinckley was 25 when he shot and wounded the 40th U.S. president outside a Washington hotel. The shooting paralyzed Reagan press secretary James Brady, who died in 2014. It also injured Secret Service agent Timothy McCarthy and Washington police officer Thomas Delahanty.

Jurors decided Hinckley was suffering from acute psychosis and found him not guilty by reason of insanity, saying he needed treatment and not life in prison.

US officials: Biden aide to meet Saudi crown prince on Yemen

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's national security adviser Jake Sullivan is traveling to Saudi Arabia on Monday to meet with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman as the U.S. tries to press the kingdom to move toward a cease-fire in its yearslong war with Houthi rebels in Yemen.

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Sullivan will be the highest-ranking Biden administration official to visit Saudi Arabia. Besides seeing the crown prince, often referred to by his initials, MBS, Sullivan is expected to meet with deputy defense minister Khalid bin Salman, a brother to the crown prince, according to two senior administration officials. The officials were not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The Biden White House has largely steered clear of the crown prince since making public in February a CIA report that showed MBS likely approved the killing of Washington Post columnist and Saudi critic Jamal Khashoggi in a 2018 operation at the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul.

But the White House has resolved that bringing an end to perhaps the world's most complex conflict can't be done without engaging with the most senior Saudi officials face to face, one senior administration official said.

National Security Council spokesperson Emily Horne said Sullivan was traveling to Riyadh on Monday and would also visit the United Arab Emirates, a Saudi ally in the war, but did not provide additional details.

Sullivan is being dispatched at a moment when the situation in Yemen, the Arab world's poorest country, has further deteriorated. Fighting has intensified in the key city of Marib, as Iran-backed rebels have sought to oust the Saudi-backed government from the oil-rich city in the country's north.

The new U.N. special envoy to Yemen, Hans Grundberg, recently declared that the country is "stuck in an indefinite state of war" and resuming negotiations to end the more than six-year conflict won't be easy.

Yemen's war began in September 2014, when the Iranian-backed Houthis seized Sanaa and began a march south to try to seize the entire country. Saudi Arabia, along with the United Arab Emirates and other countries, entered the war alongside Yemen's internationally recognized government in March 2015.

The U.S. sold bombs and fighter jets to Saudi Arabia that the kingdom later used in strikes on Yemen that also killed civilians. The Obama administration in 2015 initially offered U.S. targeting assistance to Saudi Arabia's command-and-control operations that was supposed to minimize civilian casualties in airstrikes. It didn't, and Obama ultimately cut back on the program.

Under President Donald Trump, targeting assistance continued although his administration later stopped U.S. refueling operations for Saudi jets.

Biden announced weeks into his administration that he was ending all American support for "offensive operations in the war in Yemen, including relevant arms sales." But there has been little progress on the ground in resolving what the United Nations says is the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

White House officials are hopeful that the appointment of Grundberg will bring a new dynamic and put pressure on all sides to bring an end to the conflict, according to two senior administration officials.

Sullivan is being joined for the talks with the Saudis and the UAE by U.S. special envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking and NSC senior director for the Middle East Brett McGurk. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin planned to travel to Saudi Arabia earlier this month while he was in the region but postponed due to what the administration said were scheduling issues.

The high-level White House push comes after Lenderking traveled to Saudi Arabia and Oman, which has pressed for an end to the war. In addition, Secretary of State Antony Blinken had talks with his counterpart members of the Gulf Cooperation Council on the margins of the U.N. General Assembly.

Sullivan's visit to Saudi Arabia also comes as the administration is looking for ways to resurrect the Iran nuclear deal. The Saudis and the UAE fiercely oppose returning to the deal with Iran that was originally brokered in 2015 by the Obama administration only to be scrapped by Trump in 2018.

Addressing the U.N. General Assembly on Friday, Iran's new foreign minister Hossain Amir Abdollah said the country will return to nuclear negotiations in Vienna "very soon." But he accused the Biden administration of sending contradictory messages by saying it wants to rejoin the pact while slapping new sanctions on Tehran and not taking "an iota of positive action."

Biden and his team have made a U.S. return to the deal — to which Britain, France, Russia, China, Germany and Iran are signatories — one of their top foreign policy priorities. But the U.S. has made limited headway in indirect talks, and Tehran has bristled at Biden administration officials' call for a "longer and stronger" deal than the original, which expires at the end of 2030.

EXPLAINER: How and when Germany will form a new government

By GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Germany's voters have delivered their verdict. Now it's up to party leaders to thrash out who will succeed Chancellor Angela Merkel after 16 years in office and with what political priorities.

The shape of Germany's new Bundestag, or lower house of parliament, is now clear. But there are majorities for three more or less plausible new coalition governments, and it could take weeks or months to put a new administration in place. Here's a look at how the process works.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The first-placed party typically leads German governments, but that isn't always the case. It can end up in opposition if other parties form a coalition without it. That happened in 1976 and 1980, when then-Chancellor Helmut Schmidt stayed in office although his party finished second.

There is no referee for the process of forming a new government, and no set time limit. Parties hold exploratory talks to determine who they have most common ground with, and one combination of parties then moves on to formal coalition talks.

Those negotiations typically produce a detailed coalition agreement setting out the new government's plans. That will typically need approval at least from congresses of the parties involved. The center-left Social Democrats, who emerged from Sunday's election as the strongest party, held ballots of their entire membership in 2013 and 2018 to sign off on agreements to join Merkel's center-right Union bloc as its junior partner in government.

Once a coalition is ready, Germany's president nominates to the Bundestag a candidate for chancellor, who needs a majority of all members to be elected.

If two attempts to elect a chancellor with a majority fail, the constitution allows for the president to appoint the candidate who wins the most votes in a third vote as chancellor or to dissolve the Bundestag and hold a new national election. That has never yet happened.

WHEN WILL MERKEL STEP DOWN?

Merkel and her outgoing government will remain in office in a caretaker capacity until the Bundestag elects her successor.

The outgoing coalition holds the record for the longest time taken to form a government, after an attempt to form an alternative alliance collapsed. The Bundestag elected Merkel for her fourth term on March 14, 2018 — nearly six months after German voters had their say on Sept. 24, 2017.

One side-effect of a very long coalition-building process might be to add another aspect to Merkel's legacy. Among democratic Germany's post-World War II leaders, she has served longer than all but Helmut Kohl, who led the country to reunification during his 1982-98 tenure. She would overtake even him if she is still in office on Dec. 17.

WHAT PARTIES ARE INVOLVED?

Four parties are potentially in play to form the new government. The outcome will almost certainly be a coalition that has a majority of the seats in parliament. Germany has no tradition of minority governments, which are generally viewed as unstable and undesirable.

The Social Democrats of outgoing finance minister and Vice Chancellor Olaf Scholz are the biggest party, but even they are far short of a majority with 206 of the 735 seats in parliament.

They want to build a coalition with the environmentalist Greens and the business-friendly Free Democrats. The Union bloc under Merkel's would-be successor, Armin Laschet, could also form a government with those two parties. The former is known in Germany as a "traffic light" coalition, after the parties' colors of red, green and yellow; a Union-led alliance is labeled a "Jamaica" coalition because the party colors of black, green and yellow reflect that country's flag. Both have been tried successfully in German state governments, but not at national level.

Agreeing on either may not be easy because the Greens in recent decades have tended to ally themselves with the Social Democrats, and the Free Democrats with the Union. The two parties have different

priorities on fighting climate change, which the Greens want to put at the center of the new government's agenda, and on how to handle the economy as it recovers from the pandemic.

The Free Democrats and Union oppose raising taxes and loosening Germany's tight rules on running up public debt. The Social Democrats and Greens want to raise taxes for top earners and increase the minimum wage.

In Europe, the Union and Free Democrats have tended to take a stricter line on financial aid to struggling countries. But either alliance is unlikely to be troubled by huge foreign policy differences, though the Greens favor a tougher line toward China and Russia, and oppose the new Nord Stream 2 pipeline bringing Russian gas to Germany.

There is one alternative to a "traffic light" or "Jamaica" coalition — a repeat of the outgoing "grand coalition" of the Union and Social Democrats, but this time under the latter's leadership. This combination of rivals has run Germany for 12 years of Merkel's 16-year tenure and has often been marred by squabbling. There is little appetite for it.

Follow AP's coverage of Germany's election at <https://apnews.com/hub/germany-election>

Biden plan seeks to expand education, from pre-K to college

By COLLIN BINKLEY and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As Democrats push ahead with President Joe Biden's \$3.5 trillion rebuilding plan, they're promising historic investments across the arc of an education — from early childhood to college and beyond — in what advocates describe as the most comprehensive package of its kind in decades.

The education provisions in Biden's "Build Back Better" proposal would serve as a bedrock for schooling opportunities for countless Americans and test the nation's willingness to expand federal programs in far-reaching ways.

Equity is a focus, as it seeks to remove barriers to education that for decades have resulted in wage and learning disparities based on race and income. And by expanding early education and child care programs, it aims to bring back workers, especially women, who left jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic to look after children whose schools were closed.

All told, Americans would be entitled to two years of free preschool plus two years of free community college. Millions of families would be eligible for expanded child care subsidies. And there would be more federal financial aid for low-income college students.

"We haven't done anything like that in my memory," said Jessica Thompson, associate vice president of the Institute for College Access and Success, an education nonprofit. "It's the dream."

Congress is working to meet Monday's self-imposed deadlines, and Biden's broader proposal could come before the House later in the week. But Democrats must first overcome divisions within their own ranks over the scope of the plan. The \$3.5 trillion proposal reaches nearly every aspect of American life, from health care and taxes to the climate and housing, largely paid for by raising taxes on corporations and the wealthy.

The price tag will likely drop and ambitions scaled back to appease more centrist lawmakers wary of big spending. But the cuts are drawing concerns from progressives and others who say they have already compromised enough.

Funding for historically Black colleges and universities, for example, has been slashed from Biden's earlier plans. As lawmakers eye other possible cost-saving moves, money to repair aging school buildings could lose out.

At a recent House committee hearing, Rep. Frederica Wilson, D-Fla., argued that any more cuts could jeopardize the success of its education programs.

"Even with the robust investments proposed here, we are still shortchanging vital programs," she said.

Democrats are pushing ahead on their own because Republicans decry the proposal as a step toward socialism that will worsen inflation and strain the economy. They argue that free community college will

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benefit wealthier students who access the resource, at the expense of those with lower-incomes. And even on child care, which typically brings bipartisan support, Republicans say the plan goes too far.

"We should be focused on ensuring hardworking taxpayers can find the best care for their children rather than blindly throwing money at the problem and calling it a solution," said Rep. Virginia Foxx of North Carolina, the top Republican on the House Education and Labor Committee.

Taken together, the \$761 billion in education investments make up a fifth of Biden's total package. They're intended to provide a stronger academic start for children, especially those from low-income families. The higher education plans aim to get more adults into college and help them graduate with degrees that will lead to higher-paying jobs.

Even if the package is approved over solid GOP opposition, some of the marquee education proposals would face a big hurdle: getting buy-in from states.

For example, the community college and preschool plans would apply only in states that opt in and cover a portion of the cost. Supporters worry that some states will reject the programs over political grounds or to avoid the cost.

Democrats' proposal for universal preschool — one of Biden's campaign promises — would create new partnerships with states to offer free prekindergarten for all 3- and 4-year-olds. The federal government would cover the entire cost for the first three years before scaling back until states are paying 40%. After seven years, it would end or need to be renewed.

A separate provision would expand child care benefits to a wider swath of families, and cost for families would be capped at no more than 7% of their earnings. Unlike other aspects of the agenda, it wouldn't require state participation — cities or counties could opt in even if their states don't.

With free community college, Biden hopes to deliver a benefit that he's been pushing since the Obama administration. Under the proposal, anyone in a participating state would be eligible attend two years of community college without paying tuition.

States that opt in would get federal funding through a formula; they eventually would be asked to cover about 20% of the cost. The bill would provide enough funding to support the program for five years.

Other provisions include a \$500 increase to the maximum Pell grant for low-income college students, new investments in teacher training programs and \$82 billion for school infrastructure. In a move heralded by college affordability advocates, it would also make federal college aid available to students in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

The plan has been lauded by education advocacy groups, even though many were hoping for a bigger increase to the Pell grant program.

Denise Forte, interim CEO of the Education Trust, said the bill has the potential to open new doors for communities that have long been left behind. But she said the plan's success will largely rest on its acceptance by states.

"Some states may see the barrier as too high, even though there's a significant return," she said. "And some of the states that may not be willing have the highest proportion of students of color who lack access across the range of these issues."

There's also criticism that the bill fails to deliver some of Biden's promises, particularly to Black Americans and other key voting groups that helped deliver him to the White House.

In previous proposals, Biden called for at least \$45 billion to support research at historically Black colleges and universities. The bill includes just \$2 billion for that purpose, though, prompting pushback from HBCU leaders who issued a letter on Wednesday requesting "several more billions of dollars."

Tensions have mounted over the issue in recent weeks, with some Democrats in the Congressional Black Caucus threatening to withhold support from the bill unless more funding is added.

Binkley reported from Boston.

Top US general: Whisperer to presidents, target of intrigue

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By ROBERT BURNS and LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Gen. Mark Milley has been the target of more political intrigue and debate in two years as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff than any of his recent predecessors were in four. One after another, political firestorms have ignited around him — unusual for an officer who by law is a whisperer to presidents and by custom is careful to stay above the political fray.

From racial injustice and domestic extremism to nuclear weapons and the fitness of Donald Trump as commander in chief, Milley has become entangled in politically charged issues, regularly thrusting him into the news headlines.

Milley is expected to face tough questioning on those and other issues when he testifies with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin at a Senate hearing Tuesday and a House panel Wednesday. The hearings originally were meant to focus on the Afghanistan withdrawal and the chaotic evacuation from Kabul airport last month.

But since then, Milley has come under fire from Republicans for his portrayal in a new book as having taken unusual — some say illegal — steps to guard against Trump potentially starting a war with China or Iran or ordering an unprovoked nuclear attack in the final months of his presidency. Milley was reported to have agreed with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's assertion in a January phone call that Trump was "crazy."

Even during Milley's swing through Europe last week, headlines dogged him and reporters quizzed him. Mostly he batted questions away or buried them in detailed historical precedent.

Burly and square-jawed, with a bushy slash of eyebrows over often mischievous eyes, Milley is quick with a quip and frequently a curse. His oversize personality, born of Irish roots in Boston, belies a sharp intellect and a penchant for digging deep into military history. The Princeton-educated Milley often meets simple questions with a deep dive into history that can reach as far back as the Greeks, cover long stretches of both world wars, and expound upon the context and concepts of war.

So as he faced accusations of disloyalty for what the book "Peril," by Bob Woodward and Robert Costa, reported as assurances to a Chinese general that he would warn him of a U.S. attack, Milley gripped his identity as a soldier who answers to civilian leaders. He declined to make his case in the media, instead telling reporters that he will lay out his answers directly to Congress. His only brief comments have been that the calls with the Chinese were routine and within the duties and responsibilities of his job.

"I think it's best that I reserve my comments on the record until I do that in front of the lawmakers who have the lawful responsibility to oversee the U.S. military," Milley said. "I'll go into any level of detail Congress wants to go into."

While some in Congress have charged that he overstepped his authority, President Joe Biden has stood by him.

Loren Thompson, a longtime observer of the U.S. defense establishment as chief operating officer of the nonprofit Lexington Institute, says Milley is a victim of Washington's extreme partisanship and perhaps of his own efforts to shape his public image.

"His views and descriptions of his behavior behind closed doors, pop up too frequently in tell-all books like the Woodward and Costa book," Thompson said. "So perhaps Milley has taken a more active approach to trying to shape his image, and that has not served him well."

Not all of Milley's controversies have been related to Trump. At a House hearing in June, Milley passionately defended the military's openness to allowing young officers to study ideas they might not agree with, such as "critical race theory," and he said he wanted to understand "white rage" and the motivations of those who participated in the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol.

Joint Chiefs chairmen traditionally keep a low public profile. Of the 19 who preceded Milley, none was fired, nor does it appear he will be. Among recent chairmen, only Marine Gen. Peter Pace served fewer than four years when the George W. Bush administration did not tap him for another two-year term, citing the divisiveness of his association with the Iraq war.

Created in 1949, the job of chairman is to advise the president and the defense secretary. By law, the chairman commands no troops. The role has grown in public prominence during the two decades of U.S.

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warfighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Milley commanded troops during tours in both wars. Those battles, where he lost many soldiers, helped chart his path as he rose from an armor officer in 1980 to Army chief of staff 35 years later.

His move into the chairman's office on Sept. 30, 2019, came with an unusual twist.

Nearly a year before he was sworn in and just days before James Mattis resigned as defense secretary, Trump announced that Milley was his choice to succeed Gen. Joseph Dunford as chairman. The timing was unusually early in Dunford's tenure, and it may have had as much to do with Trump's antagonism toward Mattis as his belief that Milley was right for the job.

That's how Trump described it when he lashed out at Milley this summer following reports that Milley had feared last year that Trump might use the military in a coup. Trump said he picked him as chairman to spite Mattis, who he believed didn't like Milley. In fact, Mattis had recommended the Air Force's top general for the job, not Milley.

Milley's gregarious nature might have initially appealed to Trump, but he soon soured on him. In June 2020, Milley privately opposed Trump's talk of invoking the Insurrection Act to put active-duty troops in the streets of Washington to counter protests sparked by the killing by Minneapolis police of a Black man, George Floyd.

Milley also expressed public regret at being part of a Trump entourage that strolled across Lafayette Square on June 1, 2020, to be positioned near a church where Trump held up a Bible for photographers. Critics hit Milley for appearing to be a political pawn. Days later, Milley said he had made a big mistake. Through the months that followed, he seemed at risk of being sacked by Trump.

In the book "I Alone Can Fix It," Washington Post reporters Carol Leonnig and Philip Rucker reported that on the day President Joe Biden was sworn in, Milley expressed relief to former first lady Michelle Obama. "No one has a bigger smile today than I do," Milley said.

Shadow contracts, corruption keep the lights out in Iraq

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — In the Baghdad suburb of Sadr City, glossy election campaign posters are plastered alongside jungles of sagging electrical wires lining the alleyway to Abu Ammar's home.

But his mind is far from Iraq's Oct. 10 federal election. The 56-year-old retired soldier's social welfare payments barely cover the cost of food and medicine, let alone electricity. Despite chronic outages from the national grid, Abu Ammar can't afford a generator.

When the lights go off, he has no choice but to steal power from a neighbor's line. He doesn't have the right political connections to get electricity otherwise, he says, a frail figure seated in a spartan living room.

In this country, if you don't have these contacts, "your situation will be like ours," Abu Ammar says.

In Iraq, electricity is a potent symbol of endemic corruption, rooted in the country's sectarian power-sharing system that allows political elites to use patronage networks to consolidate power. It's perpetuated after each election cycle: Once results are tallied, politicians jockey for appointments in a flurry of negotiations based on the number of seats won. Ministry portfolios and state institutions are divided between them into spheres of control.

In the Electricity Ministry, this system has enabled under-the-table payments to political elites who siphon state funds from companies contracted to improve the delivery of services.

The Associated Press spoke to a dozen former and current ministry officials and company contractors. They described tacit partnerships secured through intimidation and mutual benefit between ministry political appointees, political parties and the companies, ensuring that a percentage of those funds end up in party coffers. All spoke on condition of anonymity because they feared reprisal from political groups.

"Corruption occurs as an individual act or for political interest," said ministry spokesman Ahmed Mousa. "It happens everywhere in Iraq, not just the Electricity Ministry."

Meanwhile, the public seethes, outraged that in Iraq, a major oil-producing country with plentiful energy resources, the prospect of electricity 24-hours-a-day is a distant dream. Neighborhoods nationwide

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face daily outages — up to 14 hours during peak summer in the impoverished southern provinces, where temperatures can reach 52 degrees Celsius (125 Fahrenheit).

It's a conundrum that baffles energy experts.

"The technical solutions are clear, and it's not happening. One has to ask why?" said Ali al-Saffar of the International Energy Agency.

SHADOW CONTRACTS

In June, an Iraqi businessman received a call from the representative of the economic committee of the Sadrist Movement led by Muqtada al-Sadr, a populist Shiite cleric with a cult-like following whose party garnered the most seats in the 2018 election.

The representative, Abbas al-Kufi, wanted to see him. He had been informed the businessman met with Electricity Ministry officials to discuss a multi-million-dollar project to increase languishing tariff collections — bills owed to the government by consumers, which in Iraq are rarely paid.

At al-Kufi's office, the businessman was instructed to deliver 15% of earnings, in cash, once the deal was inked and the ministry paid out the invoices.

"He told me, 'The Electricity Ministry belongs to me, to my party,' and I can't do anything without his approval," the businessman recalled being told by al-Kufi, who wields untold influence cemented by the Sadrist Movement's powerful militia arm.

"They aren't shy," the businessman added. "They tell you: 'If you don't follow us, we will hurt you.'"

Al-Kufi, once a militia figure in the fight against the Islamic State group, is the latest example of party economic representatives who have strong-armed companies over the years.

Through coordination among ministry loyalists, company officials and lawmakers, representatives like al-Kufi are appointed to ensure certain contracts are approved, a contractor of their choosing is selected to execute them and a cut delivered to the party, according to officials at six companies involved in the process since 2018.

Al-Kufi was named in the local media in July when a letter purportedly penned by former Electricity Minister Majid Hantoush accused him of undermining the ministry's work. Hantoush, who later resigned, denied writing it.

Nassar Rubaie, the head of the Sadrist Movement's political wing, said his party earned the electricity ministry because it won the most parliament seats in the 2018 election. The ministry, with its high state budget, is among the most sought after. He confirmed al-Kufi was a Sadrist figure, but denied the allegations against him or the Movement, saying they amounted to "slander."

If documents exist proving the complicity of Sadrist officials, he would personally see to it that they are prosecuted in a court of law, al-Rubaie added.

Only, no such paper trail exists.

Contractors said intimidation is standard operating procedure in the Electricity Ministry. One official from a major multinational company said he was ordered to subcontract to a local company exclusively as a package of deals worth billions was being negotiated with the government.

"It was made clear to me: 'Either you join us, or you will get nothing in the end,'" he said.

To secure the funds for payoff, sometimes more expensive materials are invoiced than what is actually bought. One official estimated "billions" have been lost to these schemes since 2003, but accurate figures are not available.

Officials who question why contract prices are inflated receive warnings, including one who objected to a power plant in northern Salahaddin province that was overvalued by \$600 million. He got a call when it became clear he would not sign off on the deal, he said.

Be careful, he was told.

DAUNTING EQUATIONS

Every electricity minister since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein has faced this daunting equation: Iraq should be able to produce over 30,000 megawatts of power, enough to meet current demand, but only about a half of that reaches consumers.

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Poor infrastructure, inappropriate fuel and theft account for 40%-60% of losses, among the highest rates in the world. In the more impoverished south, heat, urban expansion and illegal dwellings put even more pressure on the aging grid.

Revenue collections are abysmal and subsidies astronomical. The ministry collects less than 10% of what it should in billings. In December, a parliamentary committee reported that \$81 billion had been spent on the electricity sector since 2005, yet outages were still the norm.

That is partly to blame on politically appointed civil servants, especially director-generals of key departments, who wield the most influence in the ministry and are empowered to facilitate contract fraud, according to six former and current officials. Negotiations after the 2018 election involved at least 500 such posts. The Sadrist Movement was given the most — 200.

The future is bleak.

Demand is set to double by 2030, with Iraq's population growing by 1 million per year. The International Energy Agency estimates that by not developing its electricity sector, Iraq has lost \$120 billion between 2014-2020 in jobs and industrial growth due to unmet demand.

A HIGH PRICE

A hidden cost of Iraq's power woes: Sleeplessness.

Uday Ibrahim Ali, a generator repairman, is routinely wakened for urgent fixes in Basra's Zubair neighborhood. His clients beg him: They have children struggling to sleep in the suffocating heat. "Can I ignore them? I can't," he says.

In the summer of 2018, poor electricity service prompted protests in Basra that left at least 15 dead. A year later, mass protests paralyzed Baghdad and Iraq's south, as tens of thousands decried the rampant corruption that has plagued service delivery.

Independent candidates drawn from the protest movement in Basra are making electricity a priority as they prepare for the elections. With temperatures going down in September, power cuts are less frequent. To avoid protests ahead of the elections, Iraqi officials also improved distribution.

In Baghdad, Sadr City is a front line in the electricity crisis. A bastion of the Sadrist Movement, Al-Sadr's portrait hangs in almost every home.

Publicly, his movement supports a reformist agenda. Meanwhile, disillusioned Iraqis call for boycotting the elections. Expected low voter turnout will guarantee grassroots movements like the Sadrists win a large share of seats.

That's because of loyalists like Mahdi Mohammed.

When the lights go out, the 60-year-old asthmatic douses himself with water and wheezes in the dark, barely able to breathe. The parties that came before the Sadrist Movement are to blame, he says, adding that he will vote for a Sadrist candidate.

He has more to say, but in that moment the electricity returns, lights come on and a gust of cool air strikes his face. He closes his eyes and looks up toward the heavens.

"Welcome, welcome," he cries.

India's farmers renew protests, challenging Modi government

By RISHI LEKHI Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Thousands of Indian farmers blocked traffic on major roads and railway tracks outside of the nation's capital on Monday, marking one year of demonstrations against government-backed laws that they say will shatter their livelihoods.

The farmers have renewed their protests with calls for a nationwide strike on the anniversary of the legislation's passage. The drawn-out demonstrations have posed one of the biggest political challenges to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who swept the polls for the second time in 2019.

Waving colorful flags and distributing free food, hundreds of farmers gathered Monday at one of the protest sites on the edges of the capital, New Delhi.

"The enthusiasm we had on the first day, it is much stronger and bigger now," said Manjit Singh, a

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45-year-old farmer and protester.

Mohini Kaur, a 61-year-old New Delhi resident traveled to the protest site to show her support for the farmers.

"These lion-hearted farmers are here today under the hot sun. They have been exposed to rain, heat and the cold," she said.

Protesters expressed their determination to keep the movement going — some even brought mattresses with them, camping out as the day went on.

Along New Delhi's southwest and eastern fringes, protesting farmers crowded highways, choking traffic and cutting off access from the capital to neighboring states. Police were deployed to three main protest sites on the outskirts of the city to maintain law and order.

A coalition of farmers' unions — known as the Samyukta Kisan Morcha, or United Farmers' Front — has called on shops, offices, factories and other institutions to shut their doors in solidarity for the 10-hour strike. The calls for a strike, however, seemed to go largely unanswered, with most businesses continuing work as usual across the capital.

The government has defended the legislation, saying it is necessary to modernize agriculture and that the laws will boost production through private investment. But the farmers say the new legislation will devastate their earnings by ending guaranteed pricing and force them to sell their crops to corporations at cheaper prices.

In neighboring Punjab and Haryana states — which are the country's the two biggest agricultural producers — thousands of demonstrators also blocked highways, bringing traffic to a halt in some areas.

In the eastern state of Bihar, trains were halted as farmers squatted on railway tracks. Protesters also took to the streets, raising slogans against the Modi government, burning tires and blocking roads across the region. Police said some 500 protesters had been taken into custody, but added that the shutdown remained peaceful.

In the southern city of Bengaluru on Monday, hundreds of people marched in support of the protest against the government. In the southern state of Kerala, the ruling Left Democratic Front called for a total shutdown, reported local media.

Opposition parties in India, including the Congress Party, have supported the farmers. Senior leader Rahul Gandhi called the government "exploitative" and said he stood with farmers on Monday.

A number of talks between the government and farmers have failed to resolve the issue.

In November, the farmers escalated their movement by hunkering down on the outskirts of New Delhi, where they have camped out for nearly a year, pushing through a harsh winter as well as a coronavirus surge that devastated India earlier this year.

While the farmers' protest movement has been largely peaceful, demonstrators in January broke through police barricades to storm the historic Red Fort in the capital's center. Clashes with police left one protester dead and hundreds injured.

Associated Press writers Indrajit Singh in Patna and Aijaz Rahi in Bengaluru contributed.

Germany embarks on tricky search for post-Merkel government

By GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Germany is embarking on a potentially lengthy search for its next government after the center-left Social Democrats narrowly beat outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel's center-right bloc in an election that failed to set a clear direction for Europe's biggest economy under a new leader.

Leaders of the parties in the newly elected parliament were meeting Monday to digest a result that saw Merkel's Union bloc slump to its worst-ever result in a national election, and appeared to put the keys to power in the hands of two opposition parties.

Both Social Democrat Olaf Scholz, who pulled his party out of a years-long slump, and Armin Laschet, the candidate of Merkel's party who saw his party's fortunes decline in a troubled campaign, laid a claim

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to leading the next government. Scholz is the outgoing vice chancellor and finance minister and Laschet is the governor of Germany's most populous state, North Rhine-Westphalia.

Whichever of them becomes chancellor will do so with his party having won a smaller share of the vote than any of his predecessors. Who gets the job looks likely to depend on the decision of the prospective junior partners, the environmentalist Greens and the business-friendly Free Democrats — parties that traditionally belong to rival ideological camps.

"Voters have spoken very clearly," Scholz said Monday. "They strengthened three parties — the Social Democrats, the Greens and the Free Democrats — so this is the visible mandate the citizens of this country have given: these three parties should lead the next government."

The only other option that would have a parliamentary majority is a repeat of the "grand coalition" of the Union and Social Democrats. That is the grouping that has run Germany for 12 years of Merkel's 16-year tenure and has often been marred by squabbling, but this time it would be under Scholz's leadership with Merkel's bloc as junior partner. There is little appetite for that, however.

Scholz said the Union "received the message from citizens that they should no longer be in government, but go into opposition."

Merkel's outgoing government will remain in office until a successor is sworn in, a process that can take weeks or months. Merkel announced in 2018 that she wouldn't seek a fifth term.

The Greens traditionally lean toward the Social Democrats and the Free Democrats toward the Union, but neither ruled out going the other way on Sunday night. The Greens made significant gains in the election to finish third but fell far short of their original aim of taking the chancellery, while the Free Democrats improved slightly on a good result from 2017.

Julia Reuschenbach, a political analyst at the University of Bonn, told ARD television that a Laschet-led government "isn't excluded in principle," though the Social Democrats will push the argument that the result shows Germans want them to lead the new administration. "Ultimately, the parties will of course have to agree on matters of substance," she said.

Final official results gave the Social Democrats 25.7% of the vote and the Union 24.1%. Four years ago, they won 20.5% and 32.9% respectively. The Union — made up of Laschet's Christian Democratic Union and its Bavarian sister, the Christian Social Union — had never previously polled below 31% in a national parliamentary election.

The Greens took 14.8%, the Free Democrats 11.5% and the far-right Alternative for Germany 10.3% — a decline from the 12.6% it took to enter parliament for the first time in 2017. The smallest party in the new parliament is the Left Party, which won just 4.9% of the vote.

The new Bundestag, or lower house of parliament, will have a record 735 lawmakers. The parliament varies in size because of a peculiarity of Germany's electoral system, which means that it can be considerably bigger than the minimum 598 seats.

The Social Democrats took 206 seats, the Union 196, the Greens 118, the Free Democrats 92, Alternative for Germany 83 and the Left Party 39. One seat went to the Danish minority party SSW, which will be represented for the first time in decades.

Follow AP's coverage of Germany's election at <https://apnews.com/hub/germany-election>

US officials: Biden aide to meet Saudi crown prince on Yemen

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's national security adviser Jake Sullivan is traveling to Saudi Arabia on Monday to meet with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman as the U.S. tries to press the kingdom to move toward a cease-fire in its yearslong war with Houthi rebels in Yemen.

Sullivan will be the highest-ranking Biden administration official to visit Saudi Arabia. Besides seeing the crown prince, often referred to by his initials, MBS, Sullivan is expected to meet with deputy defense minister Khalid bin Salman, a brother to the crown prince, according to two senior administration officials.

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The officials were not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The Biden White House has largely steered clear of the crown prince since making public in February a CIA report that showed MBS likely approved the killing of Washington Post columnist and Saudi critic Jamal Khashoggi in a 2018 operation at the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul.

But the White House has resolved that bringing an end to perhaps the world's most complex conflict can't be done without engaging with the most senior Saudi officials face to face, one senior administration official said.

National Security Council spokesperson Emily Horne said Sullivan was traveling to Riyadh on Monday and would also visit the United Arab Emirates, a Saudi ally in the war, but did not provide additional details.

Sullivan is being dispatched at a moment when the situation in Yemen, the Arab world's poorest country, has further deteriorated. Fighting has intensified in the key city of Marib, as Iran-backed rebels have sought to oust the Saudi-backed government from the oil-rich city in the country's north.

The new U.N. special envoy to Yemen, Hans Grundberg, recently declared that the country is "stuck in an indefinite state of war" and resuming negotiations to end the more than six-year conflict won't be easy.

Yemen's war began in September 2014, when the Iranian-backed Houthis seized Sanaa and began a march south to try to seize the entire country. Saudi Arabia, along with the United Arab Emirates and other countries, entered the war alongside Yemen's internationally recognized government in March 2015.

The U.S. sold bombs and fighter jets to Saudi Arabia that the kingdom later used in strikes on Yemen that also killed civilians. The Obama administration in 2015 initially offered U.S. targeting assistance to Saudi Arabia's command-and-control operations that was supposed to minimize civilian casualties in airstrikes. It didn't, and Obama ultimately cut back on the program.

Under President Donald Trump, targeting assistance continued although his administration later stopped U.S. refueling operations for Saudi jets.

Biden announced weeks into his administration that he was ending all American support for "offensive operations in the war in Yemen, including relevant arms sales." But there has been little progress on the ground in resolving what the United Nations says is the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

White House officials are hopeful that the appointment of Grundberg will bring a new dynamic and put pressure on all sides to bring an end to the conflict, according to two senior administration officials.

Sullivan is being joined for the talks with the Saudis and the UAE by U.S. special envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking and NSC senior director for the Middle East Brett McGurk. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin planned to travel to Saudi Arabia earlier this month while he was in the region but postponed due to what the administration said were scheduling issues.

The high-level White House push comes after Lenderking traveled to Saudi Arabia and Oman, which has pressed for an end to the war. In addition, Secretary of State Antony Blinken had talks with his counterpart members of the Gulf Cooperation Council on the margins of the U.N. General Assembly.

Sullivan's visit to Saudi Arabia also comes as the administration is looking for ways to resurrect the Iran nuclear deal. The Saudis and the UAE fiercely oppose returning to the deal with Iran that was originally brokered in 2015 by the Obama administration only to be scrapped by Trump in 2018.

Addressing the U.N. General Assembly on Friday, Iran's new foreign minister Hossain Amir Abdollah said the country will return to nuclear negotiations in Vienna "very soon." But he accused the Biden administration of sending contradictory messages by saying it wants to rejoin the pact while slapping new sanctions on Tehran and not taking "an iota of positive action."

Biden and his team have made a U.S. return to the deal — to which Britain, France, Russia, China, Germany and Iran are signatories — one of their top foreign policy priorities. But the U.S. has made limited headway in indirect talks, and Tehran has bristled at Biden administration officials' call for a "longer and stronger" deal than the original, which expires at the end of 2030.

Investigators seek cause of deadly Montana train derailment

By AMY BETH HANSON, MARTHA BELLISLE and ANITA SNOW Associated Press

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JOPLIN, Mont. (AP) — Federal investigators are seeking the cause of an Amtrak train derailment near a switch on tracks in the middle of vast farmland in far northern Montana that killed three people and left seven hospitalized over the weekend.

The westbound Empire Builder was traveling from Chicago to Seattle when it left the tracks about 4 p.m. Saturday near Joplin, a town of about 200. Amtrak spokesman Jason Abrams said the train was carrying about 141 passengers and 16 crew members. It had two locomotives and 10 cars, eight of which derailed, with some tipping onto their sides.

Trevor Fossen was first on the scene. The Joplin resident was on a dirt road near the tracks Saturday when he saw “a wall of dust” hundreds of feet high.

“I started looking at that, wondering what it was and then I saw the train had tipped over and derailed,” said Fossen, who called 911 and started trying to get people out. He called his brother to bring ladders for people who couldn’t get down after exiting through the windows of cars resting on their sides.

Passenger Jacob Cordeiro from Rhode Island was traveling with his father to Seattle to celebrate his college graduation.

“I was in one of the front cars and we got badly jostled, thrown from one side of the train to the other,” he told MSNBC. He said the train car left the tracks near a switch where two tracks narrow to one but did not fall over.

“I’m a pretty big guy and it picked me up from my chair and threw me into one wall and then threw me into the other wall,” Cordeiro said.

Railroad safety expert David Clarke, director of the Center for Transportation Research at the University of Tennessee, said the two locomotives and two cars at the front of the train reached the switch and continued on the main track, but the remaining eight cars derailed. He said it was unclear whether some of the last cars moved onto the second track.

“Did the switch play some role? It might have been that the front of the train hit the switch and it started fish-tailing and that flipped the back part of the train,” Clarke said.

Another possibility was a defect in the rail, Clarke said, noting that regular testing doesn’t always catch such problems. He said speed was not a likely factor because trains on that line have systems that prevent excessive speeds and collisions.

Allan Zarembski, director of the University of Delaware’s Railway Engineering and Safety Program, said he didn’t want to speculate but suspected the derailment stemmed from an issue with the train track, equipment, or both.

Railways have “virtually eliminated” major derailments by human error after the implementation of positive train control nationwide, Zarembski said.

Matt Jones, a BNSF Railway spokesman said at a news conference that the track where the accident occurred was last inspected on Thursday.

A 14-member National Transportation Safety Board team including investigators and railroad signal specialists will be looking into the cause of the accident on a BNSF Railway track, NTSB spokesman Eric Weiss said.

Law enforcement on Sunday said the officials from the NTSB, Amtrak and BNSF were at the accident scene just west of Joplin, where the tracks cut through vast, golden brown wheat fields that were recently harvested. Several large cranes were brought to the tracks that run roughly parallel to U.S. Highway 2, along with a truckload of gravel and new railroad ties.

The site is about 150 miles (241 kilometers) northeast of Helena and about 30 miles (48 kilometers) from the Canadian border.

Amtrak CEO Bill Flynn expressed condolences to those who lost loved ones and said the company is working with the NTSB, Federal Railroad Administration and local law enforcement, sharing their “sense of urgency” to determine what happened.

Because of the derailment, Sunday’s westbound Empire Builder from Chicago was terminating in St. Paul, Minnesota, and the eastbound train was originating in Minnesota.

Montana Gov. Greg Gianforte said BNSF was readying replacement track for when the NTSB gives the

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go-head. "BNSF has assured me they can get the line up and running in short order," he said.

Most of those on the train were treated and released for their injuries, but five who were more seriously hurt remained at the Benefis Health System hospital in Great Falls, Montana, said Sarah Robbin, Liberty County emergency services coordinator. Two were in the intensive care unit, a hospital spokeswoman said.

Another two people were at Logan Health, a hospital in Kalispell, Montana, spokeswoman Melody Sharp-ton said.

Liberty County Sheriff Nick Erickson said the names of the dead would not be released until relatives are notified.

Biden, Congress face big week for agenda, government funding

By HOPE YEN and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It's a consequential week for President Joe Biden's agenda, as Democratic leaders delicately trim back his \$3.5 trillion "Build Back Better" package to win over remaining lawmakers and work to quickly pass legislation to avoid a federal shutdown.

An expected Monday vote on a related \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure package is now postponed until Thursday, amid ongoing negotiations. More immediately, the Senate has a test vote set Monday to keep the government funded and avert a federal debt default before Thursday's fiscal year-end deadline. That package stands to run into a blockade by Republican senators — all but ensuring lawmakers will have to try again later in the week.

All this while Biden's domestic agenda hangs in the balance, at risk of collapse and political fallout if he and Democratic leaders cannot pull their party together to deliver what could be a signature piece of legislation and the biggest overhaul of the nation's tax and spending priorities in decades. Over the weekend, Biden personally spoke with lawmakers on the path forward, according to a White House official who requested anonymity to discuss the private conversations.

"Let me just say, it's an eventful week," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Sunday on ABC's "This Week."

Biden, Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer are deep into negotiations over the president's broader proposal, which is being chiseled back to win over key senators and a few House lawmakers who have so far refused the \$3.5 trillion price tag and the tax increases on corporations and the wealthy to pay for it.

Behind-the-scenes talks churned, allowing for needed breathing room after Monday's anticipated vote on the companion \$1 trillion public works measure was postponed. The two bills are related, and centrists and progressive factions are at odds at prioritizing one ahead of the other. Pelosi announced the Thursday vote in a letter late Sunday evening to colleagues, noting it's also a deadline for related transportation programs in the infrastructure bill.

Rep. Josh Gottheimer, D-N.J., who led a group of House moderates in a securing a vote on the slimmer infrastructure bill, said earlier Sunday he wouldn't be bothered by a slight delay. He was optimistic both pieces of legislation could be resolved this week.

The more difficult action now lies in the Senate, as Democrats are under pressure to amass the votes for Biden's big package. It would provide an expansion of existing health, education and child care programs for Americans young and old, alongside new federal efforts to curb climate change.

Republicans are lockstep opposed to Biden's proposal, which would be paid for by increasing the corporate tax rate, from 21% to 26.5% on businesses earning more than \$5 million a year, and raising the top rate on individuals from 37% to 39.6% for those earning more than \$400,000 a year, or \$450,000 for couples.

Two Democratic holdouts, Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, also have said they won't support a bill of that size. Manchin has previously proposed spending of \$1 trillion to \$1.5 trillion.

Asked Sunday on ABC if she agrees the final number on the so-called reconciliation bill will be "somewhat smaller" than \$3.5 trillion, Pelosi responded: "That seems self-evident."

"We'll see how the number comes down and what we need," she added. "I think even those who want

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a smaller number, support the vision of the president, and this is really transformative.”

Her comments reflected the enormous stakes for the coming week, one that could define the Biden presidency and shape the political contours of next year’s midterm elections.

For Pelosi and Schumer, two veteran political leaders, it is the job of their careers.

Democrats have only a few votes to spare in the House and no votes to spare in the 50-50 Senate, since there is no Republican support expected for Biden’s massive agenda. Some Republican senators did back the \$1 trillion public works bill, but now House Republicans are objecting, saying it is too much.

While progressives say they have already compromised enough on Biden’s big bill, having come down from a bill they originally envisioned at \$6 trillion, some are also acknowledging the more potential changes.

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., who heads the Congressional Progressive Caucus, didn’t rule out additional cuts to the \$3.5 trillion proposal to reach agreement.

“If somebody wants to take something out, we need to hear what that is,” she said.

The House Budget Committee on Saturday advanced a first version of the \$3.5 trillion, 10-year bill, though one Democrat voted “no,” illustrating the challenges party leaders face.

Pelosi suggested that House-Senate agreement could be reached this week, depending on rulings from the Senate parliamentarian on what provisions could be included.

The overall bill embodies the crux of Biden’s top domestic goals, with billions for rebuilding infrastructure, tackling climate change and expanding or introducing a range of services, from free prekindergarten and to child tax breaks to dental, vision and hearing aid care for older Americans.

While Democrats are largely in agreement on Biden’s vision — many ran their campaigns on the long-standing party priorities — stubborn disputes remain. Among them are splits over which initiatives should be reshaped, including how to push toward cleaner energy or to lower prescription drug costs.

Republicans say the proposal isn’t needed and can’t be afforded given accumulated federal debt exceeding \$28 trillion. They also argue that it reflects Democrats’ drive to insert government into people’s lives.

Gottheimer spoke to CNN’s “State of the Union” and Jayapal appeared on CBS’ “Face the Nation.”

Associated Press writer Alan Fram contributed to this report.

Social Democrats narrowly beat Merkel’s bloc in German vote

By FRANK JORDANS and GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Germany’s center-left Social Democrats won the biggest share of the vote in a national election Sunday, narrowly beating outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel’s center-right Union bloc in a closely fought race that will determine who succeeds the long-time leader at the helm of Europe’s biggest economy.

The Social Democrats’ candidate Olaf Scholz, the outgoing vice chancellor and finance minister who pulled his party out of a years-long slump, said the outcome was “a very clear mandate to ensure now that we put together a good, pragmatic government for Germany.”

Despite getting its worst-ever result in a federal contest, the Union bloc said it too would reach out to smaller parties to discuss forming a government, while Merkel stays on in a caretaker role until a successor is sworn in.

Election officials said early Monday that a count of all 299 constituencies showed the Social Democrats received 25.9% of the vote, ahead of 24.1% for the Union bloc. No winning party in a German national election had previously taken less than 31% of the vote.

Armin Laschet, the governor of North Rhine-Westphalia state who outmaneuvered a more popular rival to secure the nomination of Merkel’s Union bloc, had struggled to motivate the party’s base and suffered a series of missteps.

“Of course, this is a loss of votes that isn’t pretty,” Laschet said of results that looked set to undercut by some measure the Union’s previous worst showing of 31% in 1949. But he added that with Merkel departing after 16 years in power, “no one had an incumbent bonus in this election.”

Laschet told supporters that “we will do everything we can to form a government under the Union’s

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leadership, because Germany now needs a coalition for the future that modernizes our country.”

Both Laschet and Scholz will be courting the same two parties: the environmentalist Greens, who were third with 14.8%; and the pro-business Free Democrats, who took 11.5% of the vote.

The Greens traditionally lean toward the Social Democrats and the Free Democrats toward the Union, but neither ruled out going the other way.

The other option was a repeat of the outgoing “grand coalition” of the Union and Social Democrats that has run Germany for 12 of Merkel’s 16 years in power, but there was little obvious appetite for that after years of government squabbling.

“Everyone thinks that ... this ‘grand coalition’ isn’t promising for the future, regardless of who is No. 1 and No. 2,” Laschet said. “We need a real new beginning.”

The Free Democrats’ leader, Christian Lindner, appeared keen to govern, suggesting that his party and the Greens should make the first move.

“About 75% of Germans didn’t vote for the next chancellor’s party,” Lindner said in a post-election debate with all parties’ leaders on public broadcaster ZDF. “So it might be advisable ... that the Greens and Free Democrats first speak to each other to structure everything that follows.”

Baerbock insisted that “the climate crisis ... is the leading issue of the next government, and that is for us the basis for any talks ... even if we aren’t totally satisfied with our result.”

While the Greens improved their support from the last election in 2017, they had higher expectations for Sunday’s vote.

The Left Party was projected to win only 4.9% of the vote and risked being kicked out of parliament entirely. The far-right Alternative for Germany — which no one else wants to work with — received 10.3%. This was about 2 percentage points less than in 2017, when it first entered parliament.

Due to Germany’s complicated electoral system, a full breakdown of the result by seats in parliament was still pending.

Merkel, who has won plaudits for steering Germany through several major crises, won’t be an easy leader to follow. Her successor will have to oversee the country’s recovery from the coronavirus pandemic, which Germany so far has weathered relatively well thanks to large rescue programs.

Germany’s leading parties have significant differences when it comes to taxation and tackling climate change.

Foreign policy didn’t feature much in the campaign, although the Greens favor a tougher stance toward China and Russia.

Whichever parties form the next German government, the Free Democrats’ Lindner said it was “good news” that it would have a majority with centrist parties.

“All of those in Europe and beyond who were worried about Germany’s stability can now see: Germany will be stable in any case,” he said.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez sent early congratulations to Scholz.

“Spain and Germany will continue to work together for a stronger Europe and for a fair and green recovery that leaves no one behind,” he wrote on Twitter.

In two regional elections also held Sunday, the Social Democrats looked set to defend the post of Berlin mayor that they have held for two decades. The party was also on course for a strong win in the north-eastern state of Mecklenburg Western-Pomerania.

For the first time since 1949, the Danish minority party SSW was set to win a seat in parliament, officials said.

Associated Press writer Kirsten Grieshaber and Karin Laub contributed to this report.

Follow AP’s coverage of Germany’s election at <https://apnews.com/hub/germany-election>

Rolling Stones open American tour, pay tribute to drummer

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By JIM SALTER Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — The Rolling Stones are touring again, this time without their heartbeat, or at least their backbeat.

The legendary rockers launched their pandemic-delayed “No Filter” tour Sunday at the Dome at America’s Center in St. Louis without their drummer of nearly six decades. It was clear from the outset just how much the band members — and the fans — missed Charlie Watts, who died last month at age 80. Except for a private show in Massachusetts last week, the St. Louis concert was their first since Watts’ death.

The show opened with an empty stage and only a drumbeat, with photos of Watts flashing on the video board. After the second song, a rousing rendition of “It’s Only Rock ‘N’ Roll (But I Like It),” Mick Jagger, Keith Richards and Ronnie Wood came to the front of the stage. Jagger and Richards clasped hands as they thanked fans for the outpouring of support and love for Watts. Jagger acknowledged it was emotional seeing the photos of Watts.

“This is our first-ever tour we’ve ever done without him,” Jagger said. “We’ll miss Charlie so much, on and off the stage.”

The band then dedicated “Tumbling Dice” to Watts.

The tour had been scheduled for 2020 before the coronavirus virtually shut down the touring industry. Signs of the pandemic were everywhere at the show in Missouri, a state hit hard by the virus’s delta variant.

The tens of thousands of fans wore masks as required by St. Louis’ anti-virus protocol. The Stones themselves appeared in a public service announcement urging anyone with symptoms to stay home. A vaccination site was set up at the dome, with plans for similar sites at each tour stop.

The concert itself featured the same driving beat personified by Watts, thanks to his replacement, Steve Jordan. The drummer may be new to fans but he’s hardly new to the Stones — Jordan has performed for years with Richards’ side project, X-Pensive Winos, along with many other leading acts.

Still, die-hard fans couldn’t help but miss Watts, widely considered one of rock’s greatest drummers, even though his real love was jazz. He joined Jagger and Richards in the Rolling Stones in 1963. Wood joined in 1975.

For Laura Jezewski, 62, of Omaha, Nebraska, seeing the Stones without Watts was bittersweet.

“It’s really sad,” she said. “He’s the first of the old Stones to pass away.”

The show featured the band’s long litany of hits. Jagger hardly looked like a 78-year-old man, strutting around the stage like a man half — or one-third of his age; a constant whirl of motion. His vocals, and the guitar work of Wood and Richards, sounded as good as ever.

After St. Louis, the tour will include stops in Charlotte, North Carolina; Pittsburgh; Nashville, Tennessee; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Tampa, Florida; Dallas; Atlanta; Detroit; and ending in Austin, Texas, on Nov. 20. The band also added new dates in Los Angeles on Oct. 14 and Oct. 17, and a concert in Las Vegas on Nov. 6.

Jzewski and her 60-year-old husband, Brad, brought their 30-year-old daughter, Sarah, to St. Louis for the concert. It was Sarah’s first chance to see the Rolling Stones. Her mom and dad have seen them in various places — Ames, Iowa; Boulder, Colorado; Denver; even Wichita, Kansas — dating back to the 1970s.

With the surviving band members well into their 70s, the Jezewskis didn’t want to miss this chance.

“If it is their last time — we’re here,” Brad Jezewski said. “And if there’s another tour, we’ll be there, too.”

Tonys Latest: ‘Moulin Rouge!’ wins best new musical crown

By The Associated Press undefined

The Latest on the Tony Awards (all times local):

10:45 p.m.

“Moulin Rouge! The Musical,” a jukebox adaptation of Baz Luhrmann’s hyperactive 2001 movie, has danced away with the best new musical Tony Award.

It beat “Jagged Little Pill” and “Tina — The Tina Turner Musical” for the coveted title during the pandemic-shortened Broadway season.

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The show is about the goings-on in a turn-of-the-century Parisian nightclub, updated with tunes like "Single Ladies" and "Firework" alongside the big hit "Lady Marmalade."

The show also earned wins for Aaron Tveit as best actor in a leading role, Danny Burstein as best actor in a featured role, scenic design, costume design, lighting design, sound design, orchestrations and best director Alex Timbers and Sonya Tayeh for choreography.

MORE ON THE TONYS

- 'Moulin Rouge!' leads Tonys haul, but 3 big trophies to come
- Select list of winners at Sunday's Tony Awards
- Tonys: Broadway hopes to dazzle its way out pandemic
- Tonywatch: Aaron Tveit rides a roller coaster of a year

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

9:50 p.m.

"The Inheritance" by Matthew Lopez has been named the best new play at the Tony Awards.

The two-part, seven-hour epic uses "Howards End" as a starting point for a play that looks at gay life in the early 21st century. It also yielded wins for Andrew Burnap as best actor in a play, Stephen Daldry as best director and Lois Smith as best performance by an actress in a featured role in a play.

A winner of multiple best play awards in London, where it premiered in 2018, the acclaimed work was directed by now-three-time Tony Award winner Daldry.

Lopez has argued that the closeted Forster in "Howards End" was telling a queer story using straight characters so he decided to retell it in a contemporary setting using gay male characters in place of the heterosexual characters in the book.

"The Inheritance" beat "Grand Horizons," "Sea Wall/A Life," "Slave Play" and "The Sound Inside."

9:30 p.m.

Charles Fuller's "A Soldier's Play" has won the Tony Award for best play revival.

"A Soldier's Play" dissects entrenched Black-white racism as well as internal divisions in the Black military community during World War II, wrapping it in a military murder mystery.

The play won the Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1982 and two years later was made into the Oscar-nominated best picture "A Soldier's Story," for which Fuller wrote the screenplay and earned an Oscar nomination.

The work has attracted a who's-who of male African American acting talent. The film version starred a young Denzel Washington, who had appeared in its first stage incarnation in New York alongside Samuel L. Jackson. A 2005 revival off-Broadway lured Taye Diggs, Anthony Mackie and Steven Pasquale.

It made its Broadway debut in the pandemic shortened season of 2019-2020 with David Alan Grier and Blair Underwood and earned seven Tony nominations, yielding a win for Grier.

For best revival, it beat out "Betrayal" and "Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune."

9:10 p.m.

Leslie Odom Jr. has kicked off a nationally televised tribute to Broadway with a musical number that mingled Broadway stars with the strangeness of the pandemic conditions.

Broadway dancers performed behind Odom during the energetic number, which saw performers from "The Lion King" and "Wicked" make brief appearances. The song mixed tributes to live theater with pleas to the audience to keep their masks on and those watching at home to get vaccinated.

Odom walked into the audience, giving shoutouts to Broadway nominee Tom Hiddleston, legendary performer Chita Rivera and his "Hamilton" co-star Lin-Manuel Miranda.

The actor then tossed to David Byrne, who performed "Burning Down the House" with performers from his "American Utopia" stage production.

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8:50 p.m.

Adrienne Warren has won the Tony Award for best leading actress in a musical for her electric turn as Tina Turner.

Warren was considered the front-runner for the award thanks to becoming a one-woman fireball of energy and exhilaration. She beat out Karen Olivo of "Moulin Rouge! The Musical" and Elizabeth Stanley from "Jagged Little Pill."

Warren, who was nominated for an Olivier Award for her turn as Turner in "Tina: The Tina Turner Musical" in the West End, wins her first Tony.

Her other credits include "Bring It On" — the loose stage adaptation of the hit cheerleading movie — and received a Tony nomination for featured actress in a musical for her role in "Shuffle Along."

Warren, a co-founder of the Broadway Advocacy Coalition, recently wrapped filming of the ABC limited series "Women of the Movement."

Mary-Louise Parker won best actress in a play for "The Sound Inside."

8:38 p.m.

In a surprise to no one, Aaron Tveit has won the Tony Award for best leading actor in a musical. That's because he was the only person nominated in the category.

The win caps a remarkable year for the Broadway star. He was wowing fans in "Moulin Rouge! The Musical" when it was suddenly shuttered by the coronavirus. Then he contracted COVID-19 himself. He recovered to lend his voice to relief efforts, got a few high-profile acting gigs — including "Schmigadoon!" — and then landed his first Tony nomination. Now he's won, needing 60% of Tony voters voted for him in the category.

Tveit's first big gig was in a "Rent" tour and he made his Broadway debut as a replacement in "Hairspray" and then "Wicked."

He then had three starring roles in "Next to Normal," "Catch Me If You Can" and now "Moulin Rouge!" His film work includes the adaptation of "Les Misérables" and on TV he was in "Graceland," "BrainDead" and "Grease Live!"

8:35 p.m.

Andrew Burnap has won the Tony for best lead actor in a play on his Broadway debut.

Burnap starred in "The Inheritance," Matthew Lopez's two-part, seven-hour epic that uses "Howards End" as a starting point for a play that looks at gay life in the early 21st century. Burnap played Toby Darling — a vivacious, talented, and deeply troubled playwright who unearths childhood demons.

Burnap grew up in Rhode Island, where during the summer he would work at his local ice cream shop. He graduated from Yale School of Drama, and acted in regional theaters and off-Broadway.

He and Lopez actually met each other before "The Inheritance" when Burnap did Lopez's play "The Legend of George McBride" in Los Angeles, a happier story about a straight man who learns how to be a drag queen.

For the Tony, Burnap beat out Blair Underwood from "A Soldier's Play," Ian Barford from "Linda Vista," Jake Gyllenhaal and Tom Sturridge both from "Sea Wall/A Life" and Tom Hiddleston of "Betrayal."

8:20 p.m.

Alex Timbers has won the trophy for best direction of a musical for "Moulin Rouge! The Musical."

It is Timbers' first Tony. The show is about the goings-on in a turn-of-the-century Parisian nightclub, updated with tunes like "Single Ladies" and "Firework" alongside the big hit "Lady Marmalade."

Timbers has been nominated twice before, for directing "Peter and the Starcatcher" in 2012 and directing and writing "Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson." He has been a production consultant on David Byrne's "American Utopia," directed "Rocky" and "The Pee-wee Herman Show" and is directing "Beetlejuice" for the second time next spring.

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He picked up a Lucille Lortel Award for directing the off-Broadway production of "Here Lies Love" and went on to direct the show at London's National Theatre. Other notable off-Broadway credits include the "Love's Labour's Lost" in Central Park and the Roundabout Theatre Company's 2016 revival of "The Robber Bridegroom."

For the Tony, he beat Phyllida Lloyd of "Tina — The Tina Turner Musical" and Diane Paulus of "Jagged Little Pill."

8:15 p.m.

Stephen Daldry now has a trio of Tony Awards for directing.

He won Sunday for helming "The Inheritance," playwright Matthew Lopez's two-part, seven-hour epic that uses "Howards End" as a starting point for a play that looks at gay life in the early 21st century.

Daldry had previously won for "Billy Elliot: The Musical" and "An Inspector Calls." He also was a nominee in 2015 for "Skylight" and directed Helen Mirren as Queen Elizabeth II in "The Audience."

Daldry directs and executive produces the Netflix series "The Crown" and was creative executive producer of the opening and closing ceremonies for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

For the Tony, he beat David Cromer from "The Sound Inside," Kenny Leon from "A Soldier's Play," Jamie Lloyd and "Betrayal" and Robert O'Hara with "Slave Play."

7:20 p.m.

Lauren Patten has edged out her co-stars from "Jagged Little Pill" to win the award for best featured actress in a musical.

The show plumbs Alanis Morissette's 1995 breakthrough album to tell a fictional story of a family spiraling out of control. Patten plays teenage lesbian Jo in the show and gets to belt out the song "You Oughta Know."

After opening in New York, "Jagged Little Pill" producers have apologized to fans for changing Jo from gender-nonconforming to cisgender female after the show moved from Boston to Broadway.

Growing up in Downers Grove, Illinois, Patten was drawn to the performing arts early on, and by age 4, had begun appearing in commercials and community theater productions. Patten, who has been on Broadway before in "Fun Home," has a recurring role on the CBS crime drama "Blue Bloods."

For the Tony, she beat out Kathryn Gallagher and Celia Rose Gooding from "Jagged Little Pill," Robyn Hurder from "Moulin Rouge! The Musical" and Myra Lucretia Taylor of "Tina — The Tina Turner Musical."

7:18 p.m.

Broadway favorite Danny Burstein has won his first Tony Award after seven nominations.

The actor won for best actor in a featured role in a musical for playing the ingratiating nightclub host Harold Zidler in "Moulin Rouge! The Musical."

He said he shared the award with his fellow nominees and thanked his son. He also thanks the Broadway community for supporting him when his wife died. "I love being an actor on Broadway."

Broadway audiences have cheered Burstein for his soulful showmanship in such musicals as "South Pacific," "Golden Boy," "Follies," "The Drowsy Chaperone," "Cabaret" and "Fiddler on the Roof."

He made his Broadway debut in 1992 in "A Little Hotel on the Side" and went on to star in dramas like "The Seagull" to musical comedies like "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown."

Shortly after the Broadway shutdown in March 2020, he was hospitalized with a near-fatal case of COVID-19. And in that December, his wife of 20 years, Broadway leading lady Rebecca Luker, died from ALS.

7:15 p.m.

Theater veteran Lois Smith has won her first Tony for "The Inheritance."

She won for best performance by an actress in a featured role in a play. Smith previously earned nominations for "The Grapes of Wrath" in 1990 and "Buried Child" in 1996.

In "The Inheritance," Smith plays a major featured role that doesn't appear onstage until late in the play's two-show, seven-hour running time. Matthew Lopez's epic uses "Howards End" as a starting point

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for a play that looks at gay life in the early 21st century.

Smith has acted in such movies as "East of Eden," "Five Easy Pieces" and "Lady Bird." TV audiences will recognize her from appearances on "Route 66," "ER" or "True Blood." She made her Broadway debut in 1952 in "Time Out for Ginger."

Other films credits include "Black Widow," "Falling Down," "Fried Green Tomatoes," "Twister," "How to Make an American Quilt," "Dead Man Walking," "Minority Report," "Marjorie Prime" and "Ladybird."

7:10 p.m.

David Alan Grier has won his first Tony for "A Soldier's Play."

Grier played a stern Army sergeant in Charles Fuller's play, set on an Army base in Louisiana during World War II. A Black investigator has been called to find out who murdered the black sergeant of an all-Black company.

He thanked his director, Kenny Leon. "And to my other nominees: Tough bananas, I won."

One of Grier's earliest roles was in a small part in the off-Broadway debut of "A Soldier's Play" when he was in his 20s. He revisited the work when it was turned into a 1984 movie. This is his third bite of the apple and it has yielded the Tony for best performance by an actor in a featured role in a play.

Grier studied acting at Yale and has had a career on stage ("Dreamgirls"), on TV ("In Living Color" and "DAG") and film ("Jumanji" and "Native Son"). He previously earned Tony nominations for "The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess," "The First" and "Race."

For the Tony, Grier beat Ato Blankson-Wood and James Cusati-Moyer from "Slave Play" and John Benjamin Hickey and Paul Hilton of "The Inheritance."

7:05 p.m.

The pandemic-delayed Tony Awards kicked off Sunday with an energetic performance of "You Can't Stop The Beat" from the original Broadway cast of "Hairspray!"

The optimistic number was performed for masked and appreciative audience at a packed Winter Garden Theatre. Host Audra McDonald got a standing ovation. "You can't stop the beat. The heart of New York City!" she said.

She called it less than a prom and more like a homecoming and that it was wonderful to see half everyone's faces. She said Broadway had been knocked out by COVID-19 for 560 nights. She also hoped to see actions that could make it a more equitable place.

David Alan Grier was the night's first winner, taking home the featured actor in a play Tony for "A Soldier's Play."

6:35 p.m.

The red carpet for the Tony Awards is underway and stars are praising the return of live theater.

David Byrne, the Talking Heads frontman whose musical "American Utopia" is among Sunday's honorees, says he's started going to shows as a spectator and it's "amazing feeling."

"The audiences are overjoyed," Byrne says. "They're happy to see the shows, but they're happy to just see one another, to be in the same room with other people. It's really exciting."

Leslie Odom Jr., who became a household name playing Aaron Burr in the original "Hamilton" run, is hosting a special tribute to Broadway that's airing on CBS Sunday night. He says he's confident that people will appreciate theater and its performers more now that they've returned.

"I think we're going to return with a new sense of gratitude," Odom says.

5 p.m.

"Jagged Little Pill" goes into the Tony Awards telecast on the defensive, dogged by two controversies.

A former cast member, Nora Schell, a Black nonbinary actor who made their Broadway debut in the chorus in 2019, posted a statement this week on social media describing repeated instances early in the run of the show in which they were "intimidated, coerced, and forced by multiple higher ups to put off

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critical and necessary surgery to remove growths from my vagina that were making me anemic.”

“Jagged Little Pill” producers — saying they are “deeply troubled” by the claims — have hired an independent investigator and the union Actors Equity Association said Sunday it was also commissioning “a thorough, independent investigation” of the show’s workplace.

In another controversy, the show’s producers have apologized to fans for changing a character from gender-nonconforming to cisgender female after the show moved from Boston to Broadway.

3 a.m.

The Oscars, Grammys, Emmys and Golden Globes have all held their ceremonies during the pandemic. Now it’s time for the Tony Awards, celebrating an art form that really needs the boost — live theater.

Sunday’s show has been expanded from its typical three hours to four, with Audra McDonald handing out Tonys for the first two hours and Leslie Odom Jr. hosting a “Broadway’s Back!” celebration for the second half, including the awarding of the top three trophies — best play revival, best play and best musical.

The sobering musical “Jagged Little Pill,” which plumbs Alanis Morissette’s 1995 breakthrough album to tell a story of an American family spiraling out of control, goes into the night with a leading 15 Tony nominations.

Nipping on its heels is “Moulin Rouge!,” a jukebox adaptation of Baz Luhrmann’s hyperactive 2001 movie about the goings-on in a turn-of-the-century Parisian nightclub that has 14 nods.

“Slave Play,” Jeremy O. Harris’ ground-breaking, bracing work that mixes race, sex, taboo desires and class, earned a dozen nominations, making it the most nominated play in Tony history.

Investigators probe deadly Amtrak derailment in Montana

By AMY BETH HANSON, MARTHA BELLISLE and ANITA SNOW Associated Press

JOPLIN, Mont. (AP) — A team of investigators from the National Transportation Safety Board was at the site of an Amtrak derailment in north-central Montana that killed three people and left seven hospitalized Sunday, officials said.

The westbound Empire Builder was en route from Chicago to Seattle when it left the tracks about 4 p.m. Saturday near Joplin, a town of about 200.

Trevor Fossen was first on the scene. The Joplin resident was on a dirt road nearing the tracks Saturday when he saw “a wall of dust” about 300 feet high.

“I started looking at that, wondering what it was and then I saw the train had tipped over and derailed,” said Fossen, who called 911 and started trying to get people out. He called his brother to bring ladders for people who couldn’t get down after exiting through the windows of cars resting on their sides.

The train was carrying about 141 passengers and 16 crew members and had two locomotives and 10 cars, eight of which derailed, Amtrak spokesman Jason Abrams said.

A 14-member team including investigators and specialists in railroad signals would look into the cause of the derailment on a BNSF Railway main track that involved no other trains or equipment, said NTSB spokesman Eric Weiss.

Law enforcement said the officials from the NTSB, Amtrak and BNSF had arrived at the accident scene just west of Joplin, where the tracks cut through vast, golden brown wheat fields that were recently harvested. Several large cranes were brought to the tracks that run roughly parallel to U.S. Highway 2, along with a truckload of gravel and new railroad ties.

Several rail cars could still be seen on their sides.

The accident scene is about 150 miles (241 kilometers) northeast of Helena and about 30 miles (48 kilometers) from the Canadian border.

Amtrak CEO Bill Flynn expressed condolences to those who lost loved ones and said the company is working with the NTSB, Federal Railroad Administration and local law enforcement, sharing their “sense of urgency” to determine what happened.

“The NTSB will identify the cause or causes of this accident, and Amtrak commits to taking appropriate

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actions to prevent a similar accident in the future," Flynn said in the statement.

Montana Gov. Greg Gianforte said BNSF was readying replacement track for when the NTSB gives the go-head. "BNSF has assured me they can get the line up and running in short order," he said.

Railroad safety expert David Clarke, director of the Center for Transportation Research at the University of Tennessee, said accident scene photos show the derailment occurred at or near a switch, which is where the railway goes from a single track to a double track.

Clarke said the two locomotives and two cars at the front of the train reached the split and continued on the main track, but the remaining eight cars derailed. He said it was unclear if some of the last cars moved onto the second track.

"Did the switch play some role? It might have been that the front of the train hit the switch and it started fish-tailing and that flipped the back part of the train," Clarke said.

Another possibility was a defect in the rail, Clarke said, noting that regular testing doesn't always catch such problems. He said speed was not a likely factor because trains on that line have systems that prevent excessive speeds and collisions.

Matt Jones, a BNSF Railway spokesman said at a news conference that the track where the accident occurred was last inspected Thursday.

Because of the derailment, Sunday's westbound Empire Builder from Chicago will terminate in St. Paul, Minnesota, and the eastbound train will originate in Minnesota.

Most of those on the train were treated and released for their injuries, but five who were more seriously hurt remained at the Benefis Health System hospital in Great Falls, Montana, said Sarah Robbin, Liberty County emergency services coordinator. Two were in the intensive care unit, a hospital spokeswoman said.

Another two people were at Logan Health, a hospital in Kalispell, Montana, spokeswoman Melody Sharp-ton said.

Robbin said emergency crews struggled without success to cut open cars with special tools, "so they did have to manually carry out many of the passengers that could not walk."

Liberty County Sheriff Nick Erickson said the names of the dead would not be released until relatives are notified.

Robbin said nearby residents rushed to offer help when the derailment occurred.

"We are so fortunate to live where we do, where neighbors help neighbors," she said.

"The locals have been so amazing and accommodating," passenger Jacob Cordeiro said on Twitter. "They provided us with food, drinks, and wonderful hospitality. Nothing like it when the best comes together after a tragedy."

Cordeiro, who is from Rhode Island, just graduated from college and was traveling with his father to Seattle to celebrate.

"I was in one of the front cars and we got badly jostled, thrown from one side of the train to the other," he told MSNBC. He said the car left the tracks, but did not fall over.

"I'm a pretty big guy and it picked me up from my chair and threw me into one wall and then threw me into the other wall," Cordeiro said.

Chester Councilwoman Rachel Ghekiere said she and others helped about 50 to 60 passengers who were brought to a school.."

A grocery store in Chester, about 5 miles (8 kilometers) from the derailment, and a nearby religious community provided food, she said.

Allan Zarembski, director of the University of Delaware's Railway Engineering and Safety Program, said he didn't want to speculate but suspected the derailment stemmed from an issue with the train track, equipment, or both.

Railways have "virtually eliminated" major derailments by human error after the implementation of positive train control nationwide, Zarembski said. He said NTSB findings could take months.

Bob Chipkevich, who oversaw railroad crash investigations for several years at the NTSB, said the agency won't rule out human error or any other potential causes for now.

"There are still human performance issues examined by NTSB to be sure that people doing the work are

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qualified and rested and doing it properly," Chipkevich said.

Chipkevich said track conditions have historically been a significant cause of train accidents and noted most of the track Amtrak uses is owned by freight railroads and must depend on those companies for safety maintenance.

Bellisle reported from Seattle and Snow reported from Phoenix. Associated Press writers Tom Krisher in Detroit and Michelle Liu in Columbia, South Carolina, contributed reporting.

This story has been corrected to show that the train was traveling from Chicago to Seattle. Also corrects Minneapolis to St. Paul, Minnesota, where the Amtrak station is located.

Americans win Ryder Cup in a rout, send Europe a message

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

SHEBOYGAN, Wis. (AP) — Steve Stricker hoisted the Ryder Cup, gold and glorious, for all to see. Then, he quickly huddled his young American team together to make sure all 12 players had their hands on it.

Nine of them had never touched the 17-inch trophy in a moment of celebration.

They don't expect it to be the last time, either.

More than just winning back the Ryder Cup on Sunday, the youngest U.S. team in history handed Europe its worst loss and delivered a strong message about how serious it is about changing the tone of these matches.

Daniel Berger won the final hole in the final match for the final point in a 19-9 victory, breaking by a half-point the record margin since Europe became part of the Ryder Cup in 1979.

"This is a new era," Stricker said. "These guys are young. They want it. They're motivated. They came here determined to win. I could see it in their eyes."

The six U.S. Ryder Cup rookies scored more points than all of Europe, combining for a 14-4-3 record. The Americans didn't lose a session for the first time in 44 years. Dustin Johnson became the first American to go 5-0 since 1979.

They had the best team on paper. They played even better on grass.

"It's not just the strongest U.S. team I've seen, but they all played well this week," Lee Westwood said. "Everybody performed and turned up this week. Looks like they are a team."

The Americans finally looked like Europe, which has dominated the Ryder Cup by winning nine of the last 12 until getting routed along the shores of Lake Michigan.

Staked to a six-point lead — no team has ever rallied from more than four points going into the last day — the Americans quickly filled the scoreboards with their red numbers.

Scottie Scheffler took down the No. 1 player in the world with a 4-and-3 victory over Jon Rahm. Scheffler won the opening four holes and birdied five of the first six. He was among three rookies who were unbeaten this week.

Bryson DeChambeau smashed his tee shot on the 373-yard opening hole onto the green and then holed the 40-foot eagle putt to start out his win over Sergio Garcia.

The clinching blow came from Collin Morikawa, at 24 the youngest player on the team and already a two-time major champion. He made a 3-foot birdie putt on the 17th hole that assured the Americans at least the 14 1/2 points they needed.

They wanted more.

"I woke up this morning and I was trying to tell the guys, 'Let's get to 20 points,' because this is going to be the next era of Ryder Cup team for the U.S. side," Patrick Cantlay said after he completed an unbeaten week with a win over Shane Lowry.

"We've got a lot of young guys. I think they're going to be on teams for a long time, and I wanted to send a message."

Tony Finau had said on the eve of these matches that this was "the big one." The Americans had so many fresh faces without any lasting scars from watching Europe celebrate so much over the years. It

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was a chance to change the culture, and this was a massive step.

The gallery saved one of its loudest cheers for Stricker, the Wisconsin native who has been at the helm of two blowouts. He guided the U.S. team to a 19-11 victory in the Presidents Cup in 2017 and added his signature piece at Whistling Straits.

Johnson became the first American since Larry Nelson in 1979 to win all five matches, completing his perfect week by beating Paul Casey in a match he never trailed.

Casey, Matt Fitzpatrick and Bernd Wiesberger all failed to win a point. Rory McIlroy and Ian Poulter, part of the backbone of European experience, didn't win a match until singles, and by then it was too late.

The Americans were young, yes, and very good, with four of the top five in the world ranking. And they finally played like it. Those four players — Johnson, Morikawa, Cantlay and Xander Schauffele — combined for a 14-1-2 record.

Stricker wasn't the only one in tears.

McIlroy led Europe off again and gave Schauffele his first loss of the week. It wasn't nearly enough. All day along the shores of Lake Michigan, the outcome was inevitable.

McIlroy teared up in his interview when talking about how much the Ryder Cup means to him.

"I've never really cried or got emotional over what I've done as an individual. I couldn't give a (expletive)," he said on NBC. "But this team ... to see Sergio break records, to see Jon Rahm come into his own this week, to see one of my best friends, Shane Lowry, make his Ryder Cup debut, all that. It's phenomenal.

"I'm disappointed that I didn't contribute more this week," he said. "But in two years' time, we'll go again and give it another so. Sorry for swearing, as well."

As much as this was about a new generation of Americans, this looked to be an aging team of Europeans. They brought winning experience but not nearly enough form.

Garcia set the Ryder Cup record with 25 matches won in his career. Rahm was the star for Europe, living up to his billing as the No. 1 player by making so many big putts.

Both lost in singles — Garcia to DeChambeau, while Rahm ran into Scheffler, who delivered big moments of his own this week.

There was little Europe could have done. This U.S. team was loaded and played like it.

"The U.S. were very strong," European captain Pádraig Harrington said. "Whatever their plan was, they got it right this week. A strong team, played well. Kept the momentum. And they would have been tough to beat at the best of times, let alone when they are at top form. It's a great win for them."

The Americans won consecutive home games for the first time since 1983. The next step is winning on the road, which the Americans haven't done since 1993.

The Ryder Cup goes to Marco Simone in Italy in 2023.

"If we play like we did this week," Jordan Spieth said, "the score will look the same over there."

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

Pelosi vows to pass \$1T bill, move ahead on larger measure

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With President Joe Biden's broad domestic agenda at risk of collapse, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Sunday vowed that Democrats will pass a bipartisan infrastructure bill this week and push ahead on the bigger \$3.5 trillion social safety net and climate change bill while acknowledging the total amount will drop.

Biden spoke with lawmakers over the weekend on the path forward, according to a White House official who requested anonymity to discuss the private conversations. Extensive work was being done behind the scenes to shore up support.

When asked Sunday if Pelosi had the votes to pass the \$1 trillion infrastructure bill, Biden told reporters at the White House, "It's going to take the better part of this week."

Pelosi had originally pledged to House moderates a vote on the infrastructure legislation by Monday, but

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she said Sunday in a letter to colleagues that vote will now be Thursday. With Democratic divisions, the extra time allowed space for negotiations on the broader bill, so both bills could advance. The \$1 trillion infrastructure plan passed the Senate last month.

"Let me just say that we're going to pass the bill this week," Pelosi, D-Calif., said earlier Sunday on ABC's "This Week." She added: "I'm never bringing a bill to the floor that doesn't have the votes. You cannot choose the date. You have to go when you have the votes in a reasonable time, and we will."

Still, in a delicate balancing act aimed at achieving the near Democratic unanimity needed to push the sprawling package through, Pelosi made clear that Biden's proposed \$3.5 trillion for social spending and climate initiatives will need to be trimmed.

Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona have said they won't support a bill of that size. Manchin has previously proposed spending of \$1 trillion to \$1.5 trillion, an amount that progressives have called unacceptable for a bill they originally envisioned at \$6 trillion.

Asked on ABC if she agrees the final number on the so-called reconciliation bill will be "somewhat smaller" than \$3.5 trillion, Pelosi responded: "That seems self-evident."

"We'll see how the number comes down and what we need," she added. "Again, the Senate and the House, those who are not in full agreement with the president, right, let's see what our values — let's not talk about numbers and dollars. Let's talk about values."

"I think even those who want a smaller number, support the vision of the president, and this is really transformative."

Her comments reflected the enormous stakes for the coming week, one that could define the Biden presidency and shape the political contours of next year's midterm elections.

Along with personal phone calls from the president, several Cabinet officials, senior staff and others were reaching out to lawmakers over the weekend, the White House official said.

Democrats have few votes to spare in the House and no votes to spare in the 50-50 Senate if there is no Republican support to enact Biden's massive "Build Back Better" agenda. Republicans are lockstep against the larger measure.

Biden, Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., have led a behind-the-scenes hunt for compromises to resolve internal divisions and, they hope, allow approval of the mammoth bill soon.

The House Budget Committee on Saturday advanced a \$3.5 trillion, 10-year bill strengthening social safety net and climate programs, though one Democrat voted "no," illustrating the challenges party leaders face. The bill, which is certain to be revised before House voting, would be paid for with taxes on corporations and the wealthy.

Rep. Josh Gottheimer, D-N.J., who led a group of House moderates in pushing a quick vote by Monday on the infrastructure bill, said Sunday he wouldn't be bothered by a slight delay. He was optimistic both pieces of legislation could be resolved this week.

"If the vote — the way these things work, if you start debating it and it rolls over to Tuesday, ... I think we're all reasonable people," Gottheimer said. "There's too much on the line here for our country."

In setting Thursday's vote, Pelosi noted it's also the deadline for related transportation programs, many of which are in the infrastructure bill.

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., who heads the Congressional Progressive Caucus, said members of her group won't be willing to support the infrastructure plan until there is "ironclad" agreement in the House and Senate on the reconciliation bill. She didn't rule out additional cuts to the \$3.5 trillion proposal to reach agreement.

"If somebody wants to take something out, we need to hear what that is," she said.

Pelosi didn't commit when asked on ABC about a vote this week on the social spending and climate bill, which Democrats intend to pass with a simple majority without GOP support. She suggested that House-Senate agreement could be reached this week, depending on rulings from the Senate parliamentarian on what provisions could be included.

"We are ready on our side," Pelosi said. "We just have to see how quickly the parliamentarian can operate."

The overall bill embodies the crux of Biden's top domestic goals, with billions for rebuilding infrastructure, tackling climate change and expanding or introducing a range of services, from free prekindergarten to dental, vision and hearing aid care for seniors.

But there are broad disputes on paying for the legislation as well as over which initiatives should be re-shaped, among them expanded Medicare, tax breaks for children and health care, a push toward cleaner energy and higher levies on the rich and corporations.

Republicans say the proposal is unneeded, unaffordable amid accumulated federal debt exceeding \$28 trillion and reflects Democrats' drive to insert government into people's lives. Its tax boosts will cost jobs and include credits for buying electric vehicles, purchases often made by people with comfortable incomes, they said.

Gottheimer spoke to CNN's "State of the Union," and Jayapal appeared on CBS' "Face the Nation."

AP Congressional Correspondent Lisa Mascaro and Associated Press writers Alan Fram and Josh Boak contributed to this report.

Liz Cheney: 'I was wrong' in opposing gay marriage in past

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rep. Liz Cheney says she was wrong to oppose gay marriage in the past, a stand that once split her family.

Cheney, R-Wyo., a fierce critic of fellow Republican Donald Trump, also tells CBS News' "60 Minutes" that she views her reelection campaign as the most important House race in the nation as forces aligned with the former president try to unseat her. She voted to impeach Trump over his role in the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol.

In the interview aired Sunday night, Cheney said she had little affection for President Joe Biden, who she believes has embraced harmful policies for the economy and national security with the Afghanistan withdrawal. "But the alternative cannot be a man who doesn't believe in the rule of law, and who violated his oath of office," Cheney said.

The daughter of former Vice President Dick Cheney was an ascendant Republican leader before the Jan. 6 riot, yet she is increasingly defined by her public opposition to Trump and his hold on the GOP. Cheney, 55, noted that she still talks with her father every night and that they share the same views on rejecting Trump.

Liz Cheney famously broke with her family in 2013 by opposing gay marriage ahead of a failed Senate bid. Her objections caused a rift with her sister, Mary, a married lesbian. Mary's spouse, Heather Poe, posted on Facebook that year that Cheney's position was offensive and that "I always thought freedom meant freedom for EVERYONE."

In the interview, Cheney said her opposition to gay marriage was misguided and she channeled her sister-in-law's Facebook post in explaining why she changed her position.

"I was wrong. I was wrong," she said. "It's a very personal issue — and very personal for my family. I believe that my dad was right. And my sister and I have had that conversation ... Freedom means freedom for everybody."

While still opposed to gun control, abortion and the Affordable Care Act, or "Obamacare," the Wyoming congresswoman finds herself on the outs for voting to impeach Trump after his Jan. 6 rally preceded a mob storming the Capitol in hopes of overturning his reelection loss to Biden. Trump continues to falsely claim election fraud in spite of results being certified by states and Republican election officials and courts rejecting dozens of legal challenges.

After voting to impeach Trump, Cheney lost her leadership post as chair of the House Republican Conference. Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi put her on a nine-person committee to investigate the Jan. 6 assault and she serves as vice chair.

Trump has vowed to defeat Cheney in next year's primary election by backing Republican Harriet Hage-

man, an attorney. Cheney, seeking a fourth term, said nothing less than the authority of the Constitution is at stake.

"I think it's going to be the most important House race in the country in 2022. And — and it will be one where people do have the opportunity to say, 'We want to stand for the Constitution,'" Cheney said. "A vote against me in this race, a vote for whomever Donald Trump has endorsed, is a vote for somebody who's willing to perpetuate the big lie, somebody who's willing to put allegiance to Trump above allegiance to the Constitution, absolutely."

The Wyoming congresswoman criticized House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy of California for sticking with Trump after the assault on the Capitol.

"What he's done is embrace Donald Trump," she said. "And if I were doing what he's doing, I would be deeply ashamed of myself. I don't know how you explain that to your children. When you are in a situation where you have somebody who did what Donald Trump did, it is absolutely clear he cannot continue to be somebody you embrace."

Utah's Lowe killed in shooting less than a year after Jordan

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Utah sophomore cornerback Aaron Lowe died in a shooting at house party early Sunday, less than a year after teammate Ty Jordan was killed in an accidental shooting.

Salt Lake City police said the 21-year-old Lowe was killed just after midnight, a few hours after the Utes beat Washington State 24-13. A second victim in the shooting, a woman, is in critical condition and police are searching for a suspect.

"We are devastated to hear about the passing of Aaron Lowe," Utah coach Kyle Whittingham said in a statement. "Our thoughts and prayers are with Aaron's family and friends, along with the other individual who was harmed in this tragic incident. Aaron was a great teammate, friend, brother and son and was loved by anyone who crossed paths with him. He will be deeply missed."

Lowe was a high school teammate of Jordan's in Mesquite, Texas, and switched his jersey from No. 2 to 22 to honor his friend after the 19-year-old died of a gunshot wound to the abdomen on Christmas night 2020.

Last month, Lowe was named the first recipient of the Ty Jordan Memorial Scholarship, voted on by the team.

"Ty made everyone around him better," Lowe said after receiving the honor in August. "He made me better. My friendship with Ty means a lot because he was always pushing me to be my best. He never let me settle for less. I want to make sure his legacy lives on through me."

The Utes credited Lowe for persuading Jordan to play at Utah after decommitting from the school. Jordan was named the Pac-12 freshman of the year and led all freshmen nationally in rushing yards per game before he was killed.

Lowe appeared in 16 combined games on special teams his first two seasons and played in all four games this season.

"We are devastated by the loss of Aaron Lowe earlier this morning," Utah athletic director Mark Harland said in a statement. "Aaron was a terrific young man, a leader on our football team, and a rock of resiliency and courage. Our prayers are with Aaron's family, friends, teammates and all who knew and loved him. We also express our deepest concern for the other individual who has been hospitalized as a result of this tragic incident."

Utah Gov. Spencer Cox also tweeted his condolences to Lowe's family.

San Marino voters overwhelmingly back legal abortion

By NICOLE WINFIELD and FRANCESCO FEDELI Associated Press

SAN MARINO (AP) — San Marino residents on Sunday voted overwhelmingly to legalize abortion, rejecting a 150-year-old law that had criminalized it and making the tiny republic the latest majority Catholic state to approve the procedure under certain circumstances.

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Some 77% of voters approved a referendum proposal calling for abortion to be legal in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, according to official returns broadcast on San Marino RTV. Abortion would also be legal beyond that point if the woman's life is in danger or if her physical or psychological health is at risk because of fetal anomalies or malformations.

With the "yes" votes winning, San Marino's Parliament must now draft a bill to legalize the procedure. Turnout for the referendum was 41% in the microstate of 33,000 people surrounded by Italy.

San Marino, one of the world's oldest republics, had been one of the last European states that still criminalized abortion. With Sunday's result, it now joins other predominantly Catholic states like Ireland, which legalized abortion in 2018 and neighboring Italy, where abortion has been legal since 1978. Abortion is still illegal in Malta and Andorra, and Poland introduced a near-total ban on the procedure this year.

The San Marino referendum was set after around 3,000 people signed a petition drive to overturn the microstate's abortion law, which dates from 1865.

Women in San Marino seeking an abortion usually go to neighboring Italy for the procedure. But proponents of the referendum argued that put an undue financial burden on them and penalized women who got pregnant as a result of rape.

Sara Casadei of the "Noi Ci Siamo" campaign that pushed for a "Yes" vote in the referendum, was pleased with the outcome.

"We supported this for the simple reason that it seemed right that women have a choice and aren't forced to go somewhere else, but to have the services on our own territory," she said.

Dr. Maria Prassede Venturini, a pediatrician and representative of the "Welcome Life" campaign that backed a "No" vote, said her group would continue working for a "culture welcoming life" that focuses care on the "two main protagonists: the mother and child."

Opponents of the measure had argued that in San Marino, even minors can receive free contraception at pharmacies, including the morning-after pill. The Catholic Church had strongly opposed the measure.

In the buildup to the vote, the bishop of San Marino, Monsignor Andrea Turazzi, said the Catholic Church was "decidedly against" the decriminalization initiative, though he said the campaign had raised awareness about the need to provide better services and care, especially for mothers in need.

The Vatican firmly opposes abortion, holding that human life begins at conception and that all life must be protected from conception until natural death.

"For us, it's inconceivable that a mother resorts to abortion because of some economic troubles," Turazzi told Vatican News.

Voter Federica Gatti said as she cast her ballot that a woman's decision to terminate a pregnancy or not involves "several personal, religious and moral reasons," but that the state "must provide its citizens this opportunity."

Nicole Winfield reported from Rome.

Clemson falls to No. 25 in AP poll, snapping top-10 streak

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

Clemson tumbled to No. 25 in The Associated Press college football poll on Sunday, snapping its streak of 97 straight weeks in the top 10.

The Tigers (2-2) lost for the second time this season Saturday — falling in double overtime to North Carolina State — and dropped 16 spots from No. 9 in the AP Top 25, which is presented by Regions Bank.

Clemson's top-10 streak was tied with Alabama for the longest current run in college football and second-longest in the history of the AP poll, behind Miami's 137 from 1985-93.

The Crimson Tide remained No. 1 with 58 first-place votes out of 62. No. 2 Georgia received the remaining four first-place votes. Oregon stayed No. 3. Penn State moved up two spots to No. 4, Iowa held at No. 5 and Oklahoma slipped two spots to No. 6.

Cincinnati moved up a spot to No. 7 and Arkansas jumped eight spots to No. 8 after beating Texas A&M.

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The Razorbacks have their best ranking since they were No. 8 early in the 2012 season.

That season, Arkansas lost its second game of the season to Louisiana-Monroe and was never ranked again. The Razorbacks had finished fifth the season before under Bobby Petrino.

No. 9 Notre Dame and Florida rounded out the top 10.

POLL POINTS

Clemson did manage to extend its streak of weeks ranked to 107, the third-longest active streak behind Alabama (218) and Ohio State (150).

The Buckeyes' streak does not include polls in which they were ineligible during the 2020 season because the Big Ten was not planning to play due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Alabama's current streak of poll appearances is second all time to Nebraska's 348 from 1981-2002.

IN

After six ranked teams lost this weekend, four to unranked opponents, four new teams entered the rankings of the first time this season.

— No. 19 Oklahoma State improved to 4-0 by beating Kansas State. The Cowboys finished last season ranked.

— No. 21 Baylor is 4-0 after upsetting Iowa State at home and is ranked for the first time since the final 2019 poll.

— No. 23 North Carolina State (3-1) snapped an eight-game losing streak against Clemson to move into the ranking. The Wolfpack was ranked briefly at No. 23 last season.

— No. 24 Wake Forest is 4-0 for the first time since 2019, when the Demon Deacons were ranked for a total of five weeks with a peak of No. 19. That's the only season Wake has been ranked since 2008.

OUT

Two teams that started the season in the top 10 are now unranked.

— Iowa State started No. 7, its best ranking in school history after finishing ninth in 2020, but now sits at 2-2 and unranked.

— North Carolina was No. 10 to start the season, but fell out after being routed by Georgia Tech to fall to 2-2.

— Wisconsin began the season No. 12 but after losing to Penn State and Notre Dame to fall to 1-2 is unranked.

— Kansas State spent one week in the rankings and dropped out.

CONFERENCE CALL

The Southeastern Conference has four teams in the top 10 and five of 12 in the top 12, including Mississippi at No. 12.

The Atlantic Coast Conference, meanwhile, has no teams in the top 20 for the first time since the final poll of the 2011 season. The last time there were no top-20 ACC teams this early in the season was Sept. 16, 1986, before Miami and Florida State were members and before the poll expanded from 20 to 25.

SEC — 7 (Nos. 1, 2, 8, 10, 12, 15, 22).

Big Ten — 5 (Nos. 4, 5, 11, 14, 17).

ACC — 3 (Nos. 23, 24, 25).

Big 12 — 3 (Nos. 6, 19, 21).

Pac-12 — 2 (Nos. 3, 20).

American — 1 (No. 7).

Sun Belt — 1 (No. 16).

Mountain West — 1 (No. 18).

Independents — 2 (Nos. 8, 13).

RANKED vs. RANKED

No. 12 Mississippi at No. 1 Alabama. First ranked matchup between the Rebels and Tide since 2017.

No. 8 Arkansas at No. 2 Georgia. Razorbacks' resurgence has been one of the stories of the first month of the season.

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No. 7 Cincinnati at No. 9 Notre Dame. The Fighting Irish obliged the Bearcats, who need Notre Dame to be as good a possible if they have any shot to sneak into the playoff.

No. 21 Baylor at No 19 Oklahoma State. Might be a short stay in the rankings for one of the Big 12 rivals.

AP Sports Writer Tim Reynolds in Miami contributed.

Follow Ralph D. Russo at <https://twitter.com/ralphDrussoAP> and listen at <http://www.appodcasts.com>

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So close! Iceland almost gets female-majority parliament

By EGILL BJARNASON Associated Press

REYKJAVIK, Iceland (AP) — Iceland briefly celebrated electing a female-majority parliament Sunday, before a recount produced a result just short of that landmark for gender parity in the North Atlantic island nation.

The initial vote count had female candidates winning 33 seats in Iceland's 63-seat parliament, the Althing, in an election that saw centrist parties make the biggest gains.

Hours later, a recount in western Iceland changed the outcome, leaving female candidates with 30 seats, a tally previously reached at Iceland's second most recent election, in 2016. Still, at almost 48% of the total, that is the highest percentage for women lawmakers in Europe.

Only a handful of countries, none of them in Europe, have a majority of female lawmakers. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Rwanda leads the world with women making up 61% of its Chamber of Deputies, with Cuba, Nicaragua and Mexico on or just over the 50% mark. Worldwide, the organization says just over a quarter of legislators are women.

"The female victory remains the big story of these elections," politics professor Olafur Hardarson told broadcaster RUV after the recount.

Iceland's voting system is divided into six regions and the recount in western Iceland was held after questions about the number of ballots cast. The mistakes have not been entirely explained but are thought to be due to human error.

The three parties in the outgoing coalition government led by Prime Minister Katrin Jakobsdottir won a total of 37 seats in Saturday's vote, two more than in the last election, and appeared likely to continue in power.

Opinion polls had suggested a victory for left-leaning parties in the unpredictable election, which saw 10 parties competing for seats. But the center-right Independence Party took the largest share of votes, winning 16 seats, seven of them held by women. The centrist Progressive Party celebrated the biggest gain, winning 13 seats, five more than last time.

Before the election, the two parties formed Iceland's three-party coalition government, together with Jakobsdottir's Left Green Party. Her party lost several seats, but kept eight, outscoring poll predictions.

The three ruling parties haven't announced whether they will work together for another term, but given the strong support from voters it appears likely. It will take days, if not weeks, for a new government to be formed and announced.

Climate change had ranked high on the election agenda in Iceland, a glacier-studded volcanic island nation of about 350,000 people in the North Atlantic. An exceptionally warm summer by Icelandic standards — with 59 days of temperatures above 20 C (68 F) — and shrinking glaciers have helped drive global warming up the political agenda.

But that didn't appear to have translated into increased support for any of the four left-leaning parties that campaigned to cut carbon emissions by more than Iceland is committed to under the Paris Climate Agreement.

One candidate who saw her victory overturned by the recount was law student Lenya Run Karim, a

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21-year-old daughter of Kurdish immigrants who ran for the anti-establishment Pirate Party.

"These were a good nine hours," said Karim, who would have been Iceland's youngest-ever lawmaker.

Swiss approve same-sex marriage by wide margin in referendum

GENEVA (AP) — Cheers rang out, hugs were exchanged and rainbow-colored flags waved overhead across Switzerland as the Swiss resoundingly voted to allow same-sex couples to marry, final results of a nationwide referendum showed Sunday.

Official results showed the measure passed with 64.1% of the vote while more than half of all voters approved in each of Switzerland's 26 cantons, or states. The vote - years in the making - is set to bring the Alpine nation into line with many others in western Europe and wraps up an often tense campaign between rival sides.

Justice Minister Karin Keller-Sutter tweeted that the government will implement the decision quickly and, under current plans, the new rules can take effect on July 1.

Switzerland's parliament and the governing Federal Council — on which she sits — had supported the "Marriage for All" measure, which marks a key step for greater rights for gays and lesbians in Switzerland. The country has authorized same-sex civil partnerships since 2007.

"With this, all couples will in the future be treated equally before the law: all can enter into a civil marriage, with the same rights and obligations," Keller-Sutter wrote.

Passage is set to put same-sex partners on an equal legal footing with heterosexual couples by allowing them to adopt children and facilitating citizenship for same-sex spouses. It will also permit lesbian couples to utilize regulated sperm donation.

"This is a historic day for us and for Switzerland, this is a great step forward, something we have been waiting for for years," said Laura Russo, co-president of the Geneva Federation of LGBT Associations, at a gathering of joyous supporters of the measure along a Geneva pedestrian street. "This initiative was begun in 2013; we had to wait 8 years for the vote to happen — and here, this is a big "Yes.""

Opponents believe that replacing civil partnerships with full marriage rights would undermine families based on a union between a man and a woman.

Benjamin Roduit of the Christian Democratic People's Party, which spearheaded the effort to stop same-sex marriage, claimed at least some success in raising awareness about his party's positions despite the defeat at the ballot box.

"On our side we have tried to draw attention to the central problem, the one of children and medically assisted procreation," he said. "On that point, I think we have succeeded in raising awareness among the Swiss people and we will still be here when other steps will be proposed."

The campaign has been rife with allegations of unfair tactics, with the opposing sides decrying the ripping down of posters, LGBT hotlines getting flooded with complaints, hostile emails, shouted insults against campaigners and efforts to silence opposing views.

Switzerland, which has a population of 8.5 million, is traditionally conservative and only extended the right to vote to all women in the country in 1990.

Most countries in Western Europe already recognize same-sex marriage, while most of those in Central and Eastern Europe don't permit wedlock between two men or two women.

At a polling station in Geneva, voter Anna Leimgruber said she cast her ballot for the "no" camp because she believed "children would need to have a dad and a mom."

But Nicolas Dzierlatka, who voted "yes," said what children need is love.

"I think what's important for children is that they are loved and respected — and I think there are children who are not respected or loved in so-called 'hetero' couples," he said.

Also on Sunday, voters dismissed a proposal spearheaded by left-wing groups to raise taxes on returns from investments and capital such as dividends or income from rental properties in Switzerland as a way to ensure better redistribution and fairer taxation.

Results showed 64.9% voting against it in a country known for its vibrant financial sector and relatively

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low taxes, and as a haven for many of the world's richest people. No canton voted in favor.

UK gas stations run dry as trucker shortage sparks hoarding

LONDON (AP) — Thousands of British gas stations ran dry Sunday, an industry group said, as motorists scrambled to fill up amid a supply disruption due to a shortage of truck drivers.

The Petrol Retailers Association, which represents almost 5,500 independent outlets, said about two-thirds of its members were reporting that they had sold out their fuel, with the rest "partly dry and running out soon."

Association chairman Brian Madderson said the shortages were the result of "panic buying, pure and simple."

"There is plenty of fuel in this country, but it is in the wrong place for the motorists," he told the BBC. "It is still in the terminals and the refineries."

Long lines of vehicles formed at many gas stations over the weekend, and tempers frayed as some drivers waited for hours. Police were called to one London gas station Sunday after a scuffle broke out. Police said a man was arrested on suspicion of assault.

The haulage industry says the U.K. is short tens of thousands of truckers, due to a perfect storm of factors including the coronavirus pandemic, an aging workforce and an exodus of foreign workers following Britain's Brexit departure from the European Union last year.

Several countries, including the United States and Germany, also are experiencing a shortage of truck drivers. The problem has been especially visible in Britain, where it has contributed to empty supermarket shelves and shuttered gas pumps.

After weeks of mounting pressure, the U.K.'s Conservative government announced Saturday that it will issue thousands of emergency visas to foreign truck drivers to help prevent a Christmas without turkey or toys for many British families. The government said it would issue 5,000 three-month visas for truck drivers starting in October, and another 5,500 for poultry workers.

Industry groups welcomed the new visa plan, although the British Retail Consortium said it was "too little, too late."

Ruby McGregor-Smith, president of the Confederation of British Industry, said the announcement was "the equivalent of throwing a thimble of water on a bonfire."

Haitians returning to a homeland that's far from welcoming

By ALBERTO ARCE and RODRIGO ABD Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Deported from the United States, Pierre Charles landed a week ago in Port-au-Prince, a capital more dangerous and dystopian than the one he'd left four years before. Unable to reach his family, he left the airport alone, on foot.

Charles was unsure how to make his way to the Carrefour neighborhood through a city shrouded in smoke and dust, often tolling with gunfire from gangs and police. On the airport road, the 39-year-old laborer tried unsuccessfully to flag down packed buses. He asked motorcycle drivers to take him but was told again and again that the trip was too risky.

Finally, someone agreed to take him as far as a bus stop.

"I know there are barricades and shootings," Charles said as he took off into the unknown, "but I have nowhere else to go."

This story is part of a series, Haiti: Business, politics and gangs, produced with support from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

At least 2,853 Haitians deported from Texas have landed here in the last week with \$15-\$100 in cash handouts and a "good luck out there" from migration officials -- many setting foot in the country for the first time in years, even decades.

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More than a city, Port-au-Prince it is an archipelago of gang-controlled islands in a sea of despair. Some neighborhoods are abandoned. Others are barricaded behind fires, destroyed cars and piles of garbage, occupied by heavily armed men. On Saturday, a local newspaper reported 10 kidnappings in the previous 24 hours including a journalist, a singer's mother and a couple driving with their toddler, who was left behind in the car.

Even before the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July, the government was weak -- the Palace of Justice inactive, congress disbanded by Moïse and the legislative building pocked by bullets. Now, although there is a prime minister, it is absent.

Most of the population of Port-au-Prince has no access to basic public services, no drinking water, electricity or garbage collection. The deportees join thousands of fellow Haitians who have been displaced from their homes, pushed out by violence to take up residence in crowded schools, churches, sports centers and makeshift camps among ruins. Many of these people are out of reach even for humanitarian organizations.

Of the more than 18,000 people the United Nations counts among those displaced in Port-au-Prince since gang violence began to spike in May, the International Organization for Migration only has access "to about 5,000, maybe 7,000," said Giuseppe Loprete, head of the IOM mission here. "We are negotiating access to the rest."

This is the Port-au-Prince that awaits the deportees. Here are snapshots of a city that is far from welcoming.

Elice Fleury didn't pay much attention to the people running and shouting outside his bakery until he heard the bursts of gunfire. When he looked out the door on June 2, he saw heavily armed masked men pulling people out of their homes and taking control of his Martissant neighborhood.

The main road in Martissant is a strategic artery that connects the Haitian capital with the south of the country. The gang wanted control. They had surrounded the neighborhood that lies between mountains and the sea in a well-planned occupation, and were firing on the police station. When Fleury saw the officers fleeing instead of facing the armed men, he called his wife.

"I can't get out," she told him.

Fleury spent that night in a nearby square with other neighbors, talking to his wife by telephone -- their children crying in the background -- as she explained that the gunmen had fired tear gas, searched house by house and were patrolling the streets.

A day later, the family escaped, leaving everything behind, and reunited in a temporary shelter.

Three months later, the Fleurys languish in that temporary shelter, sleeping on the floor of a sports center a few miles from the house to which they neither can nor want to return.

Martissant has become one of the disconnected islands in the capital. Buses carrying people and merchandise from Port-au-Prince to the south of the country form convoys to travel through Martissant, often waiting for hours and sometimes overnight until they pay the gang members for clearance to travel, according to drivers.

Doctors Without Borders was forced to shut down its hospital in Martissant, where the agency had provided care for the last 15 years.

Seidina Oussen, Head of the mission, describes the situation on the ground of Port-au-Prince in two words: "Urban warfare."

Most of the city "in different degrees is facing the same circumstances," Oussen said. "Residents organize themselves to defend their neighborhoods and when they are not capable of doing it, they have to abandon the place."

Two weeks after the Martissant attack, gunmen laid siege to an encampment called La Piste along the coast north of the capital, a neighborhood of deaf and disabled Haitians relocated there by the International Red Cross after the 2010 earthquake leveled the capital.

This time it was the police leading an assault at dusk, according to residents and a United Nations account.

"My son was playing cards outside when I heard the gunshots," said Marie Jaquesmel, 70. "The police

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entered from different directions and started firing tear gas and shooting, we could only run."

With 139 houses set fire behind her, she lost track of her 28-year-old son, who is deaf and cannot speak. "I don't know if he is dead or alive, the only thing I saw is that those men were policemen."

Now she is twice displaced, this time without her son to help provide food. She shares a cramped school with 315 families from La Piste, living in despair. Jaquesmel holds a photo of her son to her forehead and weeps. "Can you please help me find him?"

Joseph Dieu Faite, 56, a blind leader of the displaced residents of La Piste looks toward the horizon with eyes wide open, as if he were seeing a monster. The attack, he explains, was police retaliation against civilians living in a gang-controlled neighborhood.

"There were some gangsters there, I have to acknowledge that, but the police did not ask, did not say a word, did not make a difference, just evicted us and then took matches and gasoline and burned our houses one by one," Faite said.

Justin Pierre June, 31, an articulate law student who arrived in Port-au-Prince on the first deportee flight last Sunday stood up to the IOM officers receiving them at the airport.

"This is not the right moment to deport us to Haiti. Haiti is not ready to receive deportees because its situation is chaotic," he shouted. "This country is in a political, social, security and economic crisis, we are surrounded by gangs from all sides. ... We should have been allowed to apply to become refugees"

More than 100 fellow deportees clapped in support. His sentiments were seconded 72 hours later by Philipo Grandi, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who questioned the US "mass expulsions of individuals...without screening for protection needs." Grandi said that international law forbids the return of individuals to a country in such dangerous chaos.

The US has had a checkered history with the nation since Haitians freed themselves from slavery and French colonial rule at the start of the 19th century. Americans occupied Haiti for nearly two decades in the 20th Century. Since then, through coups and earthquakes, US leaders and the international community have both contributed to chaos and tried unsuccessfully to rebuild the country.

All the while, Haitian immigrants made their way to US shores by sea to Florida or through Mexico to Texas.

On Thursday, the US Special Envoy to Haiti, Dan Foote, resigned, saying he could not defend a policy of deporting Haitians back to "a country where American officials are confined to secure compounds because of the danger posed by armed gangs to daily life." The policy will backfire, he said: "Surging migration to our borders will only grow as we add to Haiti's unacceptable misery."

There could be as many as 100 gangs in Port-au-Prince; no one has an exact count and allegiances often are violently fluid. One of the most powerful groups is the G9 coalition of gangs led by Jimmy Cherizier, alias "Barbecue," a former policeman turned gangster. His power seems to have increased since the assassination of the president last July, which he condemned, and there is even talk he may enter politics.

Downtown, Barbecue's gang coalition controls the empty streets around the judiciary and legislative buildings, and all streets east to the coast. They open and close movement through the city center at will. Not far from the National Palace, residents of the adjoining Bel Air neighborhood don't support Barbecue's gang any more than they do the police, so they defend themselves against both.

Jean Baptiste Nevelson, 49, a spokesperson for Bel Air, nods toward the sea and G9's territory and says, "We are afraid of the group down there, they put pressure on us every day."

Nevelson, who holds no weapon but gives orders to some men who do, adds, "We do not trust any government, we do not trust the police. We only have ourselves ... to be honest, we arrived at a point where this neighborhood can only be defended by our weapons."

In half an hour of conversation, punctuated by several rounds of gunfire not too far away, he links the violence they are suffering to poverty and politics. "The state does not provide, we have no water, no schools, no electricity, no jobs. Many people used to go sell in the market and now they have been cut off by our enemies and cannot get there, so they stay here jobless. They are hungry."

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Gangs control access to and from the port -- and, therefore, 80% of everything consumed in the island nation, according to port and business leaders. Merchandise coming out of the port is consolidated into convoys that must cross gang-controlled areas and face daily assaults as well as extortions. Sometimes groups of teenagers jump onto one of the trucks and cut the plastic, sending bags of cement and other goods to the street, where they are whisked away to houses.

The drivers don't dare stop.

The wealthy of Port-au-Prince live in the hillside eastern suburb of Petion-Ville in gated and privately guarded homes, largely protected from the violence and cost of payoffs. But the poor suffer rising prices and bottlenecks. When food and fuel deliveries are stalled, prices rise and lines at gas stations grow into the hundreds.

In La Saline, in front of the main port entrance, a neighborhood partially burned by a gang two years ago, dozens of kids are barefoot, even naked, and beg for food and water. Warehouses and police stations have been looted. Traffic circles have burned tires and material piled up for barricades.

The city's main food market, Croix des Bosalles, extends from the southern entrance of the port to the parliament, on ground where enslaved people were sold before independence. To enter the market today, one must walk through a gang gauntlet. First, one passes half a dozen young men with long weapons, phones in hand, earphones in one ear. Then, by a larger group sitting atop the burned-out box of a trailer.

The floor of the market is thick with decomposing trash and, in some places, small fires of burning trash. Each footstep on the spongy ground seems to release fumes of decay into already fetid air.

Although the market is crowded, only about a third of the previous vendors and shoppers have been able to make their way out of their neighborhoods or through downtown to get there. The atmosphere is dense, angry, and full of resentment. Women alternately shout "go away from here," or beckon an outsider to take a closer look: "How can a person live in these conditions?"

In a matter of minutes, a 30-year-old man dressed in black and dreadlocks identifies himself as "security" and offers a guided walk through areas that would not be possible to access without his company. Andy -- he only gives one name -- points to bananas, carrots, lettuce or lemon. They are sold from broken stalls or piles on the ground, not far from discarded chicken feet, entrails and empty plastic water bags. "Look at how we live in Haiti. The government has left us in this state. No human being deserves this. That's why we have to organize ourselves," Andy said.

His polite tour comes to an abrupt end when other "security" men approach and tell him to stop. His tone changes just as suddenly. "There could be an attack at any moment, you can't be here, go away, go away, go away, go away."

Indeed, it seems that violence can breakout at any time, in any random corner of the city. Angry mobs gather and dissolve, reunite and prepare for a new confrontation, while bystanders await the unexpected. They do not foresee a better life.

Nevelson, the Bel Air community leader's prediction: "The future will be bad, chaotic, violent."

In Mexico, some Haitians find a helping hand

By MARIA VERZA Associated Press

CIUDAD ACUÑA, México (AP) — Some of the thousands of Haitian migrants who briefly formed a camp in the Texas border town of Del Rio have found a helping hand across the river in Mexico's Ciudad Acuña.

While U.S. officials announced the camp on the U.S. side had been cleared, an undetermined number of migrants remained in Ciudad Acuña, afraid to step foot in the streets after Mexican immigration agents raided a small hotel and ringed a similar camp on the Mexican side with agents.

Some Ciudad Acuña residents took in Haitian families, while others provided food and water. Virginia Salazar, a Mexican woman, and her husband Mensah Montant, from the African nation of Togo, were among those who responded to the Haitians' needs.

The couple brought rice to one home, medicine to another, and they're looking for a mattress for one Haitian family. Montant knows how it feels to be a stranger in a strange land: He arrived in Mexico as an

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immigrant himself nine years ago, and now works as a tailor.

"I come from a family of migrants," said Salazar, who works as a cleaner. "There's my husband, and I have one sister who has documents and another who is illegal," she said of relatives in the United States. "This comes naturally to me."

They have helped about a dozen Haitians personally, but don't know how many may still be in hiding here after U.S. authorities cleared the camp on the other side.

U.S. officials closed the crossing on Sept. 17 after an encampment of mostly Haitian migrants formed around the border bridge span. The camp was completely cleared of migrants on Friday.

Many of those migrants face expulsion because they are not covered by protections recently extended by the Biden administration to the more than 100,000 Haitian migrants already in the U.S.

About 2,000 Haitians had been rapidly expelled on 17 flights over the last week and more could be expelled in coming days.

The possibility of being returned to Haiti led many to seek shelter on the Mexican side, even as thousands more are believed to be travelling up from South America in a bid to reach the U.S. border. But Mexico has begun busing some Haitians back to the southernmost part of its own territory and preparing to send others back to Haiti.

Helping them is not without risk for Ciudad Acuña residents, who last week saw thousands of Haitians walk across the river to Del Rio, and later return to the Mexican side to buy food and other necessities.

Montant had been about to bring ice to Etlove Dorsicar, 32, when Mexican immigration agents surrounded him at his home. "What's happening, wait! I have my papers," he said, showing them his Mexican residency.

Montant and Salazar met Dorsicar when they were handing out food earlier in the week at a smaller encampment that sprang up on the Mexican side.

When agents showed up to surround that camp, Dorsicar, his wife and their 3-year-old daughter hid in the riverside brush until they could reach the couple's home.

Montant and Salazar found them a house where they could rent a room, a table and a fan for \$50 per month. It means the world to the family and a Haitian woman who shares the other room.

"For the first time in days, I didn't have to sleep with one eye open," said Dorsicar.

Andrea García, a 24-year-old hairstylist, has put up six Haitian families in various homes her family owns in Ciudad Acuña.

"They arrived at my house alone, with their babies and asked to help; they said there was no place they could go," recalled Garcia.

"Yes, I am worried, afraid because Mexican immigration agents are going into people's houses and are not giving them a chance at the process" to gain residency, Garcia said. "But it is more sad than scary to see how they pray when they see an immigration van."

To remain longer, the Haitians need to apply for refugee or asylum status, and that is done in the southern Mexico city of Tapachula. Because that process is so backed up, many Haitians feel Tapachula has become a trap for them and have tried to walk north, only to be stopped by checkpoints and National Guard troops.

"Tapachula has a lot of migrants, a lot, and they are not working, and they are not getting documents," Dorsicar said.

The Mexican government has tried to convince private bus companies not to carry Haitians north, and even taxi drivers in Ciudad Acuña are feeling pressure not to transport them.

Taxi driver Eliseo Ortiz no longer picks up Haitians, after he was fined about \$900 three months ago. "They accused me of being an immigrant trafficker," Ortiz said, noting other drivers paid bribes to police to continue carrying them.

Manuel Casillas, 65, the owner of a Beatles-themed restaurant near the border bridge, has seen the Haitians come and go.

"This all makes me feel bad, not to be able to help them or give them work," Casillas said. Though things have quieted down for now, he said, "I think there will be another wave."

Nonprofit grants propel prosecutor push on racial injustice

By CLAUDIA LAUER Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — When Deborah Gonzalez took office in January as the district attorney for the Western Judicial District of Georgia, she noticed that too few defendants, especially Black defendants, qualified for a program that promised treatment for addiction or mental health and not jail.

Like many court diversion programs elsewhere, potential participants in the Athens-Clarke and Oconee counties programs were being disqualified for certain previous charges or police contact. People living in poverty also had a hard time qualifying because of weekly program fees.

“My philosophy is there is racial injustice and disparities of how people are treated in this system. And we have to be intentional in how we address it,” Gonzalez said.

Through a grant from a national nonprofit criminal justice advocacy group, Vera Institute of Justice, and a local organization, People Living in Recovery, Gonzalez is redesigning the program to make it more accessible.

Many of the changes enacted by states following George Floyd’s death have centered on policing tactics and not on racial disparities in the criminal justice system. On a national level, bipartisan congressional talks on overhauling policing practices have ended without an agreement, bargainers from both parties said this past week, despite promises from the Biden administration for change.

And now, groups such as Vera are targeting suburban communities to push through criminal justice changes without new laws.

Vera awarded 10 prosecutors about \$550,000 to help reduce racial disparities in prosecution. The prosecutors in Georgia, Virginia, Michigan, Hawaii, Pennsylvania, Missouri, New York and Indiana — most of whom were elected in the past two years on progressive platforms — are looking at programs or policies in their offices that disproportionately affect defendants of color.

Some prosecutors are addressing prosecution of specific crimes or making diversion programs more inclusive. Others are looking at ways to keep juveniles out of the criminal justice system all together.

“There was a desire to do more in this moment, to address the system that continues to allow this to happen. So we started asking if there is something more we can do with this unique moment to reimagine what a just system looks like,” said Jamila Hodge, the former director of the Reshaping Prosecution Program with Vera.

In Gonzalez’s district, for example, about 22% of the district’s overall population is Black. Of the more than 6,800 people charged during 2019 and 2020, the majority were Black. Fewer than 150 were referred to the pretrial program, and most came from a county that is only 5 % percent Black.

She hopes to double participation in her program by 2022, and will put in checks to monitor that the diversity is increasing.

Vera will provide support for 12 months. The hope is to reduce the disproportionately high number of Black and brown people prosecuted and incarcerated by 20% in the pilot areas. The grants require the prosecutors to partner with local community-based organizations.

In Washtenaw County, Michigan, home to Ann Arbor and just west of Detroit, prosecutor Eli Savit is working with a group called My Brothers Keeper to divert young people of color accused of nonviolent crimes into an intensive mentoring program. Savit, who took office in January, said he wants to focus on interventions that happen with kids who are acting out or committing minor crimes.

“What we’re trying to do is intervene early without the criminal justice system’s involvement, without creating a record that can hold them back. It can have this cascading effect on their lives. Job applications ask if you’ve ever been charged, not whether you’ve been convicted,” Savit said.

In Chatham County, Georgia, home to Savannah in the state’s northeast corner, chief assistant district attorney Michael Edwards said an analysis of Black men and boys in criminal justice system found they made up disproportionate number of the people being charged with gun possession.

The office, in partnership with Savannah Feed the Hungry, developed a program called Show Us Your Guns that focuses on people between age 16 and 25 who are found to be in possession of a gun during

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an interaction with police. As long as those young men didn't use those weapons in commission of a crime, they are eligible for the program instead of arrest or jail. It requires they turn in the gun in exchange for participation.

"We are doing this, knowing that firearms are a third-rail in conversations in the community. But we know this is a significant way we can have an effect on public safety as well as on the lives of these juveniles and young men," Edwards said.

Edwards said the program will be tailored to the individuals, looking needs like job training, education, mental health and addiction treatment and even a partnership with the local YMCA so the young men can take care of themselves physically.

"Too often prosecution is case based, but we want this to be cause based— looking at the underlying causes," Edwards said.

For Shane Sims, the idea that prosecutors in all these places are creating plans to consider the whole person standing before them, not just the crime they committed, brings him overwhelming joy. Sims is the executive director of People Living in Recovery, which is working with Gonzalez in Athens, Georgia, to redesign its mental health and addiction diversion program.

He was sentenced to life plus 15 years for his accomplice role in a robbery that ended in the death of a store clerk. He was 18 years old, and it seemed like no one considered who he was or how he got there — that his parents were addicted to crack cocaine and he was taking care of his younger brother on his own from a young age.

When he got out, after three wardens petitioned for his release, he started working in the community.

"What we are doing together is coming to the realization that substance abuse lies at the heart of so many who enter the criminal justice system. Minorities historically have the least consideration when deciding how to deal with that," Sims said.

US has enough COVID-19 vaccines for boosters, kids' shots

By TODD RICHMOND and KATHLEEN FOODY Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — With more than 40 million doses of coronavirus vaccines available, U.S. health authorities said they're confident there will be enough for both qualified older Americans seeking booster shots and the young children for whom initial vaccines are expected to be approved in the not-too-distant future.

The spike in demand — expected following last week's federal recommendation on booster shots — would be the first significant jump in months. More than 70 million Americans remain unvaccinated despite the enticement of lottery prizes, free food or gifts and pleas from exhausted health care workers as the average number of deaths per day climbed to more than 1,900 in recent weeks.

Federal and state health authorities said current supply and steady production of more doses can easily accommodate those seeking boosters or initial vaccination, avoiding a repeat of the frustratingly slow rollout of COVID-19 vaccines across the country early this year.

"I hope that we have the level of interest in the booster ... that we need more vaccines," Colorado Gov. Jared Polis said Tuesday. "That's simply not where we are today. We have plenty of vaccines."

Robust supply in the U.S enabled President Joe Biden this week to promise an additional 500 million of Pfizer's COVID-19 shots to share with the world, doubling the United States' global contribution. Aid groups and health organizations have pushed the U.S. and other countries to improve vaccine access in countries where even the most vulnerable people haven't had a shot.

Among the challenges states face is not ordering too many doses and letting them go to waste. Several states with low vaccination rates, including Idaho and Kansas, have reported throwing away thousands of expired doses or are struggling to use vaccines nearing expiration this fall.

While most vaccines can stay on the shelf unopened for months, once a vial is opened the clock starts ticking. Vaccines are only usable for six to 12 hours, depending on the manufacturer, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

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Moderna vaccines come in vials containing 11 to 15 doses. Pfizer vials contain up to six doses and Johnson & Johnson vials five doses.

"We are going to see more doses that go unused over time," said Wisconsin's health secretary, Karen Timberlake. "They come in multidose files. They don't come in nice, tidy individual single-serving packages."

State health officials said they have tried to request only what health care providers and pharmacies expect to need from the federal supply. Those numbers have dwindled since the vaccines became widely available in early spring.

But U.S. officials — holding out hope that some of the unvaccinated will change their minds — are trying to keep enough vaccines in stock so all Americans can get them.

That balancing act is tricky and can lead to consternation around the globe as the U.S. sits on unused vaccines while many countries in places such as Africa can't get enough vaccines.

"Somebody sitting in a country with few resources to access vaccines, seeing people in the U.S. able to walk into a pharmacy and get that vaccine and choosing not to, I'm sure that's causing heartache," said Jen Kates, senior vice president and director of global health and HIV policy for the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Dr. Marcus Plescia, chief medical officer of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, which represents the public health agencies of all 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia and U.S. territories, said officials anticipate that on-hand doses of COVID-19 vaccines and manufacturers' ability to supply more will meet needs across the country.

"I think states have tried to plan as if everybody's going to be offered a booster," he said, suggesting they will be overprepared for the more narrow recommendations issued by the FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

California, for example, estimated earlier this month that it would need to administer an extra 63 million doses by the end of 2022 — if initial shots for children under 12 were approved and boosters were open to everyone.

U.S. health officials late Thursday endorsed booster shots of the Pfizer vaccine for all Americans 65 and older — along with tens of millions of younger people who are at higher risk from the coronavirus because of health conditions or their jobs.

California, with nearly 40 million residents, has the lowest transmission rate of any state and nearly 70% of eligible residents are fully vaccinated. That leaves nearly 12 million people not vaccinated or not fully vaccinated.

Dr. Mark Ghaly, California's health secretary, said the state will rely largely on pharmacies and primary care providers to give boosters to seniors while some large counties and health care groups will use mass vaccination sites.

In Pennsylvania, more than 67% of residents older than 18 are fully vaccinated. Alison Beam, acting secretary of health, said health authorities now have "two missions": Continuing to persuade people to get vaccinated and serving those eager to receive a booster or initial shots.

"Pennsylvania is going to be prepared," Beam said. "And we're going to have the right level of vaccine and vaccinators to be able to meet that demand."

Footy reported from Chicago. Associated Press writers Scott Bauer in Madison, Wisconsin; and Patty Nieberg in Denver contributed.

Nieberg 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.

UN and Afghanistan's Taliban, figuring out how to interact

By AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

It's been little more than a month since Kalashnikov-toting Taliban fighters in their signature heavy beards,

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hightop sneakers and shalwar kameezes descended on the Afghan capital and cemented their takeover. Now they're vying for a seat in the club of nations and seeking what no country has given them as they attempt to govern for a second time: international recognition of their rule.

The Taliban wrote to the United Nations requesting to address the U.N. General Assembly meeting of leaders that is underway in New York. They argue they have all the requirements needed for recognition of a government. The U.N. has effectively responded to the Taliban's request by signaling: Not so fast.

Afghanistan, which joined the U.N. in 1946 as an early member state, is scheduled to speak last at the General Assembly leaders' session on Monday. With no meeting yet held by the U.N. committee that decides challenges to credentials, it appears almost certain that Afghanistan's current ambassador will give the address this year — or that no one will at all.

The U.N. can withhold or bestow formal acknowledgement on the Taliban, and use this as crucial leverage to exact assurances on human rights, girls' access to education and political concessions. This is where the power — and relevance, even — of the 76-year-old world body still holds.

Afghanistan is a good, and perhaps extreme, representative case study of precisely why the United Nations was founded in the aftermath of World War II, said Rohinton Medhora, president of the Center for International Governance Innovation in Canada.

"If you're the U.N. and you want to represent the family of nations, then you want absolutely everyone of the family there — even you know, the distant cousin that not everyone's proud of," he said. "So the U.N. needs Afghanistan and countries to demonstrate the value of many of its operations."

In Afghanistan, the United Nations can deploy the weight of its vast aid and development programs to show just how crucial its often underfunded agencies are in providing stability and security. The country is facing multiple humanitarian crises and near-total poverty due to fallout from the political situation.

There are already growing calls for aid to be contingent on ensuring girls' access to education. Despite promises to be inclusive and open, the Taliban have yet to allow older girls back to school, have curtailed local media freedoms and returned to brutal practices like publicly hanging dead bodies in city squares.

"Taliban does not represent the will of the Afghan people," Afghanistan's currently accredited ambassador to the U.N. in Geneva, Nasir Andisha, told The Associated Press.

If the United Nations recognizes the Taliban's claim to power, Andisha said, then it sends a corrosive message to others — be it in Yemen or in Myanmar — that they can take up guns, create violence, join with U.S.-designated terrorist groups.

"I think for the world, for the United Nations, it's time to use this as a leverage," Andisha said.

The Taliban's appointed U.N. representative, Suhail Shaheen, a former negotiator and political spokesman, told The Associated Press that his government should be admitted into the club of nations and that "all borders, territory and major cities of Afghanistan are in our control."

"We have support of our people and because of their support, we were able to continue a successful struggle for independence of our country which culminated in our independence," he said. "We have all the requirements needed for recognition of a government. So we hope the UN as a neutral World Body recognize the current government of Afghanistan."

More than a dozen ministers in the all-Taliban Cabinet are on a U.N. blacklist, including the group's foreign minister, whom Andisha and other Afghan diplomats abroad are refusing to speak to.

Andisha was serving in Geneva under the U.S.-backed government of Ashraf Ghani when the president fled Afghanistan Aug. 15 to seek refuge in the United Arab Emirates as the Taliban encircled the capital. Ghani's government swiftly fell thereafter.

Andisha is still holding meetings with representatives from countries around the world, imploring them to push for the resuscitation of intra-Afghan peace talks. He wants the United Nations to make clear that joining its ranks is not only about "holding a country under the barrels of your guns and having enough population taken hostage."

Meanwhile, Qatar has urged countries not to boycott the Taliban, and Pakistan called on nations to avoid isolating the Taliban, and to incentivize them to hold to their promises of renouncing terrorism and being inclusive.

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During the Taliban's repressive time in power in the late 1990's, only Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates recognized their legitimacy. During that era, the U.N. refused to recognize their government and gave Afghanistan's seat to the previous, warlord-dominated government.

The group was then ousted from power in 2001 by a U.S.-led coalition after the 9/11 attacks for harboring al-Qaida.

The United States, which withdrew all its forces from the country last month in a chaotic airlift that ended America's "forever war," says it is critical that the international community remains united in ensuring the Taliban meets a range of commitments before granting legitimacy or support beyond humanitarian aid.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said this is the message he delivered to the U.N. Security Council and others on the sidelines of the General Assembly this week.

The U.S. has "significant leverage when it comes to the Taliban," State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters Friday. "But we have all the more leverage when we work in coordination and in harmony with our allies and partners around the globe," he added.

Medhora, of the Center for International Governance Innovation, said the U.N. has levers it can use through its various agencies, such as UNICEF, which focuses on children, UNHCR, which assists refugees, and the World Food Program, all "where the actual work of the U.N. gets done." This is another area where the United States has major sway as the the largest donor to the United Nations, contributing nearly one-fifth of funding for the body's collective budget in 2019, according to the Council on Foreign Relations.

In multiple U.N. speeches this past week, a number of world leaders mentioned Afghanistan, including U.S. President Joe Biden and Afghanistan's neighbors, such as Pakistan, Iran and Uzbekistan.

Enayat Najafizada, who runs an independent think tank in Kabul that monitors security issues in Afghanistan's provinces, said the U.N. should also facilitate negotiations between Afghan groups and bring the various countries with a history of meddling in the nation on board for the sake of regional security.

"Without forming an inclusive government, the country will move to a civil war," said Najafizada, founder of The Institute of War and Peace Studies.

Although what comes next for Afghanistan is far from certain, it is clear the Taliban do not want to be seen as global pariahs, said Kamal Alam, nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council.

"They want a seat at the U.N. They want to go to Davos. They like the private jet lifestyle," he said, referring to the group's political elite who reside in exile in Qatar.

"But that's only the political leaders. The foot soldiers on the ground, there's no such thing as 'the new Taliban,'" he said. "There is no new Taliban. Everything they're doing is a tactic to get recognition as well as not be isolated."

AP journalists Matthew Lee and Kathy Gannon contributed to this report. Dubai-based AP correspondent Aya Batrawy has covered the U.N. General Assembly since 2019. Follow her on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/ayaelb>

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Sept. 27, the 270th day of 2021. There are 95 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 27, 1996, in Afghanistan, the Taliban, a band of former seminary students, drove the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani out of Kabul, captured the capital and executed former leader Najibullah.

On this date:

In 1779, John Adams was named by Congress to negotiate the Revolutionary War's peace terms with Britain.

In 1854, the first great disaster involving an Atlantic Ocean passenger vessel occurred when the steam-

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ship SS Arctic sank off Newfoundland; of the more than 400 people on board, only 86 survived.

In 1917, French sculptor and painter Edgar Degas died in Paris at age 83.

In 1939, Warsaw, Poland, surrendered after weeks of resistance to invading forces from Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union during World War II.

In 1941, the United States launched the first 14 rapidly built "Liberty" military cargo vessels.

In 1964, the government publicly released the report of the Warren Commission, which concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald had acted alone in assassinating President John F. Kennedy.

In 1979, Congress gave its final approval to forming the U.S. Department of Education.

In 1991, President George H.W. Bush announced in a nationally broadcast address that he was eliminating all U.S. battlefield nuclear weapons, and called on the Soviet Union to match the gesture. The Senate Judiciary Committee deadlocked, 7-7, on the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1994, more than 350 Republican congressional candidates gathered on the steps of the U.S. Capitol to sign the "Contract with America," a 10-point platform they pledged to enact if voters sent a GOP majority to the House.

In 1999, Sen. John McCain of Arizona officially opened his campaign for the 2000 Republican presidential nomination, the same day former Vice President Dan Quayle dropped his White House bid.

In 2016, scientists announced the first baby born from a controversial new technique that combined DNA from three people — the mother, the father and an egg donor. (The goal was to prevent the child from inheriting a fatal genetic disease from his mother.)

In 2018, during a day-long hearing by the Senate Judiciary Committee, Christine Blasey Ford said she was "100 percent" certain that she was sexually assaulted by Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh when they were teenagers, and Kavanaugh then told senators that he was "100 percent certain" he had done no such thing; Republicans quickly scheduled a recommendation vote for the following morning.

Ten years ago: Opening statements in the Los Angeles trial of Michael Jackson's personal physician, Dr. Conrad Murray, took place as prosecutors accused Murray of killing the superstar through irresponsible use of the anesthetic propofol, and the defense maintained Jackson had caused his own death. (Murray was later convicted of felony involuntary manslaughter.) Israel gave the go-ahead for construction of 1,100 new Jewish housing units in east Jerusalem; the announcement met with swift criticism from the United States and the European Union.

Five years ago: The United States provided another \$364 million in humanitarian aid to Syrians as their nation's civil war appeared to be getting worse. President Barack Obama announced career diplomat Jeffrey DeLaurentis as his choice to become the first U.S. ambassador to Cuba in more than a half-century.

One year ago: The New York Times reported that President Donald Trump paid just \$750 in federal income taxes the year he ran for president and in his first year in the White House; Trump dismissed the report as "fake news." Louisville, Kentucky, saw its fifth night of protests after a grand jury declined to charge officers in the fatal shooting of Breonna Taylor. The French Open, pushed back from May and June because of COVID-19, began in Paris with just 1,000 spectators allowed per day.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Kathleen Nolan is 88. Actor Claude Jarman Jr. is 87. Author Barbara Howar is 87. World Golf Hall of Famer Kathy Whitworth is 82. Singer-musician Randy Bachman (Bachman-Turner Overdrive) is 78. Rock singer Meat Loaf is 74. Actor Liz Torres is 74. Actor A Martinez is 73. Baseball Hall of Famer Mike Schmidt is 72. Actor Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa is 71. Actor/opera singer Anthony Laciura is 70. Singer Shaun Cassidy is 63. Comedian Marc Maron is 58. Rock singer Stephan (STEE'-fan) Jenkins (Third Eye Blind) is 57. Former Democratic National Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz is 55. Actor Patrick Muldoon is 53. Singer Mark Calderon is 51. Actor Amanda Detmer is 50. Actor Gwyneth Paltrow is 49. Actor Indira Varma is 48. Rock singer Brad Arnold (3 Doors Down) is 43. Christian rock musician Grant Brandell (Underoath) is 40. Actor Anna Camp is 39. Rapper Lil' Wayne is 39. Singer Avril Lavigne (AV'-rihl la-VEEN') is 37. Bluegrass singer/musician Sierra Hull is 30. Actor Sam Lerner is 29. Actor Ames McNamara is 14.