

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Upcoming Events

### 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

### Saturday, Oct. 9

Soccer Second Round Playoffs  
Volleyball at Redfield Tourney  
Pumpkin Fest in Groton

### Monday, Oct. 11

No School - Native American Day

### Tuesday, Oct. 12

12:43 p.m. to 2:43 p.m.: PSAT Pre-Administration  
Volleyball at Tiospa Zina (7th/C match at 5 p.m., 8th/JV at 6 p.m., varsity to follow)  
7 p.m.: School Board Meeting



### Wednesday, Oct. 13

Elementary School LifeTouch Pictures, 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.

PSAT Testing for sophomores and juniors during first hour

### Thursday, Oct. 14

High School LifeTouch Pictures, 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.  
3:30 p.m.: Region 1A cross Country Meet in Webster

4:00 p.m.: Junior High Football Jamboree in Groton  
Volleyball hosts Milbank (7th/C match at 6 p.m., 8th/JV at 6 p.m. with varsity to follow)

### Friday, Oct. 15

7 p.m.: Football at Sisseton

### Saturday, Oct. 16

Oral Interp at Florence  
State Soccer in Sioux Falls  
JV Volleyball Tourney in Milbank

## 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 City Council Meeting Agenda

October 5, 2021 – 7:00pm

120 N Main Street

(NOTICE ADDRESS)

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1  
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
2. Open Sealed Bids for Safe Deposit Boxes
3. Minutes
4. Bills
5. Department Reports
6. Congratulations to April Abeln, Deputy Finance Officer – Received the 2021 Distinguished Service Award from Heartland Consumer Powers District
7. Lease for the Groton City Airport
8. Second Reading of Ordinance #752 – Amending Security Light Rates
9. Library Schedule
10. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
11. Second Reading of Ordinance #753 – 2022 Salary Summary
12. Adjournment

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## Lake Region Marching Band Festival to be held in Groton

On Friday, October 8th twelve area school bands and the Aberdeen Central High School Golden Eagle Marching Band will converge in Groton for the annual Lake Region Marching Band Festival. The parade of bands will travel from South to North on Groton's Main Street from Railroad Avenue to 9th Avenue, beginning at 10:00 a.m. Following the parade, the Aberdeen Central High School Band will present a "Phantom of the Opera" field marching show for all bands in attendance.

This festival originated in Milbank, moved to Waubay for 11 years, and has been held in Groton for the past 9 years. Each band will be evaluated on their performance by a panel of judges from Aberdeen Central High School. Awards will be given to the top two high school and top two middle school bands. Awards will be given to the top three bands in the combined band division. Other awards that will be given out are Best Percussion, Best Winds, and Best Color Guard. An overall Top Band Award will be given to the band with the overall highest score.

The festival has become a premier marching event in Northeast South Dakota, attracting bands and spectators from towns across the region. The public is invited to watch the parade of bands on Main Street as well as Aberdeen Central's field marching show and awards at the football field. The festival will be livestreamed at [gdilive.com](http://gdilive.com) free of charge. Concessions will be available at the football field following the parade.

Attending the festival are bands from Aberdeen Roncalli, Warner, Leola, Langford, Milbank MS, Ipswich, Castlewood, Wilmot, Frederick, Sully Buttes, Groton, Aberdeen Simmons and Holgate MS, and Northwestern.

Primary sponsors of the festival are Groton Dairy Queen and the Groton Daily Independent.

### 2021 Lake Region Marching Festival Lineup and Schedule

- 10:00- Groton Area High School Marching Band
- 10:05- Groton Area Junior High Marching Band
- 10:10- Simmons Holgate Middle School
- 10:15- Milbank Middle School
- 10:20- Northwestern
- 10:25- Castlewood
- 10:30- Warner
- 10:35- Leola
- 10:40- Roncalli
- 10:45- Wilmot
- 10:50- Ipswich
- 10:55- Frederick
- 11:00- Langford
- 11:05- Sully Buttes
- 11:15- Aberdeen Central
- BANDS PROCEED TO FOOTBALL FIELD
- 11:50- "Phantom of the Opera" field performance by Aberdeen Central
- 12:05- Awards

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## Week 7 SDFBCA Coaches Poll

### 11AAA

Brandon Valley (13) 129 6-0  
Harrisburg (16) 128 6-0  
Sioux Falls Lincoln 63 4-2  
Sioux Falls Washington 47 3-3  
Sioux Falls Jefferson 32 4-2  
Others: Sioux Falls O'Gorman 13 2-4

### 11AA

Tea Area (28) 145 6-0  
Pierre T.F. Riggs (2) 118 5-1  
Brookings 77 4-2  
Watertown 41 3-3  
Yankton 41 3-3  
Others: Aberdeen Central 15 3-3

### 11A

Madison (26) 142 6-0  
Canton (3) 115 5-1  
West Central 47 4-2  
Vermillion 44 4-2  
Dell Rapids 35 4-2  
Others: Lennox 28 4-2, Sioux Falls Christian 8  
3-3

### 11B

Winner (27) 135 7-0  
Sioux Valley 94 5-1  
Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan 37 4-2  
Groton 30 6-1,  
McCook Central/Montrose 30 4-2  
Others: Aberdeen Roncalli 18 6-1, Elk-Point/Jef-  
ferson 17 4-2

### 9AA

1	Hanson	(25) 133	6-0
2	Platte-Geddes	(2) 89	5-1
3	Parkston	58	5-2
4	Chester Area	52	4-2
5	Timber Lake	(2) 21	6-1
Other	Florence/Henry 21, Garretson 14, Hamlin 12, Ipswich 11, Canistota/Freeman 9		

### 9A

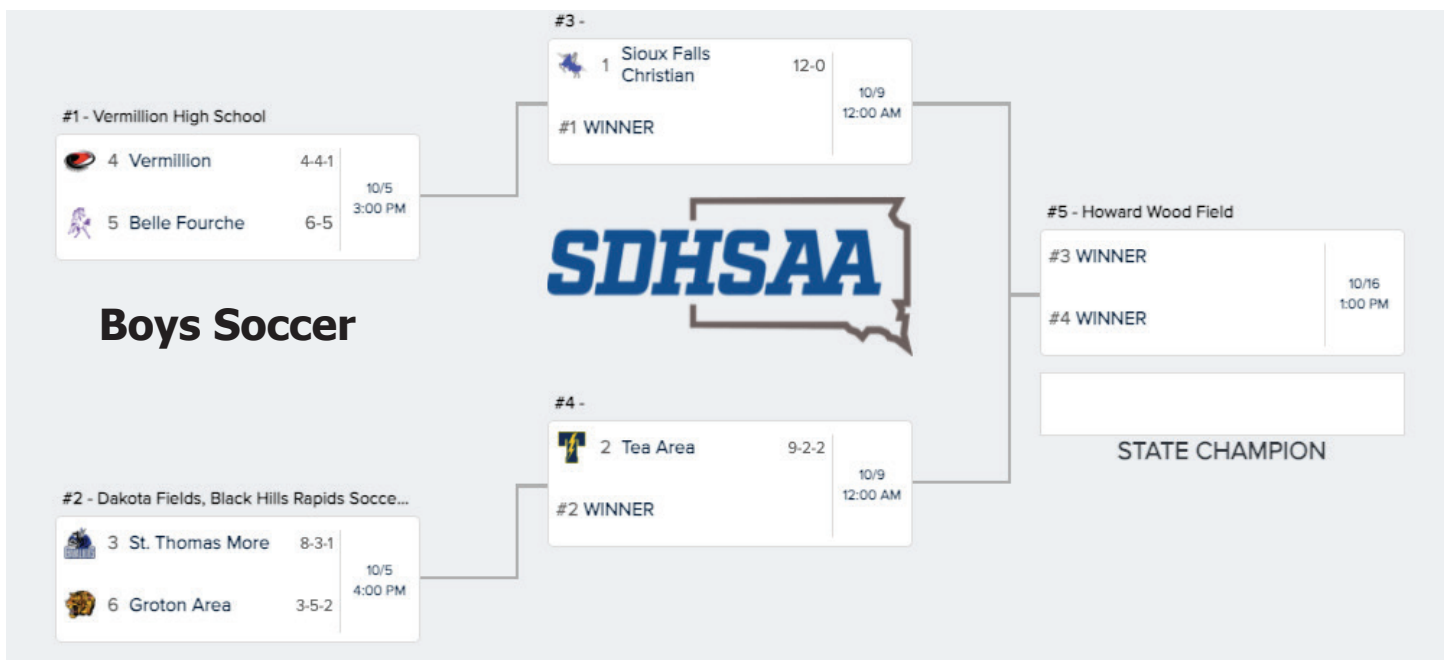
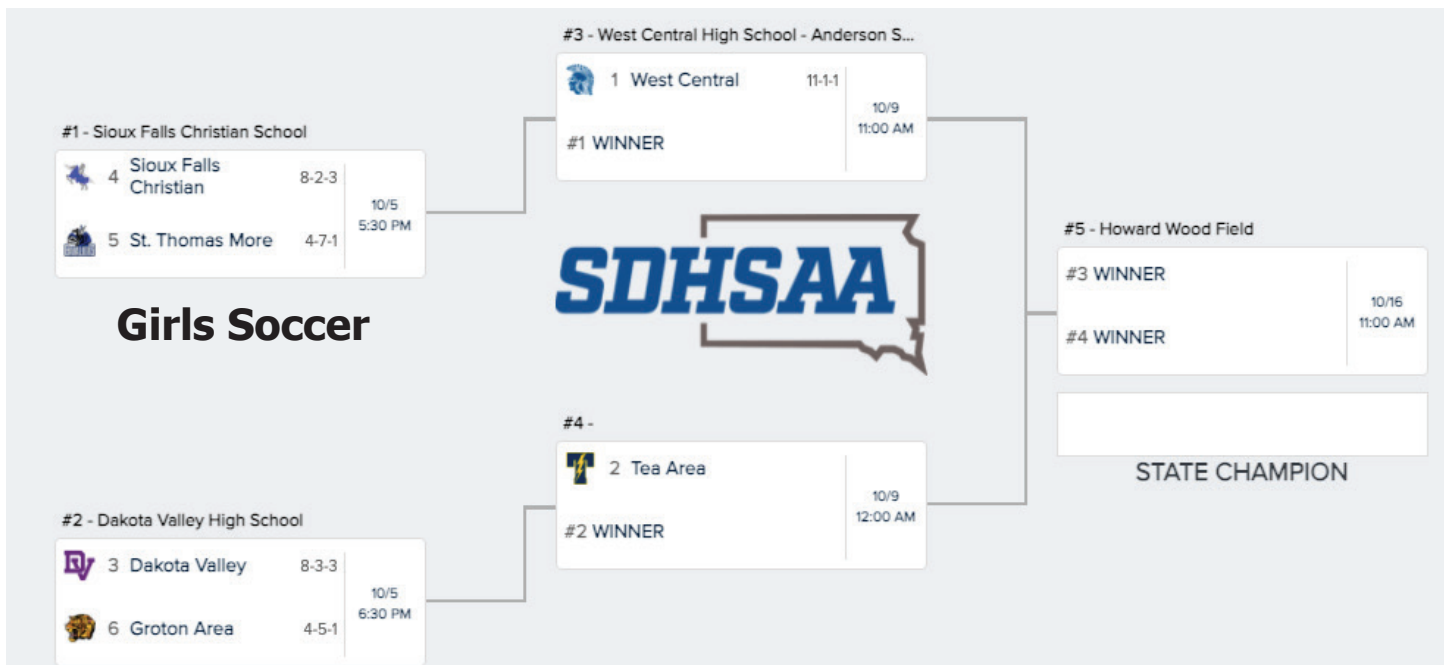
1	DeSmet	(14) 124	6-0
2	Howard	(12) 119	6-0
3	Herreid/Selby Area	(4) 95	6-0
4	Wall	63	7-0
5	Wolsey-Wessington	34	4-2
Other	Warner 7, Castlewood 3, Gregory 3, Newell 3		

### 9B cord

	Team	Points	Re-
1	Avon	(29) 147	6-0
2	Gayville-Volin	(1) 88	4-1
3	Faulkton Area	87	5-2
4	Potter County	56	6-1
5	Hitchcock-Tulare	30	5-2
Other	Harding County/Bison (1) 17, Dell Rapids St. Mary 17, Alcester-Hudson 6		

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## Seniors at Gypsy Day Parade

From left to right (Back Row): Cassandra Schultz, Rease Jandel, Alyssa Thaler, and Christina Zoellner  
From left to right (Front Row): Julianna Kosel, Trinity Smith, and Megan Fliehs

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**Junior High Band**

**That's Life**  
by Tony Bender  
**A dog's life**

**Editor's note: Tony took a few vacation days this week. Until his return, here's one of our favorites from 2011.**

**She didn't come to greet me when I pulled into the driveway, a fairly rare occurrence, but even the best dogs are not perfect. Karma, our Springer Spaniel, just turned 12, but she's a high mileage dog. There was a time when her relentless circling around the house wore a path right down to the dirt, but the grass has proven more determined than she.**

She's slowed down dramatically the last two years, and this winter was particularly hard on her. She's always been an outside dog, but stubbornly refused shelter in a dog house or the garage, instead planting herself, in hell or high water (except thunderstorms) on the mat at the front door. One tough girl. But, last winter she made a concession, and agreed to sleep on a sleeping bag in the garage.

When I went to check on her, she was shivering, although winter has given us her best, and it wasn't that cold. I didn't like the look in Karma's eyes; she refused to get up, and when I carried her inside, it hurt her. She was favoring a hind leg, and her back was tender. The road was filling up with a late snowstorm, so we decided to call Dean Christianson at the Ashley Vet Clinic lest we get snowed in with an ailing dog. Dean, a couple weeks in to calving season and already run ragged, met us at the clinic.

By this time, India, 10, was in tears. Dylan, 14, was away on an FBLA trip, or it would have been hard on him, too. We carried Karma in. Presented with all the new smells, Karma perked up at the vet clinic, embarrassing us with her newfound energy, and giving us hope at the same time. After a careful examination, Dean did some blood work and prescribed some arthritis medicine. "We may just have to treat her a couple of years," he said. A couple of years. Only I picked up on that.

Gosh, she's been a good dog. Almost psychic. Intuitively, she always did what I asked, although her hearing has become a little more selective over time. It happens in a marriage, too. So, sometimes, I would have to ask twice.

She spent years riding in the tractor with Melvin Blumhardt when he fed cattle across the road. He'd stop, and with one mighty leap she was in the cab. Melvin bragged down at the Duck Inn about how smart she was and how she saved him from an enraged cow by leaping 50 yards in a single bound, grabbing the cow by its neck and rolling it into Lemar Haas's pasture just before it crushed Melvin. That's how Melvin told it, anyway, and Karma never disputed a word.

I got talked into a St. Bernard puppy six months ago. Really, the words "St. Bernard" and "Puppy" ought not appear in the same sentence. They come in three sizes: "behemoth", "giant", and "is that a T-Rex?" So, Karma, in her advanced years, has had her paws full teaching Pike the ropes. Things like Spaniels eat first. But his incessant playfulness and his 100 pounds to her 80, has taken its toll. At least until summer is here, Karma will be warming her bones inside and the incorrigible Pike will remain an outside dog in order to provide a strong defense against package deliveries. Bob, our UPS guy is still getting through, though. "Me and Cujo have an understanding," he said.

Meanwhile, Karma sleeps most of the day, and when it is time to do her business outside, she lets you know. She was never formally trained. Just a smart dog. She did throw up on the bottom bunk in India's room the other night, which met with some disapproval, but with some notable exceptions, she has been reasonably well-mannered.

The other night, though, I was almost crowded out of bed. When I threw back the covers I found Karma



## Abeln honored with Distinguished Service Award

April Abeln's job is centered around doing what's best for her community.

As deputy finance officer for Groton, South Dakota, she helps manage city operations and ensure reliable utility service to residents.

Serving in this capacity, it was an easy decision to find more ways to help others and give back. Her mantra is simple: if you're working for the city, you might as well WORK for the city.

"When you live and work here, it makes sense to do extra," she said. "It comes with the job, but it's also my personality—I try to give one hundred percent."

In recognition of her outstanding service, selfless attitude and commitment to her community, Abeln is the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award from Heartland Consumers Power District.

### Community focused

Abeln's adoration for Groton is something that has grown over the past two decades. She's considered herself a member of the community since 2003 and has enjoyed raising her two sons here.

She dubs herself an "honorary member of anything." Although not always formally affiliated with a project, she's not afraid to step up when needed.

"If I'm asked and it works out, I'll definitely help out where I can," she said.

She plays a key role in organizing two of the community's largest annual events: Summer Fest and Pumpkin Fest.

Summer Fest is spearheaded by the local Lions Club. Each year Abeln lines up vendors prior to the event and helps with setup and other tasks during.

She is the main planner for Pumpkin Fest and heads up a team of volunteer "pumpkiners." Now in its sixth year, the event has become a passion project for Abeln.

"It's my baby," she says, laughing. "Some people call me the pumpkin queen."

Held at the city park, the one-day, family-friendly festival draws hundreds of people from the region. It features a lunch plus inflatables, hay rides, face painting, pumpkin decorating and more.

The event is free to the public—a source of pride for organizers. Abeln and her team line up dozens of sponsors to help with expenses. Guests may offer free will donations for the meal.

Money raised is typically used to help cover costs of future events. This year, however, the group plans to raise funds for new bathroom facilities at the park.

"Any time a public event is held there, we have to rent handicap-accessible facilities," Abeln said. "We desperately need an update, and the entire community could benefit."

When she's not planning events, Abeln teaches Sunday School at St. John's Lutheran Church and serves as secretary of Groton's Chamber of Commerce.

### City role

Abeln grew up in Mansfield, South Dakota, and attended grade school in Warner. She later studied accounting at Northern State University in Aberdeen.



**April Abeln with her Distinguished Service Award; Heartland Customer Relations Manager Kelly Dybdahl, far left, joins Groton Finance Officer Hope Block and Assistant FO Kellie Locke, far right, in presenting the award to Abeln.** (Courtesy Photo)

Shortly before graduating she started working part time in the Groton finance office. In May of 2008 she joined the office full time as assistant finance officer.

She's since moved into the deputy role, where she's mainly responsible for payroll for thirteen full-time employees. But, she admits, she enjoys helping with other tasks. Her attention to detail and proficiency with numbers proves beneficial for many aspects of the finance office.

Although managing a city can be hectic at times, Abeln relishes her work.

"I don't think there's ever a dull moment. We are busy all year long," she said.

She also appreciates the flexibility and convenience it offers to pursue community projects.

"I don't think many jobs would let you be this community-oriented," she said. "We can have meetings here at city hall or use the space to collect and sort items for city rummage and other projects. The mayor and council are very supportive. They understand these events are valuable to the community."

## Distinguished service

Heartland provides wholesale power to municipal electric utilities throughout the region, including Groton. Each year one employee from a customer community is chosen for the Distinguished Service Award, to recognize the exceptional people working behind the power.

Abeln was nominated separately by co-workers Hope Block and Kellie Locke. Both commended her expertise and willingness to help.

"I can ask April any question about anything, and she knows it," Locke said.

Block agrees, saying that if Abeln doesn't know an answer, she will find it.

"She's resourceful and will figure it out," she said. "April's also reliable, dependable and always eager to help. She's the most wonderful person I've ever worked with."

Abeln received her award in conjunction with Public Power Week. The annual event celebrates the distinct advantages public power utilities offer, including local control, community-focus, public input and dedicated employees.

"People like April make public power exceptional," said Heartland Chief Communications Officer Ann Hyland. "She tirelessly and selflessly serves her community in many ways, both on and off the clock."

April is a shining example of the people behind public power: individuals committed to moving communities forward."



**April Abeln with her Distinguished Service Award.** (Courtesy Photo)

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## SUPPORT THE IMPORTANT WORK OF YOUR COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

By Beau Ravellette

As president of the South Dakota Newspaper Association, I want to emphasize the importance of a free press and National Newspaper Week. This week marks the 81st annual observance of Newspaper Week.

For centuries, newspapers have been an important industry all over the world. Newspapers always have been and continue to be a vital source of information for our communities and a permanent repository of our community's history.

I am the third generation of my family in the newspaper business. I grew up watching my grandpa, Les, and father, Don, work with the newspapers for many years before I came to work for our operation in 2007.

During my time in the newspaper industry, I have seen many changes in the process of producing a newspaper, from shooting negatives in the darkroom, hand-developing plates, to now going straight from computer to press-ready plates. In my early years, we were taking pictures with a 35-mm camera and film, hoping the lighting was right and we got a quality picture. Now, we have the fancy digital cameras that make it easier to get those great pictures of an event. As we look back over the many years, one thing is unchanged and has stood the test of time: fair, honest and consistent coverage of our communities. Our commitment to covering local community events and school activities, as well as being an independent watchdog to keep our local elected officials accountable, will never change.

With ever-changing technology in the world today, we too have had to evolve and adapt, but rest assured we are still the same trusted source of news you have come to expect. Yes, we still put ink on paper, but we also utilize digital platforms to give you the best coverage we can provide.

Using online platforms does have its downfalls. As I am writing this, Facebook and other online media platforms are currently down. I'm not sure why -- whether it is a simple server issue or part of the whistleblower bomb shell report that just came out. Regardless of the reason, remember, with the tried and true newspaper, we are always available with the trusted information you need. It can't be anonymous, edited, hidden or deleted. We take pride in the fact that what we publish, is forever.

So, please continue to support newspapers as we strive to provide you with local news and protect your right to know for many years to come.



**Beau Ravellette is the 2020-21 president of SDNA, which represents 115 weekly and daily newspapers across South Dakota. He is the general manager at Ravellette Publications at Philip and its six weekly newspapers serving the communities of Philip, Bison, Faith, Kadoka, Murdo and Wall.**

## **This Judge Gets It: SD Farmers Union President Appreciates Judge Ruling on Lawsuit Against Big Four Packers**

**After hearing the news that a federal judge in Minnesota ordered a class-action lawsuit against JBS, Tyson, National Beef, and Cargill to proceed, South Dakota Farmers Union President, Doug Sombke said after decades, finally a judge, "gets it."**

**"This judge gets it," explained Sombke, a fourth-generation Conde farmer. "My entire farming career, we have been fighting for fair prices. Every time we would try to prove price fixing, the previous judges always found a reason to protect the meat processing industry. So, they continued to get richer while family farmers and ranchers continue to lose profits."**

**Getting fair prices for farmers has been a front-and-center focus of South Dakota Farmers Union member-driven policy for decades. South Dakota's members were among the members who voted it into the National Farmers Union policy.**

**National Farmers Union is among the plaintiffs alleging that America's four largest beef packers conspired to suppress the price of cattle and increase the price of beef.**

**"We are pleased the effort to restore pricing transparency and competitiveness to the cattle markets is moving forward in the courtroom. This case is nearly two-and-a-half years old, and we look forward to the next step in the litigation," said Rob Larew, President, National Farmers Union in a September 29 news**

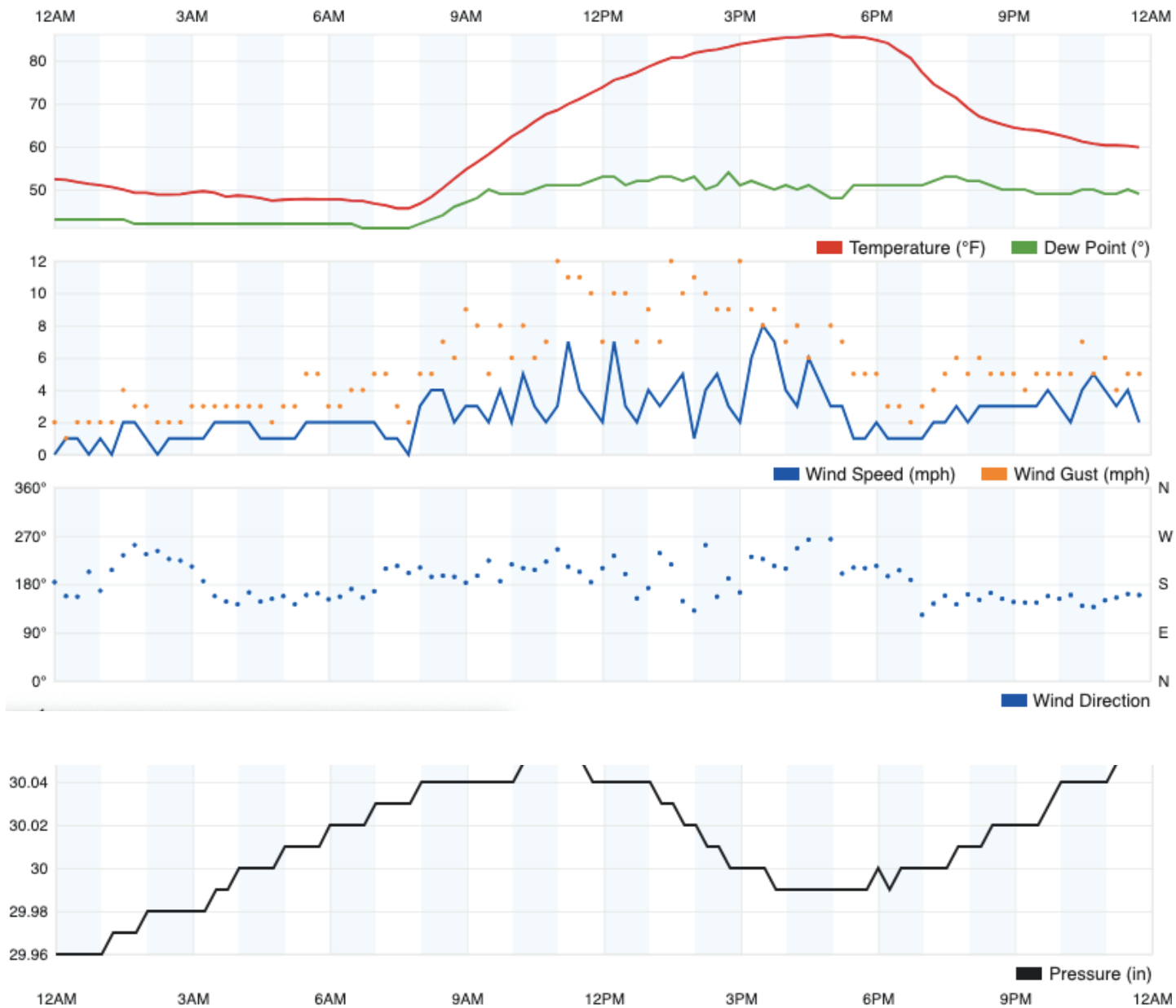


**Doug Sombke, South Dakota Farmers Union President.** (Courtesy of SDFU)

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



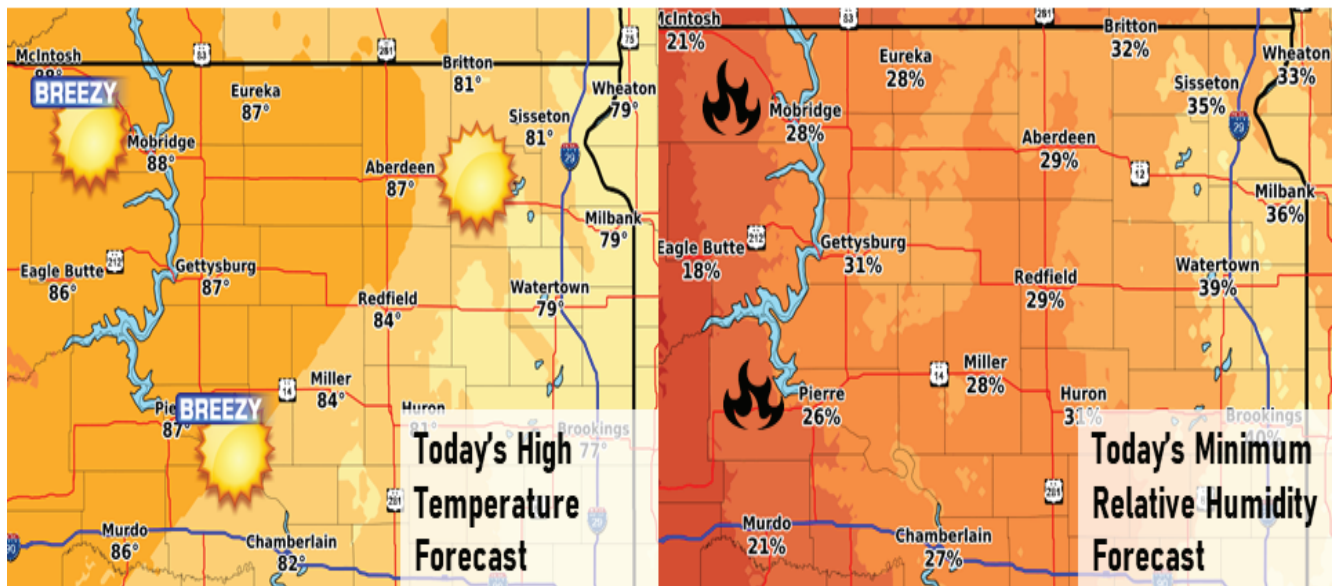
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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
				
Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny and Breezy
High: 87 °F	Low: 52 °F	High: 80 °F	Low: 56 °F	High: 79 °F

## Much Above Normal Temperatures Continue

High to Very High grassland fire danger for this afternoon along and west of the Missouri River, due to breezy south winds and low humidity.



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

Updated: 10/5/2021 5:19 AM Central

Sunny skies remain today with warm temperatures with highs mostly in the 80s. High to very high fire danger is expected along and west of the river this afternoon with breezy south winds and low relative humidity.

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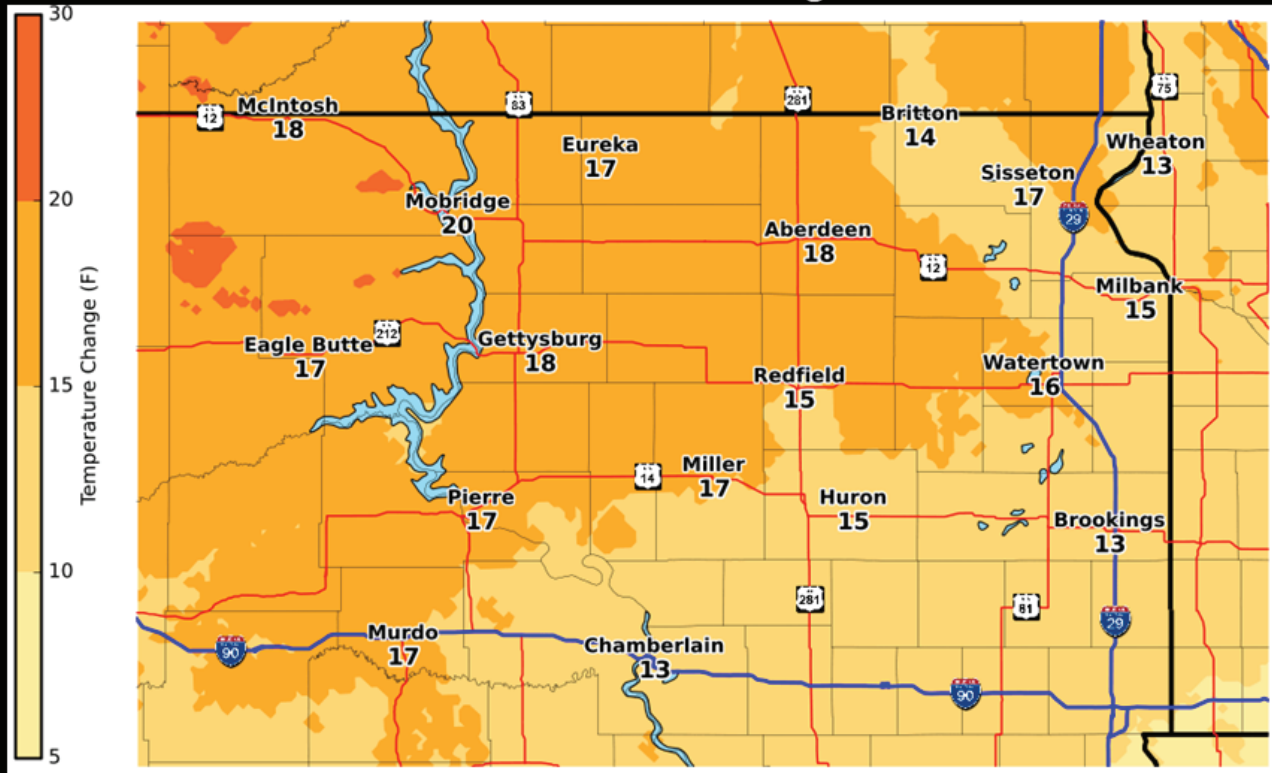
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## How Much Above Normal Today?

National Weather Service

Aberdeen, SD

Updated: 10/4/2021 11:12 AM CT



High temperatures today will reach the 70s and 80s across the region. These readings are 10 to 20 degrees above average.

Today will feature warm temperatures with highs reaching the 70s and 80s. These readings are 10 to 20 degrees above average for this time of year. The warm conditions will continue for the rest of the workweek.

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## Today in Weather History

October 5, 1982: Strong thunderstorms developed across central South Dakota and raced into portions of southwest Minnesota. The storms were prolific lightning producers in South Dakota, setting several structures on fire. An electrical substation was damaged near Salem, an elementary school was set ablaze in Aberdeen, and several homes in Sioux Falls were struck. One house in Sioux Falls had a hole knocked in a wall by a lightning strike.

Numerous fires were also started in southern Minnesota by the same line of storms. Strong thunderstorm winds leveled several buildings, damaged a house, and moved a hog shed off its foundation on three separate farms near Worthington. The winds also turned over railroad cars near Pipestone. Worthington narrowly escaped damage as a small tornado touched down two miles southwest of town and moved southeast. Fortunately, the tornado's damage was confined to trees and crops.

October 5, 2013: A historic blizzard pounded western South Dakota with record-setting snowfall and high winds for almost 48 hours from October 3 through the afternoon of October 5. One to two feet of snow was reported over the plains of western South Dakota, with three to five feet of snow falling over the northern and central Black Hills. Wind gusts to 70 mph across the plains produced significant blowing and drifting snow, with visibilities near zero for much of the day on October 4. The heavy wet snow and strong winds downed trees and power lines, causing prolonged outages and impassable highways. The roofs of several businesses, a middle school, and a community center collapsed from the heavy snow. Thousands of livestock were killed from hypothermia, suffocation, or drowning. The South Dakota Animal Industry Board received over 21,000 cattle; over 1300 sheep; 400 horses; and 40 bison deaths from the storm. Tree and debris removal costs were several million dollars. An unyielding low-pressure area moving across the region brought an early fall blizzard to most of the counties west of Missouri River on October 4th and 5th. The snowfall and blizzard conditions occurred mainly along with the western parts of the counties. The snowfall amounts varied broadly from 1 to 2 inches to as much as 22 inches in far western Corson County. Very strong northwest winds of 30 to 50 mph with gusts to 60 mph brought blizzard conditions and significant travel problems. Interstate-90 was closed from Murdo to the Wyoming border from 7 pm on October 4th to October 8th. No travel was advised on all roads west of the Missouri River. Many cattle were also lost in western Corson County due to the storm. The heavy snow, along with strong winds, resulted in some power outages and some downed tree branches. The snowfall began in the late morning hours of the 4th and ended in the early afternoon hours of the 5th. Some snowfall amounts that occurred were 1 inch at Murdo; 2 inches at Timber Lake and 5 miles west of Hayes; 4 inches at McIntosh; 16 inches southeast of Morrystown; and 22 inches southwest of Keldron.

1786: The famous "Pumpkin Flood" occurred on the Delaware and Susquehanna Rivers. Harrisburg, PA, reported a river stage of twenty-two feet.

1864: A tropical cyclone hit India near Calcutta, devastating the city and killing about 60,000 people.

1972: Tropical Storm Joanne, earlier a hurricane, moved across the Baja California peninsula and came ashore in western Mexico south of Ajo. The storm brought heavy rain and flooding to much of Arizona. This storm is the first documented tropical storm to reach Arizona, with its cyclonic circulation intact. Over 5 inches of rain was reported on the Mogollon rim southeast of Flagstaff. Additional rainfall amounts included 4.44 at Flagstaff, 3.80 at Prescott, 2.21 at Yuma, 1.95 at Phoenix, 1.63 at Nogales, and 1.63 at Tucson.

2010: Large hail pounded Phoenix, Arizona, causing nearly \$3 billion in damage.



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

**High Temp: 86 °F at 4:54 PM**

**Low Temp: 45 °F at 7:36 AM**

**Wind: 12 mph at 10:56 AM**

**Precip: 0.00**

**Record High: 96° in 1963**

**Record Low: 19° in 1935**

**Average High: 66°F**

**Average Low: 39°F**

**Average Precip in Oct.: 0.39**

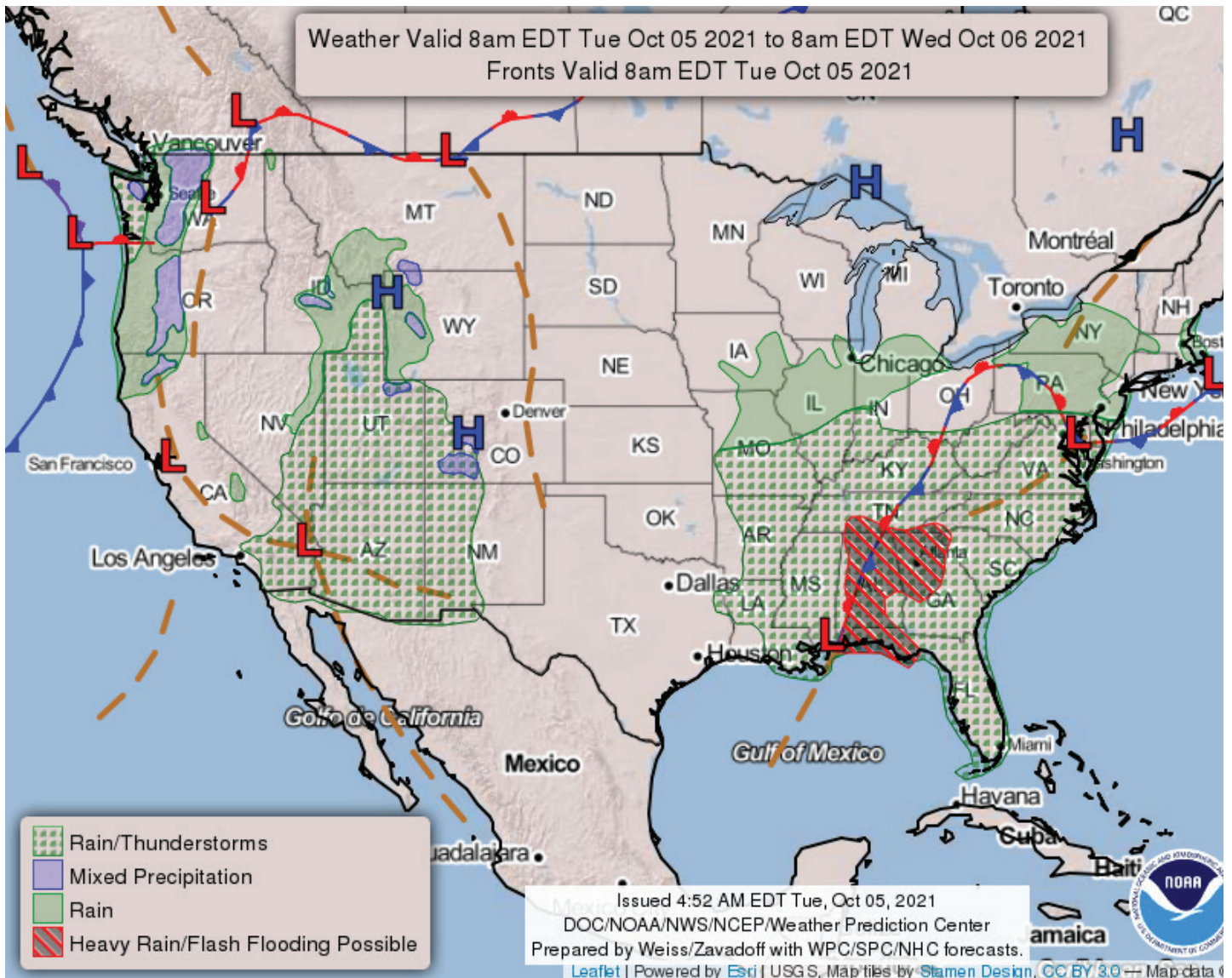
**Precip to date in Oct.: 0.28**

**Average Precip to date: 18.72**

**Precip Year to Date: 15.70**

**Sunset Tonight: 7:06:26 PM**

**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:36:09 AM**



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## OUR HOMES – GOD’S SANCTUARY

“On the first day of each month I carefully walk through every room in my home to make certain that there is nothing that would embarrass Jesus if He were to visit our family,” said my friend. “If there is anything anywhere that is not appropriate for His eyes, it certainly is wrong for me to gaze upon it. If there are magazines or books or newspapers that have vile or unclean photos or stories, I throw them away immediately. And because of the influence of television - even the news or children’s stories or cartoons, we got rid of our television. Many of my friends think I am wise because I do not allow that stuff to corrupt the minds of my children. But when I talk to “them” about Jesus, many of them think I’m weird even though I do this because of Him.”

His statements brought back childhood memories of my home in Lorain, Ohio. His attitude was the same as my mother’s. I can hear an echo of her voice today: “We’re not going to allow Satan to live in this house,” she said often. In every room there was an open Bible - readily visible for anyone to see. The walls had pictures of Bible stories and scenes of the way people lived in the days of Jesus. Wherever guests looked, they were reminded of something that had to do with the story of salvation. Of course, we also had family photos. But they were pictures of activities that were related to church events or pictures of us “kids” standing next to missionaries or evangelists.

“Home is where the heart is,” someone once said. And if the “heart” belongs to Jesus, He will be very visible in every room in our home.

Prayer: Father, may our homes become Your dwelling place where all who visit see You as the Lord of our lives. May You be well represented. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I will conduct the affairs of my house with a blameless heart. Psalm 101:2b

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## 2021 Community Events

- Cancelled** Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)  
03/27/2021 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)  
04/10/2021 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm  
04/24/2021 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)  
04/25/2021 Princess Prom (Sunday after GHS Prom)  
05/01/2021 Lions Club Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)  
05/31/2021 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)  
6/7-9/2021 St. John's Lutheran Church VBS  
06/17/2021 Groton Transit Fundraiser, 4-7 p.m.  
06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
06/19/2021 U8 Baseball Tournament  
06/19/2021 **Postponed to Aug. 28th:** Lions Crazy Golf Fest at Olive Grove Golf Course, Noon  
06/26/2021 U10 Baseball Tournament  
06/27/2021 U12 Baseball Tournament  
07/04/2021 Firecracker Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
07/11/2021 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 10am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)  
07/22/2021 Pro-Am Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course  
07/30/2021-08/03/2021 State "B" American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton  
08/06/2021 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course  
08/13/2021 Groton Basketball Golf Tournament  
**Cancelled** Lions Club Crazy Golf Fest 9am Olive Grove Golf Course  
08/29/2021 Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day at GHS Parking Lot (4-5 p.m.)  
09/11/2021 Lions Club Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)  
09/12/2021 Sunflower Classic Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
09/18-19 Groton Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport  
10/08/2021 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)  
10/09/2021 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm (Saturday before Columbus Day)  
10/29/2021 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm  
10/29/2021 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)  
11/13/2021 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)  
11/25/2021 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)  
12/04/2021 Olive Grove Tour of Homes  
12/11/2021 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-Noon

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## News from the Associated Press

### **Guard members deploying to help at US southern border**

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Dozens of National Guard members from South Dakota will answer a call from the Pentagon to help at the country's southern border.

One-hundred-twenty-five members of the 1742nd Transportation Company are being deployed for 9 to 12 months.

Gov. Kristi Noem, Sens. John Thune and Mike Rounds and Rep. Dusty Johnson were on hand for an activation ceremony Sunday at the University of Sioux Falls Stewart Center, KELO-TV reported.

"So, they're going to go down there, try and reinforce the border, bring some order and stability and obviously do it in a humanitarian and compassionate way," Thune said.

"We want them to know that we have their back," Johnson said. "We understand that they're going to be sacrificing a lot, they're families are going to be sacrificing a lot over the next year. But we're going to do the kind of things that we can do in Washington to make sure that they have the proper training, the proper equipment, but also in our communities to make sure their families are taken care of during the difficult time."

In July, Noem sent 50 South Dakota soldiers to the border following Texas Gov. Greg Abbott's request for help.

Noem is expected to join Abbott and 10 other Republican governors for a news conference in Mission, Texas this week to discuss what Abbott says is a crisis at the border.

### **Large grass fire forces evacuations in north Rapid City**

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A large grass fire forced people to evacuate in north Rapid City on Monday.

The Rapid City Fire Department said the fire began at about 1:30 p.m. Monday and had grown to about 100 acres by 4 p.m. and was moving northeast. The cause of the fire was being investigated, but the flames were being fueled by abnormally high temperatures, gusty winds and drought-like dryness, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Mandatory evacuations were being enforced in the Marvel Mountain neighborhood. It was not immediately clear how many residents were affected.

"We do have multiple crews out here working on the fire and it is still running really hot towards the Deadwood Avenue area," said Rapid City Fire Department spokeswoman Tessa Jaeger.

Great Plains Fire Information said federal and state firefighters have responded to help with the blaze, which is being called the Auburn Fire. A single-engine air tanker and heavy helicopters are providing an air attack for the fire.

The Rapid City Police Department is asking the public to avoid the area north of Interstate 90 between Haines Avenue and Deadwood Avenue.

### **SD Lottery**

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$45 million

Powerball

12-22-54-66-69, Powerball: 15, Power Play: 2

(twelve, twenty-two, fifty-four, sixty-six, sixty-nine; Powerball: fifteen; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$685 million

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## Monday's Scores

The Associated Press undefined

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Bon Homme def. Hanson, 17-25, 25-17, 14-25, 25-22, 15-13

Chester def. Colman-Egan, 25-21, 25-13, 15-25, 25-12

Corsica/Stickney def. Andes Central/Dakota Christian, 25-6, 25-21, 25-8

Dakota Valley def. Dell Rapids, 25-13, 25-18, 25-21

Hot Springs def. Edgemont, 25-13, 27-25, 24-26, 16-25, 15-8

Howard def. Lake Preston, 25-18, 25-15, 25-18

McCook Central/Montrose def. Baltic, 21-25, 25-18, 25-16, 25-23

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton def. Lennox, 25-20, 25-10, 25-23

Redfield def. Mobridge-Pollock, 15-25, 25-18, 25-23, 25-22

Wagner def. Tripp-Delmont/Armour, 25-19, 25-18, 25-18

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

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

## 'Pandora Papers' bring renewed calls for tax haven scrutiny

By PAUL WISEMAN and MARCY GORDON AP Business Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — Calls grew Monday for an end to the financial secrecy that has allowed many of the world's richest and most powerful people to hide their wealth from tax collectors.

The outcry came after a report revealed the way that world leaders, billionaires and others have used shell companies and offshore accounts to keep trillions of dollars out of government treasuries over the past quarter-century, limiting the resources for helping the poor or combating climate change.

The report by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists brought promises of tax reform and demands for resignations and investigations, as well as explanations and denials from those targeted.

The investigation, dubbed the Pandora Papers, was published Sunday and involved 600 journalists from 150 media outlets in 117 countries.

Hundreds of politicians, celebrities, religious leaders and drug dealers have used shell companies or other tactics to hide their wealth and investments in mansions, exclusive beachfront property, yachts and other assets, according to a review of nearly 12 million files obtained from 14 firms located around the world.

"The Pandora Papers is all about individuals using secrecy jurisdictions, which we would call tax havens, when the goal is to evade taxes," said Steve Wamhoff, director of federal tax policy at the left-leaning Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy in Washington.

The tax dodges can be legal.

Gabriel Zucman, a University of California, Berkeley, economist who studies income inequality and taxes, said in a statement one solution is "obvious": Ban "shell companies — corporations with no economic substance, whose sole purpose is to avoid taxes or other laws."

"The legality is the true scandal," activist and science-fiction author Cory Doctorow wrote on Twitter. "Each of these arrangements represents a risible fiction: a shell company is a business, a business is a person, that person resides in a file-drawer in the desk of a bank official on some distant treasure island."

The more than 330 current and former politicians identified as beneficiaries of the secret accounts include Jordan's King Abdullah II, former U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair, Czech Republic Prime Minister Andrej Babis, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, Ecuador's President Guillermo Lasso, and associates of both Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Some of those targeted strongly denied the claims.

Oxfam International, a British consortium of charities, applauded the Pandora Papers for exposing brazen examples of greed that deprived countries of tax revenue that could be used to finance programs and

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projects for the greater good.

"This is where our missing hospitals are," Oxfam said in a statement. "This is where the pay-packets sit of all the extra teachers and firefighters and public servants we need."

The European Commission, the 27-nation European Union's executive arm, said in response to the revelations that it is preparing new legislative proposals to enhance tax transparency and reinforce the fight against tax evasion.

The Pandora Papers are a follow-up to a similar project released in 2016 called the "Panama Papers" compiled by the same journalistic group.

The latest bombshell is even more expansive, relying on data leaked from 14 different service providers doing business in 38 different jurisdictions. The records date back to the 1970s, but most are from 1996 to 2020.

The investigation dug into accounts registered in familiar offshore havens, including the British Virgin Islands, Seychelles, Hong Kong and Belize. But some were also in trusts set up in the U.S., including 81 in South Dakota and 37 in Florida.

The document trove reveals how powerful people are able to deploy anonymous shell companies, trusts and other artifices to conceal the true owners of corrupt or illicit assets. Legally sanctioned trusts, for example, can be subject to abuse by tax evaders and fraudsters who crave the privacy and autonomy they offer compared with traditional business entities.

Shell companies, a favored tax evasion vehicle, are often layered in complex networks that conceal the identity of the beneficial owners of assets — those who ultimately control an offshore company or other asset, or benefit from it financially, while other people's names are listed on registration documents. The report said, for example, that an offshore company was used to buy a \$4 million Monaco apartment for a woman who reportedly carried on a secret relationship with Putin.

While a beneficial owner may be required to pay taxes in the home country, it's often difficult for authorities to discover that an offshore account exists, especially if offshore governments don't cooperate.

A Treasury Department agency working on new regulations for a U.S. beneficial ownership directory has been debating whether partnerships, trusts and other business entities should be included. Transparency advocates say they must or else criminals will devise new types of paper companies for slipping through the cracks.

International bodies like the G7 group of wealthiest nations and the Financial Action Task Force have begun initiatives in recent years to improve ownership transparency, but the efforts have moved at a modest pace.

Pointing to the secrecy behind many of the tax dodges, some critics are calling for a global wealth registry that would make sham investments in shell companies public, embarrassing politicians or celebrities worried about their reputations.

In the U.S., the House passed legislation this summer that would require multinational corporations to publicly disclose their tax payments and other key financial information on a country-by-country basis. Anti-money laundering and corporate transparency measures were tucked into legislation funding the Defense Department; it has yet to be implemented by the Treasury Department.

The Biden administration is also pushing for U.S. banks to be required to report customers' account information to the IRS as part of the \$3.5 trillion economic and social spending package before Congress. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and other officials say it's an important way to prevent tax dodging by wealthy individuals and companies, but it has raised fierce opposition from banking industry groups and Republican lawmakers, who maintain it would violate privacy and create unfair liability for banks.

Tax havens have already come under considerable scrutiny this year.

In July, negotiators from 130 countries agreed to a global minimum tax of at least 15% to prevent big multinational corporations from minimizing taxes by shifting profits from high- to low-tax jurisdictions such as Bermuda and the Cayman Islands. Details of the plan by the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, have yet to be worked out; it's supposed to take effect in 2023.

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And while the plan would cover huge multinational corporations, it would not include the shell companies and other entities behind the schemes described in the Pandora Papers.

Associated Press writers Stan Choe in New York and John Rice in Mexico City contributed to this report.

This story was first published on October 4, 2021. It was updated on October 5, 2021 to remove a photo with a caption that erroneously identified Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan as one of 330 current and former politicians who reportedly benefitted from secret accounts. The report identified Khan's associates as beneficiaries, but not Khan himself.

## Physics Nobel rewards work on complex systems, like climate

By DAVID KEYTON and FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

STOCKHOLM (AP) — Three scientists won the Nobel Prize for physics on Tuesday for work that found order in seeming disorder, helping to explain and predict complex forces of nature, including expanding our understanding of climate change.

Syukuro Manabe, originally from Japan, and Klaus Hasselmann of Germany were cited for their work in "the physical modeling of Earth's climate, quantifying variability and reliably predicting global warming."

The second half of the prize was awarded to Giorgio Parisi of Italy for "the discovery of the interplay of disorder and fluctuations in physical systems from atomic to planetary scales."

All three work on what are known as "complex systems," of which climate is just one example.

The judges said Manabe, 90, and Hasselmann, 89, "laid the foundation of our knowledge of the Earth's climate and how human actions influence it.

Starting in the 1960s, Manabe demonstrated how increases in the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere would raise global surface temperatures, laying the foundations for current climate models.

About a decade later, Hasselmann created a model that helped explain why climate models can be reliable despite the seemingly chaotic nature of the weather. He also developed ways to look for specific signs of human influence on the climate.

Parisi "built a deep physical and mathematical model" that made it possible to understand complex systems in fields as different as mathematics, biology, neuroscience and machine learning.

His work originally focused on so-called spin glass, a type of metal alloy in which the atoms are arranged in a way that changes the material's magnetic properties in apparently random ways that baffled scientists. Parisi, 73, was able to discover hidden patterns that explained this behavior, theories that could be applied to other fields of research, too.

In their work, the physicists used complex mathematics to explain and predict what seemed like chaotic forces of nature in computer simulations, called modeling. That modeling has given scientists such a solid understanding of those forces that they can accurately predict weather a week out and warn about the climate decades in advance.

Some non-scientists have attacked and ridiculed modeling, but it has been key to the way the world tackles one of its biggest problems: climate change.

"Physics-based climate models made it possible to predict the amount and pace of global warming, including some of the consequences like rising seas, increased extreme rainfall events and stronger hurricanes, decades before they could be observed. Klaus Hasselmann and Suki Manabe were pioneers in this area and personal role models for me," said German climate scientist and modeler Stefan Rahmstorf.

"We now witness how their early predictions are coming true one after the other," Rahmstorf said.

When climate scientists and former U.S. Vice President Al Gore won the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize, some non-scientists who deny global warming dismissed it as a political prize. Perhaps anticipating controversy, officials who spoke at the announcement emphasized that Tuesday's was a science prize.

"It's a physics prize. What we are saying is that the modeling of climate is solidly based on physical theory and well known physics," said Swedish physicist Thors Hans Hansson at the announcement.

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While Parisi's work was not focused on climate, he spoke to the pressing problems facing the Earth after the announcement.

"It's very urgent that we take very strong decisions and move at a very strong pace" in tackling global warming, he said. "It's clear for future generations that we have to act now."

Asked whether he expected to get the prize, Parisi said: "I knew there was a non-negligible possibility." COVID-19 restrictions in Italy meant "we cannot have a very big celebration," he said. "I think we will do something but we are not really decided."

It is common for several scientists who work in related fields to share the prize.

The prestigious award comes with a gold medal and 10 million Swedish kronor (over \$1.14 million). The prize money comes from a bequest left by the prize's creator, Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel, who died in 1895.

On Monday, the Nobel Committee awarded the prize in physiology or medicine to Americans David Julius and Ardem Patapoutian for their discoveries into how the human body perceives temperature and touch.

Over the coming days prizes will also be awarded for outstanding work in the fields of chemistry, literature, peace and economics.

Jordans reported from Berlin. AP science writer Seth Borenstein in Kensington, Maryland, contributed to this report.

Read more stories about Nobel Prizes past and present by The Associated Press at <https://www.apnews.com/NobelPrizes>

## Virus deaths in Russia hit record for third time this month

By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Coronavirus deaths in Russia hit a record for the third time this month on Tuesday, and new infections once again exceeded 25,000 a day — a surge that comes as vaccination rates in the country remain stagnantly low and the government shuns imposing tough restrictions to stem the spread.

Russia's state coronavirus task force reported 25,110 new confirmed cases on Tuesday and 895 new deaths — the country's highest daily death toll in the pandemic. This month, records in fatalities came every other day: the previous record, of 890 deaths, was registered on Sunday, and the one before that, of 887 deaths, occurred on Friday.

The Kremlin has said that the situation elicits concern, but still it is not considering a nationwide lockdown or any other nationwide measures.

A number of Russian regions have limited attendance of mass events and restricted access to some public places, such as theaters, cinemas, restaurants and bars, only to those who have been vaccinated, recently recovered from COVID-19 or tested negative over the past 72 hours. But critics argue that these measures aren't enough to slow down the surge.

In some areas of the country, including Moscow and St. Petersburg, life remains largely normal, with businesses operating as usual and mask mandates loosely enforced.

In the meantime, Russia's vast, yet severely underfunded health care system has started to show signs of being overwhelmed by the outbreak.

Russian media have reported long lines of ambulances once again forming in front of hospitals in St. Petersburg, the country's second-largest city, and a desperate ambulance crew in the city of Vladimir 180 kilometers (about 110 miles) east of Moscow driving a COVID-19 patient to a local government building after failing to find a hospital bed for her.

Officials have blamed low vaccine uptake. Commenting on the record deaths reported on Tuesday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that the "main cause" of the surge in fatalities was "the insufficient level of vaccination."

"The virus is becoming angrier, and the level of vaccination is insufficient. And as a rule, those who



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haven't been vaccinated get seriously ill and, unfortunately, die," Peskov told reporters Tuesday.

As of last week, 33.5% of Russia's 146-million population have received at least one shot of a coronavirus vaccine, and just 27.4% have been fully vaccinated.

According to Gogov.ru, a independent website that tracks vaccinations in Russia, immunization rates are down to the level of April, after spiking between June and August, when dozens of Russian regions made shots mandatory for certain groups of people. The website estimates that about 129,000 people a day get their first shots, and a total of some 244,000 first and second shots a day is being administered in Russia at the moment.

Peskov has attributed the slow pace of the immunization drive to "an insufficiently active campaign explaining that there are no alternatives" to vaccination.

Experts have pointed to several other factors, such as mistrust prompted by the approval and rollout of the dominating domestic vaccine, Sputnik V, even though at the time it hadn't completed large-scale trials necessary to establish its safety and effectiveness, and lack of motivation to get the shots at a time when few restrictions are in place mixed signals from the authorities about the outbreak.

Despite the soaring infections, officials in Moscow on Monday announced the closure of the largest vaccination point in the Russian capital in Gostiny Dvor, a huge exhibition space, in order to be able to hold "cultural events" there.

At the same time, Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin promised to start offering free rapid coronavirus tests in malls and government services centers. Daily new infections in the Russian capital nearly quadrupled over the past month, rising from about 1,100 in early September to about 4,000 this week.

In another confusing message, some Russian news outlets alerted Monday that the head of country's public health agency Rospotrebnadzor Anna Popova banned all mass events in light of the surge, only to correct themselves later that Popova in fact didn't announce any new restrictions, but was rather talking about the ones already in place that prohibit public events for more than 3,000 people.

In all, Russia's coronavirus task force has reported over 7.6 million confirmed cases and nearly 212,000 deaths. However, reports by Russia's state statistical service Rosstat that tally coronavirus-linked deaths retroactively reveal much higher mortality numbers.

Follow AP's pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>

## **Biden eager to get out of DC, push benefits of spending plan**

By JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is shifting strategy to sell his ambitious social spending plans by traveling outside Washington and courting Democrats who have complained they felt left out of the process.

With his agenda in jeopardy on Capitol Hill, Biden on Tuesday will visit the Michigan district of a moderate Democratic lawmaker who has urged him to promote his proposals more aggressively to the public. Back in Washington, negotiations continue on a pair of bills to boost spending on safety net, health and environmental programs and infrastructure projects.

While there is cautious optimism about recent progress, no deal had been struck to bridge stark divides between moderates and progressives in the Democratic Party on the size and scope of the package. In recent weeks, as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi worked unsuccessfully to secure passage of the bills, Biden stayed in Washington to cajole lawmakers and work phones.

Now, he's trying to put the public focus on popular components of the bills rather than the inside-the-Beltway debate over their price tag.

The president will appear with Democratic Rep. Elissa Slotkin when he visits a union training center in Howell, Michigan, a reflection of the importance of securing moderates' votes. Next to Biden, the Democrats with the most on the line over the shape and success of his spending plans are House members from swing districts whose reelections are essential if his party is to retain control of Congress.

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Democratic legislators have warned that Biden's bold ideas are getting lost in the party's infighting and procedural skirmishes over the legislation.

"We must communicate to the country the transformative nature of the initiatives in the legislation," Pelosi said in a letter to lawmakers ahead of Biden's trip.

The visit to Slotkin's district, narrowly carried by Republican Donald Trump in 2020, is part of the sales effort.

Slotkin supports a bipartisan \$1 trillion infrastructure bill that has passed the Senate but prefers passing it in the House before negotiating the broader \$3.5 trillion package of social programs. She has indicated that she may vote to approve the broader bill sooner if it is fiscally responsible and can make a difference for families, her aides said, but she is not a guaranteed yes — which she planned to tell Biden on Tuesday.

"To be honest, it was hard for me to understand why leadership decided in the first place to tie the two bills together," Slotkin recently told The Detroit News. "That's not how we normally operate. It's not my preference."

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Monday that after Biden spent considerable time in recent days deep in the messy negotiations over the bills, "now it's also important to remind people, as the sausage-making has been kind of the dominant storyline for the last few weeks, what this is all about. Why he's fighting so hard for it."

Biden last week postponed a trip to Chicago, where he had planned to promote coronavirus vaccine mandates and work in a pitch for his agenda, in order to stay in Washington and lobby lawmakers. He's rescheduled that trip for Thursday, and more travel is expected in coming days.

The uptick in travel is meant to build public support for a wide range of initiatives packaged under the imprecise slogan of "Build Back Better." A series of crises, from Afghanistan to COVID-19, along with the convoluted legislative process have hampered the White House's ability to promote the massive package or even say definitively what will be in the final version.

Polling suggests that elements in the bill such as expanded child care opportunities and infrastructure projects are popular with large parts of the public. But even some of the White House's closest allies have worried that the West Wing has not done enough to sell it.

Biden, aides said, has been eager to shift the conversation away from the price tag to the benefits of the legislation. In Michigan, he planned to extol its benefits for the middle class and union workers.

Washington was gripped with the drama last week as lawmakers grappled with the massive Democrats-only social spending bill that has been linked with the infrastructure bill. Progressives have balked at paring down the size of \$3.5 trillion social package and have refused to vote for the infrastructure bill if the other bill shrinks. Moderate Democrats, meanwhile, are pushing for the bipartisan infrastructure bill to get a House vote first and some are wary about the size of the far larger social spending bill.

That leaves Biden and his Democratic allies in Congress at a crossroads, trying to move past the tangle of legislating and remind voters what they are trying to accomplish. The president held a virtual meeting with 12 progressive House members on Monday and plans a similar session with moderates later in the week.

With considerable attention focused on winning over two key Democratic senators, Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, rank-and-file lawmakers could benefit from the high-profile backup that comes from Biden making the case for his vision to the public.

House members are fanning out to their home districts this week as public views of Biden's agenda are being shaped. Senators remain in Washington but are working on another tangle, the legislation needed to raise the nation's debt limit by midmonth to avert a devastating credit default.

Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and White House officials huddled late Monday in a room off the Senate floor to discuss the next steps for passing Biden's agenda.

Those behind-the-scenes talks are intense as Biden lowers the size and scope of the \$3.5 trillion social spending package to win over Manchin, Sinema and a small band of conservative Democrats in the House without alienating progressives, who are fighting to keep their priorities in the bill.

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Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaro in Washington and David Eggert in Lansing, Michigan, contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show Rep. Slotkin's first name is Elissa, not Elise.

## Australia won't welcome foreign tourists until at least 2022

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Foreign tourists won't be welcomed back to Australia until at least next year, the prime minister said Tuesday as he outlined plans for lifting some of the toughest and longest COVID-19 travel restrictions imposed by any democracy.

The country will instead prioritize the return of skilled migrants and students after it hits Prime Minister Scott Morrison's benchmark for reopening its external borders: the full vaccination of 80% of the population aged 16 and older. It is expected to reach that point Tuesday.

The news comes just days after Morrison announced plans to allow vaccinated citizens and permanent residents to fly overseas from November for the first time since March 2020.

The severe travel restrictions, which have trapped most Australians at home and kept most foreigners out, have led to the lowest level of immigration since World War II. Australian universities, which rely heavily on fees paid by international students, have been particularly hard hit, and many fear students will go elsewhere if they are not allowed in soon.

While many countries imposed strict lockdowns that shut down large portions of the economies, Australia's travel restrictions have kept life fairly normal for much of the pandemic — though it is now experiencing shutdowns in the biggest cities, Sydney and Melbourne, as well as the capital Canberra.

The rules imposed a high emotional burden in a country where half the population was born overseas or has at least one immigrant parent. Families were separated, and some grandparents have been barred from meeting grandchildren in Australia who are now approaching 2 years old.

After lifting restrictions on Australians, Morrison said the next priority would be skilled migrants and international students — before tourists. He did not specify when those groups would be allowed in.

"We will get to international visitors as well, I believe next year," Morrison said.

The Australian Tourism Export Council, which represents a sector that made 45 billion Australian dollars (\$33 billion) a year from international tourists before the pandemic, wants international visitors to return by March.

Australian tourism operators — which have suffered not only from the ban on international tourism but also frequent internal pandemic border restrictions — are frustrated that there aren't more details of how leisure travel will resume.

"International tourist arrivals have to be part of the plan," said Daniel Gschwind, chief executive of the Queensland Tourism Industry Council, Queensland state's peak advocacy group. "Even if they're not the first priority, we'd like to see how this is going to be worked out. There are many businesses that are just hanging on."

Gschwind that his sector needed to plan for how the COVID-19 risk could be managed, perhaps through rapid testing and self-isolation.

There are a few exceptions to Australia's travel ban — and tourism has never been accepted as a reason to cross the border. Those who have been able to enter must spend two weeks in hotel quarantine. That would represent a major obstacle if it remains even after tourists are allowed.

Morrison said last week that his government would work toward "complete quarantine-free travel for certain countries, such as New Zealand, when it is safe to do so." He did not elaborate on the timing.

Australia and New Zealand briefly shared a quarantine-free travel bubble when both countries were essentially free of COVID-19 transmission.

But New Zealand reintroduced quarantine after Australian authorities lost control of an outbreak of the highly-contagious delta variant, which was brought to Sydney in June by a U.S. air crew.

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The delta variant has changed the game in many countries that previously were able to largely keep the virus at bay with very strict travel rules, including New Zealand. On Monday, that country's government acknowledged for the first time that it can no longer completely get rid of the coronavirus.

Australia is continuing to battle outbreaks, while also racing to inoculate its population. Its vaccination rollout was initially slow but has picked up.

Victoria state on Tuesday reported a national record 1,763 new local infections. Australia's second-most populous state also reported four COVID-19 deaths.

The previous national record of 1,599 infections in 24 hours was set by New South Wales when its outbreak peaked on Sept. 10. Hospitalizations peaked in Australia's most populous state in mid-September.

New South Wales leads the other states in vaccination rates and Sydney's airport is expected to be the first to reopen to vaccinated travelers.

## Ex-Facebook employee bringing sharp criticisms to Congress

By MARCY GORDON AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A former Facebook data scientist has stunned lawmakers and the public with revelations of the company's awareness of apparent harm to some teens from Instagram and her accusations of dishonesty in its fight against hate and misinformation. Now she is coming before Congress.

Frances Haugen has come forward with a wide-ranging condemnation of Facebook, buttressed with tens of thousands of pages of internal research documents she secretly copied before leaving her job in Facebook's civic integrity unit. Haugen also has filed complaints with federal authorities alleging that Facebook's own research shows that it amplifies hate, misinformation and political unrest, but the company hides what it knows.

After recent reports in The Wall Street Journal based on documents she leaked to the newspaper raised a public outcry, Haugen revealed her identity in a CBS "60 Minutes" interview aired Sunday night. She insisted that "Facebook, over and over again, has shown it chooses profit over safety."

The ex-employee challenging the social network giant with 2.8 billion users worldwide and nearly \$1 trillion in market value is a 37-year-old data expert from Iowa with a degree in computer engineering and a master's degree in business from Harvard. She worked for 15 years prior to being recruited by Facebook in 2019 at companies including Google and Pinterest.

Haugen is set to testify to the Senate Commerce subcommittee on consumer protection at a hearing Tuesday.

The panel is examining Facebook's use of information from its own researchers on Instagram that could indicate potential harm for some of its young users, especially girls, while it publicly downplayed the negative impacts. For some of the teens devoted to Facebook's popular photo-sharing platform, the peer pressure generated by the visually focused Instagram led to mental health and body-image problems, and in some cases, eating disorders and suicidal thoughts, the research leaked by Haugen showed.

One internal study cited 13.5% of teen girls saying Instagram makes thoughts of suicide worse and 17% of teen girls saying it makes eating disorders worse.

"And what's super tragic is Facebook's own research says, as these young women begin to consume this eating disorder content, they get more and more depressed," Haugen said in the televised interview. "And it actually makes them use the app more. And so, they end up in this feedback cycle where they hate their bodies more and more."

As the public relations debacle over the Instagram research grew last week, Facebook put on hold its work on a kids' version of Instagram, which the company says is meant mainly for tweens aged 10 to 12.

The senators are eager to hear from Haugen.

"I look forward to asking her follow-up questions about why Facebook hasn't taken action to fix problems on its platforms, even when its own internal research reflects massive problems," Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., a member of the subcommittee, told The Associated Press on Monday. "I want to discuss how

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Facebook's algorithms promote harmful and divisive content, and how much Facebook really profits off of our children."

At issue are algorithms that govern what shows up on users' news feeds, and how they favor hateful content. Haugen said a 2018 change to the content flow contributed to more divisiveness and ill will in a network ostensibly created to bring people closer together. Despite the enmity that the new algorithms were feeding, Facebook found that they helped keep people coming back — a pattern that helped the social media giant sell more of the digital ads that generate most of its revenue.

Haugen's criticisms range beyond the Instagram situation. She said in the interview that Facebook prematurely turned off safeguards designed to thwart misinformation and incitement to violence after Joe Biden defeated Donald Trump last year, alleging that contributed to the deadly Jan. 6 assault on the U.S. Capitol.

After the November election, Facebook dissolved the civic integrity union where Haugen had been working. That, she said, was the moment she realized "I don't trust that they're willing to actually invest what needs to be invested to keep Facebook from being dangerous."

Haugen says she told Facebook executives when they recruited her that she had asked to work in an area of the company that fights misinformation, because she had lost a friend to online conspiracy theories.

Antigone Davis, Facebook's head of global safety, faced a barrage of criticism from senators on the Commerce panel at a hearing last Thursday. They accused Facebook of concealing the negative findings about Instagram and demanded a commitment from the company to make changes.

Davis defended Instagram's efforts to protect young people using its platform. She disputed the way The Wall Street Journal story describes what the research shows.

Facebook maintains that Haugen's allegations are misleading and insists there is no evidence to support the premise that it is the primary cause of social polarization.

"Even with the most sophisticated technology, which I believe we deploy, even with the tens of thousands of people that we employ to try and maintain safety and integrity on our platform, we're never going to be absolutely on top of this 100% of the time," Nick Clegg, Facebook's vice president of policy and public affairs, said Sunday on CNN's "Reliable Sources."

That's because of the "instantaneous and spontaneous form of communication" on Facebook, Clegg said, adding, "I think we do more than any reasonable person can expect to."

By coming forward, Haugen says she hopes it will help spur the government to put regulations in place for Facebook's activities. Like fellow tech giants Google, Amazon and Apple, Facebook has for years enjoyed minimal regulation in Washington.

Separately Monday, a massive global outage plunged Facebook, Instagram and the company's WhatsApp messaging platform into chaos, only gradually dissipating by late Monday Eastern time. For some users, WhatsApp was working for a time, then not. For others, Instagram was working but not Facebook, and so on.

Facebook didn't say what might have caused the outage, which began around 11:40 a.m. EDT and was still not fixed more than six hours later.

Follow Marcy Gordon at <https://twitter.com/mgordonap>.

## 'Pandora papers' show London is a key hub for tax avoidance

By PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Transparency advocates are calling on Britain to tighten the country's defenses against money laundering and tax avoidance after a massive leak of financial data showed how London is a key destination of choice for some of the world's richest and most powerful people to conceal their cash.

The cache of almost 12 million files shows how wealthy people around the world reportedly set up offshore companies to buy property and avoid taxes.

Foreign individuals identified as beneficiaries of these types of offshore accounts in London include Jordanian King Abdullah II, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev and associates of Pakistani Prime Minister

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Imran Khan. Abdullah has denied any impropriety and Khan tweeted that his government would investigate anyone mentioned and take appropriate action if wrongdoing is found. Aliyev hasn't commented.

The leaked financial data, dubbed the "Pandora Papers," was published Sunday by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists and its media partners, including Britain's Guardian newspaper and the BBC.

Though the purchases are legal under British law, they highlight the complicated — and often anonymous — financial practices wealthy individuals use to avoid tax, far removed from the everyday experience of most of the British population.

London is a go-to for the rich and powerful because it's home to a sophisticated ecosystem of businesses that can help in the process, including creative wealth management firms, high-end lawyers and long-established accounting firms.

A 2019 analysis by transparency group Global Witness indicated that around 87,000 properties in England and Wales were owned by anonymous companies registered in tax havens.

It said that 40% of the anonymously owned properties identified were in London and that the total value of the properties was likely to be more than 100 billion pounds (\$135 billion). Popular areas were said to include the boroughs of Westminster, where the U.K. Parliament is located, Camden, and Kensington and Chelsea.

The London property market has for years struggled to shake off a reputation for playing a central role in how rich people around the world seek to hide and accentuate their wealth, with many prime properties in the heart of the city owned by non-nationals. Russian oligarchs have been high-profile purchasers of London properties in recent years, for example.

For decades, authorities in the U.K. have pushed a light touch approach to regulation in order to attract foreign capital and talent. Critics say that has been a magnet for tax avoidance, which can be legal, as well as more criminal activities, including money laundering.

Duncan Hames, policy director at the campaign group Transparency International U.K., said the disclosures should act as a "wake up call" for the government to deliver on long-overdue measures to strengthen Britain's defenses against what he termed "dirty money."

"These leaks show that there is one system for corrupt elites who can buy access to prime property and enjoy luxury lifestyles and another for honest hard-working people," he said. "Once again Britain's role as an enabler of global corruption and money laundering have been exposed with the same loopholes exploited to funnel suspect wealth into the country."

Transparency International U.K. is urging the government to close a loophole that allows companies in the U.K.'s offshore financial centers such as the British Virgin Islands and the Cayman Islands to hold property in the country without requiring these companies to reveal the names of their true owners.

It also wants the government to crack down on professionals that help those with illicit wealth move and hide their cash in the U.K. and to properly resource the National Crime Agency to go after those suspected of having made their money through crime and corruption.

Treasury chief Rishi Sunak said Britain's tax authorities will inspect the Pandora Papers. He defended the country's record on tackling tax avoidance.

"I don't think it is a source of shame because actually our track record on this issue is very strong," Sunak told BBC radio.

He pointed to measures taken over the past decade by the Conservative government to improve transparency — who owns what — and exchange data between tax authorities.

"As you've seen from the papers, it is a global problem, there's a global dimension to it and we need other countries to co-operate with us to tackle this, but we are determined to do that," he added.

Sunak also said there is "always more we can do" when he was asked about reports that half of all Russian money laundering is estimated to occur in the U.K.

Opposition parties said the revelations, which also raised questions over donations given to the Conservative Party, needed to be acted on urgently by the U.K.'s Conservative government.

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"The tentacles of dark money exposed by the #PandoraPapers reach into the heart of U.K. democracy," Labour Party foreign affairs spokesperson Lisa Nandy said in a tweet.

## Russian film crew blasts off to make first movie in space

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — A Russian actor and a film director rocketed to space Tuesday on a mission to make the world's first movie in orbit.

Actor Yulia Peresild and director Klim Shipenko blasted off for the International Space Station in a Russian Soyuz spacecraft together with cosmonaut Anton Shkaplerov, a veteran of three space missions. Their Soyuz MS-19 lifted off as scheduled at 1:55 p.m. (0855 GMT) from the Russian space launch facility in Baikonur, Kazakhstan and successfully reached the designated orbit.

Space officials reported that the crew was feeling fine and all spacecraft systems were functioning normally.

Peresild and Klimenko are to film segments of a new movie titled "Challenge," in which a surgeon played by Peresild rushes to the space station to save a crew member who suffers a heart condition. After 12 days on the space outpost, they are set to return to Earth with another Russian cosmonaut.

Speaking at a pre-flight news conference Monday, 37-year-old Peresild acknowledged that it was challenging for her to adapt to the strict discipline and rigorous demands during the training.

"It was psychologically, physically and morally hard," she said. "But I think that once we achieve the goal, all that will seem not so difficult and we will remember it with a smile."

Shipenko, 38, who has made several commercially successful movies, also described their fast-track, four-month preparation for the flight as tough.

"Of course, we couldn't make many things at the first try, and sometimes even at a third attempt, but it's normal," he said.

Shipenko, who will complete the shooting on Earth after filming space episodes, said that Shkaplerov and two other Russian cosmonauts on board the station will all play parts in the new movie.

Russia's state-controlled Channel One television, which is involved in making the movie, has extensively covered the crew training and the launch.

"I'm in shock. I still can't imagine that my mom is out there," Peresild's daughter, Anna, said in televised remarks minutes after the launch.

Dmitry Rogozin, head of the Russian state space corporation Roscosmos, was a key force behind the project, describing it as a chance to burnish the nation's space glory and rejecting criticism from some Russian media.

Some commentators argued that the film project would distract the Russian crew and could be awkward to film on the Russian segment of the International Space Station, which is considerably less spacious compared to the U.S. segment. A new Russia lab module, the Nauka, was added in July, but it is yet to be fully integrated into the station.

Once they arrive at the space station just over three hours after the launch, the three newcomers will join Thomas Pesquet of the European Space Agency, NASA astronauts Mark Vande Hei, Shane Kimbrough and Megan McArthur, Roscosmos cosmonauts Oleg Novitskiy and Pyotr Dubrov and Aki Hoshide of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency.

Novitskiy, who is set to star as the ailing cosmonaut in the film, will take the captain's seat in a Soyuz capsule to take the crew back to Earth on Oct. 17.

## French report: 330,000 children victims of church sex abuse

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — An estimated 330,000 children were victims of sex abuse within France's Catholic Church over the past 70 years, according to a major report released Thursday that is France's first major reckon-

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ing with the devastating phenomenon.

The figure includes abuses committed by some 3,000 priests and other people involved in the church — wrongdoing that Catholic authorities covered up over decades in a “systemic manner,” according to the president of the commission that issued the report, Jean-Marc Sauvé.

The head of the French bishops conference asked forgiveness from the victims. The group is meeting Tuesday to discuss next steps.

The commission urged the church to take strong action, denouncing “faults” and “silence.” It also called on the French state to help compensate the victims, notably in cases that are too old to prosecute via the courts.

About 80% of the victims were boys.

“The consequences are very serious,” Sauvé said. “About 60% of men and women who were sexually abused encounter major problems in their sentimental or sexual life.”

The 2,500-page document prepared by an independent commission comes as the Catholic Church in France, like in other countries, seeks to face up to shameful secrets that were long covered up.

Victims welcomed the report as long overdue.

Olivier Savignac, head of victims association “Parler et Revivre” (Speak out and Live again), who contributed to the probe, told The Associated Press that the high ratio of victims per abuser is particularly “terrifying for French society, for the Catholic Church.”

He assailed the church for treating such cases as individual anomalies as opposed to a collective horror. He described being abused at age 13 by the director of a Catholic vacation camp in the south of France, who also was accused of assaulting several other boys.

“I perceived this priest as someone who was good, a caring person who would not harm me,” Savignac said. “But it was when I found myself on that bed half-naked and he was touching me that I realized something was wrong. ... And we keep this, it’s like a growing cyst, it’s like gangrene inside the victim’s body and the victim’s psyche.”

The commission worked for 2 1/2 years, listening to victims and witnesses and studying church, court, police and press archives starting from the 1950s. A hotline launched at the beginning of the probe received 6,500 calls from alleged victims or people who said they knew a victim.

Sauvé denounced the church’s attitude until the beginning of the 2000s as “a deep, cruel indifference toward victims.”

The report says an estimated 3,000 child abusers — two-thirds of them priests — worked in the church during that period. Sauvé said the overall figure of victims includes an estimated 216,000 people abused by priests and other clerics.

“Sometimes church officials did not denounce (sex abuses) and even exposed children to risks by putting them in contact with predators,” Sauvé said. “We consider ... the church has a debt toward victims.”

The President of the Conference of Bishops of France, Eric de Moulins-Beaufort, said Tuesday “we are appalled” at the conclusions of the report.

“I wish on that day to ask for pardon, pardon to each of you,” he told the victims.

Sauvé said 22 alleged crimes that can still be pursued have been forwarded to prosecutors. More than 40 cases that are too old to be prosecuted but involve alleged perpetrators who are still alive have been forwarded to church officials.

The commission issued 45 recommendations about how to prevent abuse. These included training priests and other clerics, revising Canon Law — the legal code the Vatican uses to govern the church — and fostering policies to recognize and compensate victims, Sauvé said.

The report comes after a scandal surrounding now-defrocked priest Bernard Preynat rocked the French Catholic Church. Last year, Preynat was convicted of sexually abusing minors and given a five-year prison sentence. He acknowledged abusing more than 75 boys for decades.

One of Preynat’s victims, Francois Devaux, head of the victims group La Parole Libérée (“The Liberated Word”), told The Associated Press that “with this report, the French church for the first time is going to



the root of this systemic problem. The deviant institution must reform itself.”

He said the number of victims the report identifies is “a minimum.”

“Some victims did not dare to speak out or trust the commission,” he said.

The Preynat case led to the resignation last year of the former archbishop of Lyon, Cardinal Philippe Barbarin, who has been accused of failing to report the abuses to civil authorities when he learned about them in the 2010s. France’s highest court ruled earlier this year that Barbarin did not cover up the case.

French archbishops, in a message to parishioners read during Sunday Mass across the country, said the publication of the report is “a test of truth and a tough and serious moment.”

“We will receive and study these conclusions to adapt our actions,” the message said. “The fight against pedophilia concerns all of us ... Our support and our prayers will keep going toward all the people who have been abused within the church.”

Pope Francis issued in May 2019 a groundbreaking new church law requiring all Catholic priests and nuns around the world to report clergy sexual abuse and cover-ups by their superiors to church authorities.

In June, Francis swiftly rejected an offer from Cardinal Reinhard Marx, one of Germany’s most prominent clerics and a close papal adviser, to resign as archbishop of Munich and Freising over the church’s mishandling of abuse cases. But he said a process of reform was necessary and every bishop must take responsibility for the “catastrophe” of the crisis.

Masha Macpherson contributed from Paris and Nicolas Vaux-Montagny contributed from Lyon, France.

## **Rights group: Taliban unlawfully killed 13 ethnic Hazaras**

By DAVE BRYAN and SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Taliban forces unlawfully killed 13 ethnic Hazaras, most of them Afghan soldiers who had surrendered to the insurgents, a prominent rights group said Tuesday.

The killings took place in the village of Kahor in Daykundi province in central Afghanistan on Aug. 30, according to an investigation by Amnesty International. Eleven of the victims were members of the Afghan national security forces and two were civilians, among them a 17-year-old girl.

The reported killings took place about two weeks after the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in a blitz campaign, culminating in their takeover of Kabul. At the time, Taliban leaders sought to reassure Afghans that they had changed from their previous harsh rule of the country in the late 1990s.

Meanwhile in Kabul, the Taliban said Tuesday they arrested 11 members of the Islamic State group, a rival and bitter enemy of the insurgents. The Islamic State group’s affiliate — based in eastern Nangarhar province — has claimed responsibility for a spate of recent attacks targeting Taliban forces in eastern Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Taliban spokesman Bilal Karimi posted on Twitter that the raid was carried out on Sunday night in the Afghan capital’s Fifth Police District. He provided no further details. The raid came just hours after a bombing that targeted the Eid Gah Mosque in Kabul, killing at least five people.

IS claimed responsibility for the mosque attack late on Monday, saying in a posting on its media arm, the Amaq news agency, that one of their suicide bombers targeted senior Taliban figures following a mourning service.

Sunday’s bombing was the deadliest attack in Kabul since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan with the chaotic departure of the last U.S. troops on Aug. 31. IS had also claimed responsibility for the horrific bombing on Aug. 26 that killed more than 169 Afghans and 13 U.S. military personnel outside the Kabul airport, where thousands of people were trying to reach the airport to escape Taliban rule.

The world has been watching whether the Taliban would live up to their initial promises of tolerance and inclusiveness toward women and ethnic minorities, among them the Shiite Hazaras. However, Taliban actions so far, such as renewed restrictions on women and the appointment of an all-male government, have been met with dismay by the international community.

Hazaras make up around 9% of Afghanistan’s 36 million people. They are often targeted because they

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are Shiite Muslims in a Sunni-majority country.

Amnesty's secretary general, Agnes Callamard, said that "these cold-blooded executions (of the Hazaras) are further proof that the Taliban are committing the same horrific abuses they were notorious for during their previous rule of Afghanistan."

Taliban spokespersons Zabihullah Mujahid and Karimi did not respond to calls from The Associated Press seeking comment.

The rights group said Sadiqullah Abed, the Taliban-appointed chief of police for Daykundi, denied any killings had happened and only said that a member of the Taliban had been wounded in an attack in the province.

The Taliban took control of Daykundi province on Aug. 14, according to the Amnesty report, and an estimated 34 former soldiers sought safety in Khidir district. The soldiers, who had government military equipment and weaponry with them, agreed to surrender to the Taliban.

Mohammad Azim Sedaqat, who led the group's surrender, arranged to decommission the weapons in the presence of Taliban members.

On Aug. 30, an estimated 300 Taliban fighters arrived in a convoy close to Dahani Qul village, where the security forces members were staying, some with family members, according to Amnesty's report. As the security forces attempted to leave the area with their families, Taliban fighters caught up with them and opened fire on the crowd, killing a 17-year-old girl named Masuma. One soldier fired back, killing a Taliban fighter and wounding another.

The Taliban continued to shoot as the families fled, killing two soldiers, according to the report. After nine security forces surrendered, the Taliban took them to a nearby river basin and killed them, according to the rights group.

Amnesty said it verified photographs and video evidence taken in the aftermath of the killings.

Bryan reported from Cairo. Associated Press writers Rahim Faiez in Istanbul and Maamoun Youssef in Cairo contributed to this report.

## French child kidnap plot shows global sway of QAnon style

By LORI HINNANT Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — The old music box factory had been abandoned for years on the outskirts of the Swiss mountain town, with paint curling at the edges of its dingy grey and yellow walls.

It was the perfect hiding place for the young French mother and her 8-year-old daughter at the heart of Operation Lima, an international child abduction plot planned and funded by a French group with echoes of the far-right extremist movement QAnon.

Lola Montemaggi had lost custody of her daughter, Mia, to her own mother months earlier because French government child protective services feared the young woman was unstable. Montemaggi found people online who shared the QAnon belief that government workers themselves were running a child trafficking ring. Then she turned to her network to do what she needed to do: Extract Mia.

The April 13 kidnapping of the girl from her grandmother's home marked what is believed to be the first time that conspiracy theorists in Europe have committed a crime linked to the QAnon-style web of false beliefs that sent hundreds to storm the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6. It shows how what was once a strictly U.S. movement has metastasized around the world, with Europol, the European umbrella policing agency, adding QAnon to its list of threats in June. QAnon influence has now been tracked to 85 countries, and its beliefs have been adapted to local contexts and languages from Hindi to Hebrew.

A California father this summer took his two children to Mexico and killed them under the influence of "QAnon and Illuminati conspiracy theories," federal authorities say. QAnon supporters also have been linked to at least six attempted kidnappings in the United States, convinced that children are falling victim to pedophiles, according to Mia Bloom, who documented the abductions for her book on QAnon published this summer.

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"If someone is trying to get back their child and says they're with this cabal, there's now a support network where before QAnon it would not have existed," Bloom said.

Part of QAnon's loose collection of beliefs is specific to the United States, where the conspiracy theory began. But the conviction that there is a deep state conspiracy and cabals of government-sponsored child traffickers crosses borders, as does anti-vaccine rhetoric since the start of the pandemic.

The abduction of Mia was inspired by a former politician who promised to save child trafficking victims and lead France back to its former greatness. The AP pieced the story together from interviews with investigators and lawyers, as well as thousands of online messages, showing how QAnon-style beliefs draw in the vulnerable and connect them in often dangerous ways.

Two men charged in the abduction were also charged last week in an unrelated far-right plot against vaccine centers. Montemaggi was freed Monday after nearly six months in jail, but remains under judicial supervision until her trial.

Montemaggi is a 28-year-old woman with glossy chestnut hair and pale eyes, a lilting voice and a smile whose very edges curved upwards. Two stars are tattooed on the fragile skin inside her wrist.

She had Mia when she was 20, but she and the baby's father turned her over to his parents days after the birth, according to their lawyer, who publicly described "social, professional, financial precariousness; maybe too much immaturity." Montemaggi would drop in for an afternoon from time to time.

One day, when Mia was 5, her mother took her out to play. The two never returned, said the lawyer, Guillaume Fort. It was a year before Montemaggi sent word about the child, Fort said.

By then, Montemaggi had joined France's 2018 anti-government Yellow Vest movement, according to people who spent time with her in protests, all wearing the group's iconic fluorescent safety vests.

In November 2019, Montemaggi turned 27. She was not celebrating.

"Today, on my birthday, I am disgusted," she wrote in a Facebook post on Nov. 12, 2019. "Since I awoke, this famous 'awakening' is hard, digesting all that I have learned, all that the TV and the politicians hide from us, all these lies, it's not easy."

Over the course of the next year, as France entered one of the world's strictest coronavirus lockdowns, Montemaggi's world grew progressively darker. She believed 5G towers were concealing population control devices, Bill Gates was plotting to spread the coronavirus, and governments everywhere were trafficking children either to molest them or to extract an essence for eternal youth. She pulled Mia out of school.

The month of her 28th birthday, she concluded that the French government was illegitimate and its laws no longer applied to her, beliefs central to what is known as the sovereign citizen movement. Like QAnon, the sovereign citizen movement started in the U.S., and its followers are anti-government extremists who believe that they don't have to answer to government authorities, including courts and law enforcement.

She urged others to join her and enlisted in a Telegram group for sovereign citizens in the Lorraine region. Montemaggi tended to leave short voice messages punctuated by a gentle laugh, trying to set up meetings, wishing people a happy New Year, or admonishing those she thought were insufficiently dedicated to the cause.

She told those around her she was going to empty her apartment, sell her furniture and "go under the radar with her daughter." Montemaggi had been losing weight for months, arguing so violently with her boyfriend that her family feared Mia was in danger.

To her new acquaintances on Telegram, she casually mentioned a court summons Jan. 11 that would prevent her from joining a proposed meeting, "a personal thing." She rejected the judge's authority to interfere in her life or her child's.

The judge thought otherwise. Montemaggi lost custody of her daughter to her own mother.

She could see Mia twice a month, never alone, at the grandmother's house in Les Poulières, a village about a 30-minute drive from Montemaggi's apartment. And she could not speak to her by phone.

Montemaggi had no plan, but her beliefs were hardening.

"There are no laws above us except for universal law," she said in one message over the winter to a

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Telegram correspondent. "There are no government laws. You have to understand that."

While the Capitol insurrection in the United States is the best-known example of violence tied to QAnon, it is far from the only one. Twenty-seven people in U.S. have been linked to QAnon violence unrelated to the riot, eight of whom also had ties to the sovereign citizen movement, according to recent research from the University of Maryland's National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. A quarter of the QAnon offenders were women – an unusually high percentage for alleged crimes.

In March 2020, a Kentucky mother who adhered to QAnon as well as an American sovereign citizen movement kidnapped her children from her grandmother, who was their guardian. In November the same year, a woman who had lost custody of her children shot her legal advisor in the head in Florida after deciding he had joined a cabal of child-stealing Satanists.

By the time the mob stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 this year, QAnon already had a solid foothold in Europe. At first, it was on the margins of protests against coronavirus lockdowns in Germany and Britain. But during the lockdowns, QAnon accommodated a range of other conspiracies and turned darker, first in the United States and then across the Atlantic.

It was around this time that the name of a disgraced French politician started circulating in French QAnon chats on Telegram.

Rémy Daillet-Wiedemann was finding new audiences for his previously obscure calls to overthrow France's government, resist the "medical dictatorship" of coronavirus restrictions and protect children from the government-linked pedophiles in their midst.

"In Europe, a tipping point came when everything got wrapped "under the banner of 'Save our Children,'" said Andreas Önnersfors, a Swedish researcher who studies the history of conspiracy theories.

Daillet-Wiedemann's name appeared 271 times in a QAnon Telegram group from October until April, when its chat history was scrubbed. Most of those mentions came amid a debate among the "digital soldiers" about whether his movement to overthrow the government was authentic, according to data shared with the AP by Jordan Wildon, an extremism researcher who archived the material before the chat history was erased.

The more Daillet-Wiedemann's theories aligned with the QAnon conspiracy, the more his audience grew. In early spring, a group of his supporters fell under surveillance by French antiterrorism investigators. Around the same time, one of Montemaggi's Telegram friends advised her to contact Daillet-Wiedemann about her custody troubles.

Daillet-Wiedemann, who had been living in self-imposed exile in Malaysia for years, had a network of a few hundred supporters, with a much smaller "hard core," according to François Pérain, the prosecutor in the region's main city of Nancy. He instructed one of his supporters to make a plan for Mia and for another French child in a similar situation, and wired 3,000 euros for transportation and equipment, Pérain said.

Five men, ages 23 to 60, came together in the plot they dubbed "Operation Lima" – an anagram of Lola and Mia's names. They gave themselves code names as well: Jeannot, Pitchoun, the Crow, Bruno, Bouga. A sixth man, a retired lieutenant-general from the French military, forged government paperwork for the mission in France's Vosges region, near Switzerland.

The main planner went by the nickname Bouga and was an educator, according to his lawyer, Randall Schwerdorffer. He vetted Montemaggi with an online questionnaire before organizing what he considered "a legitimate intervention," the lawyer said. He declined to release his client's real name for reasons of privacy.

Concluding that Mia was in psychological danger, the men drew up a script for their roles in extracting her. Anti-terrorism investigators listening in on Daillet-Wiedemann's supporters overheard troubling discussions about "a camping trip" in the eastern borderlands but could make little sense of it.

On April 13, an anthracite gray Volkswagen van pulled into Les Poulières. Flashing official-looking paperwork, the two men inside claimed to be carrying out a welfare check on Mia for the government. The girl's grandmother agreed to their request to take her briefly away for an interview.

A quick call to the real child protective services revealed her mistake. By then Mia was long gone, on her way to a neighboring village.

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There, Montemaggi waited in a black Peugeot with the other men. They caravanned to the Swiss border, then Montemaggi and two of the men entered the woods.

Over several hours, Montemaggi and the men hiked eastward, taking turns carrying Mia. When they reached Switzerland, another member of the network met them in his Porsche Cayenne. He took them not to a safehouse as expected but to a hotel.

As they were settling in for the night, the kidnapping alert flashed on television screens across France, one of only two dozen the nation has authorized in the past 15 years. The photos of Mia and her mother were beamed to millions of screens simultaneously.

That's when Daillet-Wiedemann stepped in again from Malaysia, Pérain said. He sent out a call for shelter that only one person answered — and only for one night.

By then, the antiterrorism investigators had connected the van from Les Poulières with the anti-government clique of Daillet-Wiedemann supporters under surveillance. They figured out that the coded language of the "camping trip" referred to the abduction in the Vosges region.

Most of the men were arrested in France the next day. None bothered to hide their role or their conviction that the kidnapping was actually a restitution. One 58-year-old man compared himself to Arsène Lupin, the fictional French gentleman thief.

"They passed from conspiratorial beliefs to very serious acts, and those who went into action didn't necessarily realize that they were on the wrong side of the law," Pérain said.

Mia and Montemaggi were still missing, but investigators now knew that they had crossed the border and were headed east.

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On April 15, Montemaggi and Mia were driven to the decommissioned music box factory. It lacked electricity, running water and beds, but had something the young mother turned kidnapper needed more — isolation.

With no alternatives, Montemaggi spent three nights at the factory, chatting briefly with the artists and hikers who passed through during the day and trying to keep Mia amused. Witnesses said the pair baked a cake, played games and explored the surrounding clearing.

She told one woman she was going to take the girl to Saint Petersburg, Russia, but had no clear idea how. That period in the factory gave investigators the time they needed to find Mia and her mother before they left Switzerland.

The police arrived on Sunday morning. They spotted Mia first, checking her photo against the kidnap alert. Then her mother walked outside, and the game was up.

Montemaggi was taken into custody on kidnapping charges. Her family declined comment, as did her lawyer. Mia was reunited with her grandmother.

Daillet-Wiedemann posted a video praising the kidnappers.

"These are heroes. They are re-establishing the law. I congratulate them and will do everything to free them," he said in a YouTube video viewed 30,000 times.

He would not get the chance. Malaysia expelled him in June.

Now he himself is jailed on charges of conspiring in the organized abduction of a child. At his first court hearing, Daillet-Wiedemann declared himself a candidate for president, maintaining that the charges against him are political.

His YouTube channel went offline soon after Mia was returned to her grandmother's village home.

"Let them arrest me," he said at the time. "People will see that I'm on the front lines and that's how I will lead my revolution."

Judges on Monday finally agreed to Montemaggi's requests to be freed until trial, after months of insistence from her family and lawyer that she poses no danger to her daughter or anyone else.

"I've begun to put down in black and white my natural rights," she wrote to a Telegram acquaintance, weeks before she was arrested. "With this text, I'll ensure my rights are respected."

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Bram Janssen in Sainte-Croix, Switzerland, and Nicolas Vaux-Montagny in Paris contributed to this report.

## Herbert, Ekeler propel Chargers to 28-14 win over Raiders

By JOE REEDY AP Sports Writer

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — Justin Herbert and the Los Angeles Chargers came into their showdown against the Las Vegas Raiders after a signature win on the road at Kansas City.

In front of a prime-time audience on Monday night, the Chargers showed they are indeed for real.

Herbert threw for three touchdowns, Austin Ekeler rushed for a career-high 117 yards and scored twice as the Chargers knocked the Raiders from the unbeaten ranks with a 28-14 victory.

Los Angeles is 3-1 for the first time since 2014 and part of a three-way tie atop the AFC West with Las Vegas and Denver. The Raiders' loss means the Arizona Cardinals are the NFL's lone undefeated team after four weeks.

"We stayed patient, I thought we had a good mix of the run and pass. Justin was extremely patient and Austin came alive tonight," Chargers first-year coach Brandon Staley said.

Herbert accounted for all of his TDs in the first half as the Chargers built a 21-0 halftime lead. The Raiders scored on their first two possessions of the second half to draw within a touchdown, but Ekeler gave Los Angeles some breathing room with an 11-yard run scoring off left guard. Herbert had the key play of the drive with a 13-yard completion to Jared Cook on fourth-and-2 from midfield.

The reception by Cook was one of two fourth downs converted by the offense and four on the season.

"He picks and chooses the right time to be able to do it. Sometimes on critical downs, especially when we have the momentum and we're driving, and maybe when he feels like we need points," said Cook, who had six catches for 70 yards and a touchdown. "He's been choosing great. We might as well play some lottery numbers with coach."

Herbert achieved a pair of milestones in the win. He completed his 500th pass in his 19th start, becoming the first quarterback in the Super Bowl era to reach that mark before his 20th start. He has accounted for 10 TDs in his first three prime-time games, tying Patrick Mahomes and Dan Marino.

"It's awesome that he believes in us because everyone in the huddle believes in each other too, and whenever we get into one of those situations, we know that we've got the right play, we know that we've got the right guys," said Herbert, who completed 25 of 38 passes for 222 yards.

Derek Carr was 21 of 34 for 196 yards with two TDs and an interception. The Raiders could manage only 48 yards rushing against a Chargers defense that was last in the league in run defense.

"We cannot come out and take that many punches in the first round," coach Jon Gruden said. "We found a way to make it a football game and give ourselves a chance, but it's just too hard in this league against good teams."

The Chargers took the opening kickoff and went 75 yards in 12 plays, including a 4-yard bullet to tight end Donald Parham in the back of the end zone to put them on top 7-0.

Los Angeles extended its lead to 21-0 at halftime by scoring on the final two drives of the first half — Herbert's 10-yard TD to Cook and a 14-yard screen to Ekeler.

Las Vegas was held to one first down and 51 net yards in the first half, but made adjustments at halftime. The Raiders took the third-quarter kickoff and scored when Carr found Hunter Renfrow for a 10-yard touchdown.

Darren Waller then drew them within 21-14 when he caught a 3-yard pass with 1:44 remaining in the third.

"If anything, hopefully this wakes us up a little bit. I think we need to start a lot faster, if I'm honest," Carr said. "We started the season great, but we don't start games nearly good enough yet."

### LATE START

SoFi Stadium has a roof over it, but the start of the game was delayed 35 minutes due to lightning strikes in the area. The stadium is classified as open-air due to the north side being open on the upper deck. Torrential rain hit the Los Angeles area nearly an hour before kickoff.

"I've never had an indoor stadium with a lightning delay. This is a bizarre night for all of us," said Gruden, who added he didn't receive an explanation for the delay.

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## GOLDEN MILESTONE

Joey Bosa recorded his 50th career sack during the first quarter when he brought down Carr for a 9-yard loss. Bosa, who is in his sixth season, reached it in 67 career games, faster than any Chargers player since sacks were kept as an official stat in 1982.

However, Bosa was not happy about receiving an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty during the fourth quarter.

"I didn't even know they called the penalty on me because I was fuming, but, I mean, refs are blind. Simple. I'm sorry, but you're blind. Like open your eyes and do your job, it's so bad, unbelievable," he said. "Obviously, that's on me. I should never lose my control like that. But these guys have got to do a better job because it's been years of terrible, terrible missed calls, left and right."

## INJURIES

Raiders: Cornerbacks Damon Arnette (groin) and Trayvon Mullen Jr. (foot) were injured during the first quarter and did not return. Cornerback Nate Hobbs suffered a concussion in the second half.

## UP NEXT

Raiders: Host the Chicago Bears (2-2) on Sunday.

Chargers: Host the Cleveland Browns (3-1) on Sunday.

More AP NFL coverage: <https://apnews.com/hub/NFL> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_NFL](https://twitter.com/AP_NFL)

## Rural Alaska at risk as COVID surge swamps faraway hospitals

By MARK THIESSEN and BECKY BOHRER Associated Press

TANACROSS, Alaska (AP) — One Alaska Native village knew what to do to keep out COVID-19. They put up a gate on the only road into town and guarded it round the clock. It was the same idea used a century ago in some isolated Indigenous villages to protect people from outsiders during another deadly pandemic — the Spanish flu.

It largely worked. Only one person died of COVID-19 and 20 people got sick in Tanacross, an Athabaskan village of 140 whose rustic wood cabins and other homes are nestled between the Alaska Highway and Tanana River.

But the battle against the coronavirus isn't over. The highly contagious delta variant is spreading across Alaska, driving one of the nation's sharpest upticks in infections and posing risks for remote outposts like Tanacross where the closest hospital is hours away.

The COVID-19 surge is worsened by Alaska's limited health care system that largely relies on hospitals in Anchorage, the biggest city. It's where the state's largest hospital, Providence Alaska Medical Center, is overwhelmed with patients and was the first weeks ago to declare crisis-of-care protocols, meaning doctors are sometimes prioritizing care based on who has the best odds of survival.

Since then, 19 other health care facilities in Alaska, including Anchorage's two other hospitals and Fairbanks Memorial, have also entered crisis care mode, something overtaxed facilities in other states have had to do, including Idaho and Wyoming.

"Even though we live here, we're concerned about Anchorage and Fairbanks," said Alfred Jonathan, a Tanacross elder. "If somebody gets sick around there, there's no place to take them."

While Alaska has contracted with nearly 500 medical professionals to help over the next few months, the ramifications are dire for those in rural Alaska if they need higher levels of care — for COVID-19 or otherwise — but no beds are available.

Sometimes those patients get lucky and get transferred to Fairbanks or Anchorage. Other times, health care staff are on the phones — in some cases, for hours — looking for a bed or facility that can provide specialty treatments like dialysis.

One patient who couldn't get dialysis at Providence died, hospital spokesperson Mikal Canfield said. Dr. Kristen Solana Walkinshaw, the hospital's chief of staff, said she knew a patient in an outlying community who needed cardiac catheterization and died waiting.

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Options in Seattle and Portland, Oregon, also are being overloaded. One rural clinic finally found a spot for a patient from interior Alaska in Colorado.

Health officials blame the hospital crunch on limited staffing, rising COVID-19 infections and low vaccination rates in Alaska, where 61% of eligible residents in the conservative state are fully vaccinated. According to data collected by Johns Hopkins University, one in every 84 people in Alaska was diagnosed with COVID-19 from Sept. 22 to Sept. 29, the nation's worst diagnosis rate in recent days.

Officials say medical workers are exhausted and frustrated with what feels like a no-win effort to combat misinformation about COVID-19 being overblown and vaccines being unsafe. Some say it could have long-term effects — further shaking confidence in vaccines and treatments for other illnesses and making the longstanding pre-pandemic challenge of recruiting health care workers to the remote state more difficult.

Medical workers "describe the emotions of: 'You hear a code is happening, someone is passing away,'" said Jared Kosin, president and CEO of the Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association. "That is devastating. You never want to lose a patient. But in the back of your mind, you're thinking, 'OK, another bed is now available that is critically needed.' And how do you balance those emotions? It's gut-wrenching."

In Tanacross, elders are encouraging people to get vaccinated, especially with facilities strained. The village is in a sprawling, sparsely populated region of eastern Alaska where the vaccination rate is under 50%.

Jonathan, 78, tells villagers that COVID-19 is here, and like the delta variant, is going to develop in other ways.

Those who "didn't get vaccinated? Gosh, we're afraid for them," said Jonathan, who recently led a crew clearing dead and dying trees to reduce wildfire fuel and provide wood to heat homes.

His wife, Mildred, helped guard the gate into the community this year. Those restrictions ended this summer as the pandemic seemed to be improving. Now, she says she's tired of outsiders calling their friends in Tanacross to scare them, claiming there are problems with the vaccines.

"I got both my shots, I'm alive and nothing's wrong with me," she said before piling bags of sanitizer, masks and nitrile gloves into her Prius to deliver throughout town.

Alaska, hailed early in the pandemic for working with tribal health organizations to distribute vaccines widely and quickly, was 25th in the U.S. for the percentage of its total population inoculated, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data.

At hospitals, care "has shifted," said Dr. Anne Zink, Alaska's chief medical officer.

"The same standard of care that was previously there is no longer able to be given on a regular basis," she said. "This has been happening for weeks."

In rural Alaska, six Indigenous villages, including Tanacross, rely on the new Upper Tanana Health Center in the hub community of Tok, about a two-hour drive from the Canadian border. The staff treats who they can and moves those with more serious needs to Anchorage or Fairbanks, said Jacoline Bergstrom, executive director of health services for the Tanana Chiefs Conference, a consortium of 42 Athabaskan villages spread over an area of interior Alaska nearly the size of Texas.

Emergency plans are in place to house people overnight if hospital beds aren't available right away, clinic director Joni Young said. They're usually flown because it's a three-hour drive from Tok to Fairbanks and about seven to Anchorage.

"If for some reason, we can't medevac out, we've been preparing since the beginning to help our patients if we need to," Young said. "We've got cots before, stored here, and we have another building that we lease that we could use to separate COVID patients."

The staff is putting in overtime, with nurses taking COVID-19 questions from callers and working weekends. They need to hire two urgent care registered nurses, but few have applied.

Joyce Johnson-Albert lay on a bed at the health center with an IV in her arm. She was vaccinated but got a breakthrough infection, she suspects from a hunting camp.

"I just hope the next few days, I'll be getting a little better than now," Johnson-Albert said as she received a monoclonal antibody infusion, given at the onset of COVID-19 to lessen symptoms. "It's just hard to say. You can go either way."

Registered nurse Angie Cleary is grateful the clinic offers the infusion treatment.



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"However, I feel worried some days where we're not sure when we'll get more," Cleary said. "For example, we're down to, I think, five doses right now, and we could get more tomorrow or it might not be until next week. That's one of the concerns we have living out here, is like, when are we going to get our next shipment?"

They're also battling misinformation about the pandemic.

Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy has faced criticism for not mandating masks and not endorsing vaccines as fully as some would like. He has encouraged people to get shots but said it is a personal choice. Others have accused him of pushing vaccines and peddling fear.

Providence hospital employees are having a hard time with the harsh rhetoric, Solana Walkinshaw said. One staffer got spit at leaving work, the chief of staff said.

"We still have people who are COVID-denying as they're being intubated, or family members who are COVID-denying as they're saying on an iPad, saying goodbye to their loved one," she said.

Daisy Northway of the Tok Native Association knows how hard it is to advocate for vaccinations, saying she's "talked till I'm blue in the face" trying to convince one of her sons.

The Athabaskan elder said she urges people to get the shots but in a way that lowers the political fervor.

"We need to say, 'Get vaccinated' in such a manner that it's helpful and not being criticizing for their beliefs," she said.

## Records show slow response to report of California oil spill

By BRIAN MELLEY, MATTHEW BROWN AND STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

HUNTINGTON BEACH, Calif. (AP) — The U.S. Coast Guard received the first report of a possible oil spill off the Southern California coast more than 12 hours before a company reported the major leak in its pipeline and a cleanup effort was launched, records show.

Oil spill reports reviewed Monday by The Associated Press raise questions about the Coast Guard's response to one of the state's largest recent oil spills as well as how quickly Amplify Energy, the company operating three offshore platforms and the pipeline, recognized it had a problem and notified authorities.

Two early calls about the spill came into the National Response Center, which is staffed by the Coast Guard and notifies other agencies of disasters for quick response. The first was from an anchored ship that noticed a sheen on the water and the second, six hours later, from a federal agency that said a possible oil slick was spotted on satellite imagery, according to reports by the California Office of Emergency Services.

The spill sent up to 126,000 gallons (572,807 liters) of heavy crude into the ocean off Huntington Beach and it then washed onto miles of beaches and a protected marshland. The beaches could remain closed for weeks or longer, a major hit to the local economy. Coastal fisheries in the area are closed to commercial and recreational fishing.

Gov. Gavin Newsom proclaimed a state of emergency in Orange County, directing state agencies "to undertake immediate and aggressive action to clean up and mitigate the effects" of the spill.

Experts say it's too early to determine the full impact on the environment but that so far the number of animals found harmed is minimal.

Investigators are looking into whether a ship's anchor may have struck a pipeline on the ocean floor, Coast Guard officials said Monday.

Amplify Energy CEO Martyn Willsher said company divers were inspecting the area of the suspected leak reported Saturday, and he expected that by Tuesday there would be a clearer picture of what caused the damage. Willsher said an anchor from a cargo ship striking the pipeline is "one of the distinct possibilities" behind the leak.

Cargo ships entering the twin ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach routinely pass through the area. Backlogs have plagued the ports in recent months and several dozen or more of the giant vessels have regularly been anchored as they wait to enter the ports and unload.

"We're looking into if it could have been an anchor from a ship, but that's in the assessment phase right now," Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. Jeannie Shaye said.

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Shaye said the Coast Guard was not notified of the disaster until Saturday morning, though records show its hazardous spill response hotline received the first report of a possible oil slick Friday evening.

A foreign ship anchored off the coast witnessed an "unknown sheen in the water near their vessel" at 6:13 p.m. and the report was called into the response center just after 8:22 p.m., according to the state report.

Lonnie Harrison Jr., vice president of Colonial Compliance Systems Inc., which works with foreign ships in U.S. waters to report spills, said one its clients reported the sighting.

Harrison, a retired Coast Guard captain, said the ship was not involved in the spill and was later given clearance over the weekend to enter the port to refuel after determining it wasn't contaminated by the slick.

About six hours after the first report was received, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported that satellite imagery spotted a possible oil slick more than 3 miles (5 kilometers) long. The report by the National Response Center said the image of a "possible oil anomaly" was probably associated with the first report.

"Although there were numerous vessels within immediate proximity to the anomaly, none were clearly associated with the anomaly," the report said. "These factors prevented the possible identification of a point source. Still, the NRC report allows for high confidence that this was oil."

The company that operates the pipeline first reported the spill to the Coast Guard's response center at 8:55 a.m. Saturday. However, the report said the incident occurred at 2:30 a.m.

Federal and state authorities require rapid reporting of a spill. Failure to do so led to criminal prosecutions against Plains All American Pipeline, which caused a coastal spill near Santa Barbara in 2015, and Southern California Gas Co. for a massive well blowout later that year.

A 2016 spill response plan for the Amplify platforms submitted to federal regulators called for immediate notification of federal officials when more than one barrel of oil is released into the water. Releases greater than five barrels — or that threaten state waters or the shoreline — require immediate notification of the state fire marshal and California wildlife officials.

The pipeline was supposed to be monitored under an automated leak detection system that would report problems to a control room staffed around the clock on the oil platform known as Elly.

The system was designed to trigger an alarm whenever a change in the flow of oil is detected. But how fast it can pick up on those changes was expected to vary according to the size of the leak. For a large leak — 10% or more of the amount of oil flowing through the pipeline — the detection time was estimated at 5 minutes. Smaller leaks were expected to take up to 50 minutes to detect, according to the response plan.

The spill plan warned that a break in the pipeline could cause "substantial harm to the environment" and that in a worst-case scenario 3,111 barrels (131,000 gallons) of oil could be released from the pipeline.

Willsher said required agencies were notified "instantly" when the company recognized the leak was from its pipe. Records show the spill was not reported by Amplify Energy, but by Witt O'Brien's, a crisis and emergency management firm listed on the spill response plan as the point of contact to notify the NRC.

The report said the leaking pipe had been shut off but containment was not confirmed. The cause of the rupture was unknown.

Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer said he has investigators looking into whether he can bring state charges for the spill even though the leak occurred in waters overseen by the U.S. government. Other potential criminal investigations were being pursued by the U.S. Department of Justice, the Coast Guard and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, officials said.

Safety advocates have pushed for years for federal rules that would strengthen oil spill detection requirements and force companies to install valves that can automatically shut down the flow of crude in case of a leak. The oil and pipeline industries have resisted such requirements because of the high cost.

"If the operator had more valves installed on this line, they'd have a much better chance at having the point of failure isolated by now," said Bill Caram with the Pipeline Safety Trust, an organization based in Bellingham, Washington.

The pipeline was built using a process known as electric resistance weld, according to a regulatory filing from the company. That welding process has been linked to past oil pipeline failures because corrosion

can occur along seams, according to government safety advisories and Caram.

Annual reports filed with federal regulators in 2019 and 2020 showed inspections for the inside and outside of the pipe revealed nothing requiring repairs.

Associated Press writers Michael Biesecker in Washington, Bernard Condon in New York, and Amy Taxin in Huntington Beach, California, contributed to this report.

## Questions amid Ida's destruction: Stay? Move? How far?

By KEVIN MCGILL Associated Press

DULAC, La. (AP) — Coy Verdin grew up 100 feet (30 meters) or so from the slow-moving waters of Bayou Grand Caillou, and a few miles north of Louisiana's marshy coast.

His parents still live in the firmly anchored, elevated mobile home that overlooks the sprawling oaks framing their view of the bayou. The 52-year-old's own home on Fisherman's Lane in the Dulac community is a short drive away, a little farther from the water, but close by.

A third-generation fisherman who also coaches volleyball at Grand Caillou Middle School in Houma, Verdin speaks glowingly, almost reverently about bayou life. But he doesn't want to live "down the bayou" anymore. Not after Ida severely damaged his home — less than a year after it took minor damage from Hurricane Zeta.

"I'm moving," he said, touring the ruins of his home, days after Ida badly damaged his roof and caved in his ceiling with torrential rains. "A little bit further up."

Whether to evacuate or stay is often a question before a hurricane hits. If it hits hard, the question then becomes whether to stay or relocate. Ida, one of the strongest storms ever to hit Louisiana, made landfall on Aug. 29. That was 16 years to the day after Hurricane Katrina led to massive population shifts in southeast Louisiana. The latest storm, has people talking about leaving again. And not just in Verdin's bayou country.

The city of LaPlace is a good 70 miles (110 kilometers) inland from Dulac and about 30 miles (50 kilometers) west of New Orleans. It's a working class suburb tucked between the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain. People cleaning up after the second major flood there in nine years — Isaac in 2012 pushed waters from the lake into their homes — are considering moving away.

"This is our second time around, and I just don't want to experience it anymore," Dawn Anthony said, standing outside the house where she's lived for 27 years as her husband, Derek, worked inside, knocking down ruined drywall with a sledgehammer.

Down Cambridge Street -- which was lined, yard after yard, block after block, with head-high piles of sodden furniture, carpeting, clothing, insulation and other debris -- Michael and Shontrece Lathers watched as workers wrestled a blue tarp into place over their home.

"We didn't need flood insurance when we bought this house," Michael Lathers said as he toured the soggy mess that Hurricane Ida made of the home.

A mechanic, he'd been planning a move even before Ida hit, flooding the house for the second time since Isaac. Now, he's expecting to sell the house at a loss. A recent highly touted groundbreaking on a flood control project that would protect his neighborhood is "10 years too late," he said.

He won't be leaving Louisiana, however. He plans to move to St. Helena Parish, where he has family, about 60 miles (95 kilometers) north of LaPlace, farther from the lake and the river. Likewise, Verdin, said he didn't plan to move far from where he grew up. He'll remain close to family and hopes to keep fishing.

"Environmental migrants, people who move because of repeated hazard events, typically move very short distances so that they can preserve all of that -- their employment, their cultural capital, their friendship networks," said Elizabeth Fussell, a professor at Brown University. "They don't want to change everything in their lives. They just want to move away from risk, and that means moving a relatively short distance."

Katrina caused catastrophic flooding when levees failed, swamping 80% of New Orleans. The city's population plummeted. Even now, with a population estimated at 394,000, New Orleans has only 79% of its pre-Katrina population. Some hard-hit neighborhoods, like the Lower 9th Ward, haven't recovered half

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their population, according to a report released this month by The Data Center of New Orleans.

What effect Ida will have on the region, whether it drives people to other areas or prompts moves inland, remains to be seen. And factors other than storms — housing costs, job opportunities — are often factors in population shifts, noted The Data Center's executive director, Lamar Gardere.

While recently released 2020 census figures show that Louisiana's population growth of 2.7% over 10 years lags the national rate of 7.4%, the growth has been largely in the southern part of the state, including the region around New Orleans and in suburbs near Baton Rouge.

That raises questions about whether people are leaving the state or the southern region because of storms, Gardere said via email.

"Interestingly, even among people that left New Orleans and never came back, many did eventually return to a neighboring parish, pointing more to the idea that economic issues drove relocation more than climate risk," Gardere said.

In LaPlace, District Attorney Bridget Dinvaux, who helped her sister empty out a storm ravaged apartment, said she understands the impulse to leave after a disaster.

"It's overwhelming. It's horrific. The damage is so devastating. So, the visceral response is, 'Just let me walk away from it,'" Dinvaux said.

But she believes people will decide to build back, especially in light of planned flood control.

And, on Bayou Grand Caillou, Coy Verdin's mother Kathy Verdin said she isn't ready to give up on bayou life.

"I don't plan on leaving," she said, leaning on a pickup truck parked beneath her elevated — and newly tarp-covered — mobile home. She gestured toward the water: "There's no other place like this."

## Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram suffer worldwide outage

By FRANK BAJAK and BARBARA ORTUTAY Associated Press

Facebook and its Instagram and WhatsApp platforms are back online after a massive global outage plunged the services and the businesses and people who rely on them into chaos for hours.

Facebook said late Monday that "the root cause of this outage was a faulty configuration change" and that there is "no evidence that user data was compromised as a result" of the outage.

The company apologized and said it is working to understand more about the cause, which began around 11:40 a.m. Eastern Monday.

Facebook was already in the throes of a separate major crisis after whistleblower Frances Haugen, a former Facebook product manager, provided The Wall Street Journal with internal documents that exposed the company's awareness of harms caused by its products and decisions. Haugen went public on CBS's "60 Minutes" program Sunday and is scheduled to testify before a Senate subcommittee Tuesday.

Haugen had also anonymously filed complaints with federal law enforcement alleging Facebook's own research shows how it magnifies hate and misinformation and leads to increased polarization. It also showed that the company was aware that Instagram can harm teenage girls' mental health.

The Journal's stories, called "The Facebook Files," painted a picture of a company focused on growth and its own interests over the public good. Facebook has tried to play down their impact. Nick Clegg, the company's vice president of policy and public affairs, wrote to Facebook employees in a memo Friday that "social media has had a big impact on society in recent years, and Facebook is often a place where much of this debate plays out."

The outage didn't exactly bolster Facebook's argument that its size and clout provide important benefits for the world. London-based internet monitoring firm Netblocks noted that the company's plans to integrate the technology behind its platforms — announced in 2019 — had raised concerns about the risks of such a move. While such centralization "gives the company a unified view of users' internet usage habits," Netblocks said, it also makes the services vulnerable to single points of failure.

"This is epic," said Doug Madory, director of internet analysis for Kentik Inc, a network monitoring and intelligence company. The last major internet outage, which knocked many of the world's top websites offline in June, lasted less than an hour. The stricken content-delivery company in that case, Fastly, blamed

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a software bug triggered by a customer who changed a setting.

For hours, Facebook's only public comment was a tweet in which it acknowledged that "some people are having trouble accessing (the) Facebook app" and said it was working on restoring access. Regarding the internal failures, Instagram head Adam Mosseri tweeted that it feels like a "snow day."

Mike Schroepfer, Facebook's outgoing chief technology officer, later tweeted "sincere apologies."

In Monday night's statement, Facebook blamed changes on routers that coordinate network traffic between data centers. The company said the changes interrupted the communication, which had "a cascading effect on the way our data centers communicate, bringing our services to a halt."

There was no evidence as of Monday afternoon that malicious activity was involved. Matthew Prince, CEO of the internet infrastructure provider Cloudflare, tweeted that "nothing we're seeing related to the Facebook services outage suggests it was an attack."

Facebook did not respond to messages for comment about the attack or the possibility of malicious activity.

While much of Facebook's workforce is still working remotely, there were reports that employees at work on the company's Menlo Park, California, campus had trouble entering buildings because the outage had rendered their security badges useless.

But the impact was far worse for multitudes of Facebook's nearly 3 billion users, showing just how much the world has come to rely on it and its properties — to run businesses, connect with online communities, log on to multiple other websites and even order food.

It also showed that despite the presence of Twitter, Telegram, Signal, TikTok, Snapchat and a bevy of other platforms, nothing can easily replace the social network that over the past 17 years has effectively evolved into critical infrastructure. The outage came the same day Facebook asked a federal judge that a revised antitrust complaint against it by the Federal Trade Commission be dismissed because it faces vigorous competition from other services.

There are certainly other online services for posting selfies, connecting with fans or reaching out to elected officials, But those who rely on Facebook to run their business or communicate with friends and family in far-flung places saw this as little consolation.

Kendall Ross, owner of a knitwear brand called Knit That in Oklahoma City, said he has 32,000 followers on his Instagram business page @id.knit.that. Almost all of his website traffic comes directly from Instagram. He posted a product photo about an hour before Instagram went out. He said he tends to sell about two hand-knit pieces after posting a product photo for about \$300 to \$400.

"The outage today is frustrating financially," he said. "It's also a huge awakening that social media controls so much of my success in business."

So many people are reliant on Facebook, WhatsApp or Instagram as primary modes of communication that losing access for so long can make them vulnerable to criminals taking advantage of the outage, said Rachel Tobac, a hacker and CEO of SocialProof Security.

"They don't know how to contact the people in their lives without it," she said. "They're more susceptible to social engineering because they're so desperate to communicate." Tobac said during previous outages, some people have received emails promising to restore their social media account by clicking on a malicious link that can expose their personal data.

Jake Williams, chief technical officer of the cybersecurity firm BreachQuest, said that while foul play cannot be completely ruled out, chances were good that the outage is "an operational issue" caused by human error.

"What it boils down to: running a LARGE, even by internet standards, distributed system is very hard, even for the very best," tweeted Columbia University computer scientist Steven Bellovin.

Twitter, meanwhile, chimed in from the company's main account on its service, posting "hello literally everyone" as jokes and memes about the Facebook outage flooded the platform. Later, as an unverified screenshot suggesting that the facebook.com address was for sale circulated, Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey tweeted, "how much?"

AP business writer Mae Anderson in New York and AP technology writer Matt O'Brien in Providence, R.I., contributed to this report.

## Biden lifts abortion referral ban on family planning clinics

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration reversed a ban on abortion referrals by family planning clinics, lifting a Trump-era restriction as political and legal battles over abortion grow sharper from Texas to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Department of Health and Human Services said Monday its new regulation will restore the federal family planning program to the way it ran under the Obama administration, when clinics were able to refer women seeking abortions to a provider. The goal is to "strengthen and restore" services, said HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra.

Groups representing the clinics said they hope the Biden administration action will lead some 1,300 local facilities that left in protest over Trump's policies to return, helping to stabilize a longstanding program shaken by the coronavirus pandemic on top of ideological battles.

"I have heard that almost everywhere in the country people have made the decision that conditions will be good for them to return to the program," Clare Coleman, president of the umbrella group National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association, said in an interview. "My sense is that people have been waiting for the rule."

Planned Parenthood, the biggest service provider, said on Twitter its health centers look forward to returning. But the group criticized part of the Biden administration rule that allows individual clinicians who object to abortion not to provide referrals. The administration said that's "in accordance with applicable federal law."

Known as Title X, the taxpayer-funded program makes available more than \$250 million a year to clinics to provide birth control and basic health care services mainly to low-income women, many of them from minority communities. Under former President Donald Trump, clinics were barred from referring patients for abortions, prompting a mass exit by service providers affiliated with Planned Parenthood, as well as several states and other independent organizations.

Women's groups labeled the Trump policy a "gag rule," and medical organizations called it a violation of the clinician-patient relationship.

But religious and social conservatives praised the policy for imposing a strict separation between family planning services and abortion. Under federal law, clinics cannot use federal family planning money to pay for abortions. However, abortion opponents argue that birth control funding for organizations like Planned Parenthood, the leading provider of abortions, amounts to an indirect subsidy.

On Monday, the National Right to Life Committee criticized the Biden administration for "supplementing the abortion industry through taxpayer funds."

Title X family planning clinics served about 3.9 million clients in 2018, but HHS estimates that number fell by nearly 40% after the Trump policy. The upheaval may have led to more than 180,000 unintended pregnancies, the agency said. In all, more than one-quarter of the clinics left the program. Although several states stepped up with their own no-strings-attached funding, women in some parts of the country still lost access.

Combined with service disruptions due to COVID-19 shutdowns, "this has just been a massive one-two punch to the system," said Coleman.

Biden campaigned on a promise to overturn the restrictions on family planning clinics, but abortion was not a central issue in the 2020 presidential race. It may become one in the 2022 midterm elections to determine who controls Congress.

Restrictive state laws in Texas, Mississippi and elsewhere have prompted a mobilization by abortion rights supporters, who fear a conservative-leaning Supreme Court will overturn the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision

that legalized abortion nationally. Hundreds of abortion-themed protests were held around the country Saturday, including one that brought thousands of abortion rights supporters to the steps of the court.

The Supreme Court has allowed the Texas law to take effect, but has not ruled on the substantive legal questions behind that statute, which bans most abortions in the state. The justices will hear arguments Dec. 1 on the Mississippi law, which bans most abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy.

The court now tilts decidedly to the right after Trump appointed three conservative justices. Twelve states have passed laws that would ban abortion entirely if Roe is overturned.

"Given the attacks on abortion in Texas and across the country, it's more important than ever that patients can access their choice of birth control and other health care through Title X," Planned Parenthood President Alexis McGill Johnson said in a statement.

The new abortion referral policy for family planning clinics will take effect Nov. 8.

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Associated Press writer David Crary contributed to this report.

## Milestone for Bubba Wallace as he earns 1st NASCAR victory

By JENNA FRYER AP Auto Racing Writer

TALLADEGA, Ala. (AP) — The hard part wasn't dodging his way around a crash and then driving to the front of the field at Talladega Superspeedway. That was just instinct for Bubba Wallace.

The challenge was the 45 minutes after Wallace took the lead, when the sky opened and he anxiously sat in the rain — hoping, wishing, praying — that NASCAR would call off Monday's rescheduled race and declare him the winner.

With a crowd gathered behind his pit stand chanting its support — one man told his 6-year-old son, clad in a Wallace shirt and jumping up and down along the fence, that he was "witnessing history" — NASCAR pulled the plug and Wallace became just the second Black driver to win a race at the Cup Series level.

"Got some credibility to my name now," said Wallace, a first-time Cup winner in his 143 starts. "I'm just like, 'Finally, I'm a winner and I'm a winner in the Cup level,' and it's just like 'Hell yeah!' It was a huge weight lifted off my shoulders."

This was so much more than just a first win.

Wallace is the first Black driver to win at the top level of the elite stock car series since Wendell Scott in 1963, a race where he wasn't declared the victor until long after Buck Baker had already been rewarded the trophy. NASCAR at last presented Scott's family with his trophy from that race two months ago.

"You can't swim standing on the Bank!," tweeted Warrick Scott Sr., who is Scott's grandson. "RIP Wendell Scott. Congratulations @bubbawallace!!" A second post showed his grandfather leaning against a car and read: "PaPa was there the whole time chilling in the rain."

The Wallace victory earned praise from rapper Big Sean, the University of Tennessee football team and Bill Lester, a Black driver who raced intermittently in NASCAR from 1999 through a Trucks Series start this season, among others.

"Finally, it's official, you've done it!" Lester posted. "So proud of you and what you've accomplished. Your win moves the @NASCAR needle forward on so many fronts. Glad I was a witness."

The race was spotlighted on NBC's "Nightly News" at the top of Monday's broadcast, illustrating how culturally important Wallace's win was for NASCAR, a predominately white sport with deep Southern roots and a longtime embrace of Confederate symbols.

As much as Wallace wanted the moment to be solely about his first career win, he couldn't ignore the significance.

"It's definitely been tough going to some of the tracks this year, we get some of the most boos now," Wallace said. "Everybody says as long as they're making noise that's fine, but you know, I get booed for different reasons and that's the tough thing to swallow. I appreciate all those who were there doing the rain dance with us, pulling for us, supporting me my whole career, but especially those who have supported me with everything that's gone on the last 15-16 months."

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In June 2020 at Talladega, NASCAR discovered a noose in the garage stall assigned to Wallace. The finding came just a week after NASCAR had banned the Confederate flag at its events at Wallace's urging.

The FBI investigated and found that the noose was tied at the end of the garage door pull and had been there for months, meaning Wallace was not a victim of a hate crime. Still, the series rallied around him and stood in solidarity with Wallace at the front of the grid before the race.

The flag ban continues to be an issue at Talladega, where a convoy of vehicles has paraded up and down Speedway Boulevard outside the main entrance of the speedway during all four race weekends since NASCAR announced the ban. The convoy was back this weekend and included one car pulling a trailer that contained a Civil War-era cannon.

Wallace has called the noose incident a low point and he's been subjected to online harassment that last year even included a tweet from then-President Donald Trump that falsely accused Wallace of making up the noose. Although Wallace never saw the noose and was only told about it by NASCAR President Steve Phelps after the FBI had been summoned to investigate, he's been accused by many in the public of orchestrating a hoax.

When Monday's race was halted with Wallace as the leader, social media was ablaze with comments attacking the 27-year-old Alabama native whose birthday is later this week.

"They just are haters. That's all you can really say about it," said Denny Hamlin, Wallace's team co-owner and a fellow driver. "I try to say to him, 'Don't get your motivation trying to prove haters wrong. Instead get your motivation from trying to do the people that support you proud.'"

"That's where the motivation is going to come from, is the people that are going to support you through the good times and the bad times," Hamlin said.

Wallace had driven through a crash and to the front of the field five laps before the second rain stoppage of the race. When he surged to the front, and with the entire field realizing that rain could halt the race at any time, runner-up Brad Keselowski recognized Wallace had likely just won the race with his pass.

"I was thinking, 'Oh, geez. I wish I would have made that move,'" Keselowski said. "(His) was the right move at the right time."

NASCAR tried to dry the track for nearly 45 minutes, but called things off as sunset approached and the rain showed no sign of ceasing.

Wallace had been waiting atop his pit stand and celebrated wildly with his crew when the decision came. Wallace is in his first season driving for 23X1 Racing, a team owned by both Hamlin and Michael Jordan.

"I'm so happy for Bubba and our entire 23XI Racing team. This is a huge milestone and a historic win for us," Jordan said in a tweeted statement. "From the day we signed him, I knew Bubba had the talent to win and Denny and I could not be more proud of him. Let's go!"

Wallace broke down in tears after he returned to his parked No. 23 Toyota, the car number picked for Jordan, who wore 23 in the NBA.

"This is for all the kids out there that want to have an opportunity and whatever they want to achieve, and be the best at what they want to do," Wallace said as he choked back tears. "You're going to go through a lot of (BS). But you always got to stick true to your path and not let the nonsense get to you.

"Stay strong. Stay humble. Stay hungry. Been plenty of times when I wanted to give up."

Wallace went to a makeshift victory lane inside an empty garage stall to celebrate with his team, which made a personnel change three races ago and named Bootie Barker his crew chief. It was the first victory for Barker in more than 400 races as a Cup crew chief.

The organization was formed a year ago and Wallace was the centerpiece based on all the corporations that entered NASCAR in support of Wallace and his social justice efforts. 23XI will expand to two cars next season with former series champion Kurt Busch joining the team.

No playoff drivers won a race at Talladega this weekend — Trucks, Xfinity and Cup all had first-time winners for the first time at the same track on the same weekend — and only Hamlin is locked into the third round of the Cup playoffs headed into next week's elimination race at Charlotte, North Carolina.

Hamlin, a three-time Daytona 500 winner, celebrated with Wallace following his own seventh-place finish.



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"It's just way more emotional because I know how difficult it is. These guys have worked so hard over the last 10 months to put this team together," Hamlin said. "We're still in the beginning stages of our team. We're still growing. We've got some great things on the horizon. It's just a great morale booster for everyone."

Keselowski finished second and was followed by Team Penske teammate Joey Logano in a pair of Fords. Busch was fourth in a Chevrolet.

Kevin Harvick, Christopher Bell, Alex Bowman and William Byron head to Charlotte in danger of elimination.  
UP NEXT

The final race in the second round of the playoffs is at The Roval at Charlotte Motor Speedway. The hybrid road course/oval is where the field of 12 will be trimmed to eight. Chase Elliott is the two-time defending race winner at The Roval. His victory last October was his first of three wins in the final five races that lofted Elliott to his first Cup championship.

More AP auto racing: <https://apnews.com/hub/auto-racing> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Sports](https://twitter.com/AP_Sports)

## Biden tells GOP to 'get out of the way' on debt limit

By JOSH BOAK and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Monday urged Republican senators to "get out of the way" and let Democrats suspend the nation's debt limit, hoping to keep the U.S. government from bumping dangerously close to a credit default as Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell refuses to lend his party's help.

Biden's criticism came with Congress facing an Oct 18 deadline to allow for more borrowing to keep the government operating after having accrued a total public debt of \$28.4 trillion. The House has passed a measure to suspend the debt limit, but McConnell is forcing Senate Democrats into a cumbersome process that could drag on and approach the deadline with little margin for error.

Both Biden and McConnell have promised that the country will avoid default, yet the public fight and political posturing risks an economic meltdown. The global economy relies on the stability of U.S. Treasury notes, and unpaid debt could crush financial markets and hurl America into recession. Biden noted that the debt limit applies to borrowing that has already occurred, including under former President Donald Trump, and said Republicans are hurting the country by blocking the limit's suspension.

"They need to stop playing Russian roulette with the U.S. economy," Biden said at the White House. "Republicans just have to let us do our job. Just get out of the way. If you don't want to help save the country, get out of the way so you don't destroy it."

Unmoved, McConnell said Republicans had given the Democrats a roadmap for dealing with the debt ceiling with months of warning.

"I suggest that our Democratic colleagues get moving," McConnell said at the Capitol.

Once a routine vote, the need to raise the nation's debt limit has become increasingly partisan. It's become a favorite political weapon of Republicans to either demand concessions or force Democrats into unpopular votes to enable more borrowing. McConnell has tied the vote to Biden's multitrillion-dollar tax and economic agenda that awaits Congressional approval. But Biden says the price tag in terms of debt for his plan will be "zero," paid for by raising taxes on corporations and on the wealthy, whom the House Democrats have defined as individuals earning more than \$400,000 a year, or couples making more than \$450,000.

Biden said he planned to talk with McConnell, who dug in with a letter of his own to the president.

"We have no list of demands. For two and a half months, we have simply warned that since your party wishes to govern alone, it must handle the debt limit alone as well," the Kentucky senator wrote in the Monday letter.

The financial markets have stayed relatively calm with interest rates on 10-year Treasury notes holding just below 1.5%. That rate is slightly higher than the all-time lows set last year as the coronavirus

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pandemic spread, but it's still lower than at any other time over nearly 60 years of data tracked by the Federal Reserve.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has projected the government will exhaust its cash reserves on Oct. 18, an event she says would likely trigger a financial crisis and economic recession. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer warned Monday that it would be hazardous for the economy to come anywhere near that deadline.

"The consequences of even approaching the X date could be disastrous for our economy and devastating to American families, raising the costs of borrowing for average Americans and hampering our economic recovery over the long-term," Schumer said in a letter to Democratic senators.

Democrats and Republicans are in a standoff over how to handle an extension for the debt ceiling. Republicans are insisting that Democrats go it alone with the same legislative tool that is already being used to try and pass Biden's plan to boost safety net, health and environmental programs. Democrats say that extending the debt limit has traditionally been a bipartisan effort and that the debt cap was built up under presidents from both parties.

Schumer said that if the debt issue is not resolved this week, the Senate will likely be forced to remain in session during the weekend and possibly the following week when senators were scheduled to be back in their home states.

Schumer also discussed the current state of play with the bipartisan \$1 trillion infrastructure bill that has already passed the Senate and is stuck in the House, as well as Biden's larger, \$3.5 trillion effort focused on social programs and the environment that would be offset by tax increases on corporations and the wealthy. He noted that the president visited with House Democrats on Friday to generate support for both measures.

"He encouraged them to stick together, compromise, and find the sweet spot that will allow us to complete our work," Schumer said. "I agree with his sentiment wholeheartedly – we can get this done, together, if we put aside our differences and find the common ground within our party."

Biden discussed the larger plan with progressive House Democrats during a virtual meeting Monday afternoon. And Schumer, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and top White House advisers huddled late Monday at the Capitol over it.

"We're making progress, Pelosi said as she exited. Schumer had said in an earlier letter to colleagues they need to reach a deal soon, preferably "days, not weeks."

Schumer and McConnell debated the debt ceiling when the Senate earlier Monday.

McConnell noted that Biden voted against raising the debt ceiling as a senator when Republicans controlled Congress and the presidency.

But Schumer said Democrats allowed for an up-or-down vote back then rather than requiring the majority to overcome a filibuster. He said Republicans should follow that example when he seeks to bring up the House-passed bill that would suspend the debt ceiling until December 2022.

"We aren't asking Republicans to support it when it comes time for a vote. We only ask that they get out of the way, let Democrats pass it on our own just as the majority party did in the early 2000s," Schumer said.

"The fact is we don't have the luxury of waiting until Oct. 18 to extend the debt ceiling," Schumer added. "Even a near miss can have dramatic consequences."

Biden will be traveling to Michigan on Tuesday to promote his legislative plan as negotiations resume in Washington. Democratic Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona have said they won't back a \$3.5 trillion spending bill. And many House Democrats won't support the smaller bipartisan infrastructure plan until they get an agreement on the larger measure.

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AP Chief Congressional Correspondent Lisa Mascaro contributed to this report.

**Did ship's anchor cause California oil spill? Maybe**

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By STEFANIE DAZIO and CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

HUNTINGTON BEACH, Calif. (AP) — Officials investigating one of California's largest recent oil spills are looking into whether a ship's anchor may have struck an oil pipeline on the ocean floor, causing heavy crude to leak into coastal waters and foul beaches, authorities said Monday.

The head of the company that operates the pipeline said company divers were inspecting the area of the suspected leak that was discovered Saturday, and he expected that by Tuesday there would be a clearer of what caused the damage.

A anchor from a cargo ship striking the pipeline is "one of the distinct possibilities" behind the leak, Amplify Energy CEO Martyn Willsher told a news conference. He said divers have examined more than 8,000 feet (2,438 meters) of the pipeline and were focusing on "one area of significant interest."

Cargo ships entering the twin ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach routinely pass through the area, Coast Guard officials said. Backlogs have plagued the ports in recent months and several dozen or more of the giant vessels have regularly been anchored as they wait to enter the ports and unload.

"We're looking into if it could have been an anchor from a ship, but that's in the assessment phase right now," Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. Jeannie Shaye said.

The spill sent up to 126,000 gallons (572,807 liters) of heavy crude into the ocean, contaminating the sands of famed Huntington Beach and other coastal communities. The spill could keep beaches closed for weeks or longer.

The Orange County district attorney, Todd Spitzer, said he has investigators looking into whether he can bring state charges for the spill even though the leak occurred in waters overseen by the U.S. government.

Spitzer also said Amplify's divers should not be allowed near the pipeline without an independent authority alongside them.

Other potential criminal investigations were being pursued by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Central District of California, the Coast Guard and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, officials said.

Safety advocates have pushed for years for federal rules that would strengthen oil spill detection requirements and force companies to install valves that can automatically shut down the flow of crude in case of a leak. The oil and pipeline industries have resisted such requirements because of the high cost.

"If the operator had more valves installed on this line, they'd have a much better chance at having the point of failure isolated by now," said Bill Caram with the Pipeline Safety Trust, an organization based in Bellingham, Washington.

The pipeline was built using a process known as electric resistance weld, according to a regulatory filing from the company. That welding process has been linked to past oil pipeline failures because corrosion can occur along seams, according to government safety advisories and Pipeline Safety Trust Director Bill Caram.

Annual reports filed with federal regulators in 2019 and 2020 showed inspections for the inside and outside of the pipe revealed nothing requiring repairs.

On Sunday as the extent of the spill was being revealed environmentalists had feared the oil might devastate birds and marine life in the area. But Michael Ziccardi, a veterinarian and director of the Oiled Wildlife Care Network, said only four oily birds had been found so far. One suffered chronic injuries and had to be euthanized, he said.

"It's much better than we had feared," he said at a news conference Monday.

Ziccardi said he's "cautiously optimistic," but it's too soon to know the extent of the spill's effect on wildlife. In other offshore oil spills, the largest number of oiled birds have been collected two to five days after the incident, he said.

Amplify operates three oil platforms about 9 miles (14.5 kilometers) off the coast of California, all installed between 1980 and 1984. The company also operates a 16-inch pipeline that carries oil from a processing platform to an onshore storage facility in Long Beach. The company has said the oil appears to be coming from a rupture in that pipeline about 4 miles (6.44 kilometers) from the platform.

In a 2016 spill-response plan submitted to federal regulators, the company said its worst-case spill scenario was based on the assumption of a "full guillotine cut" of the pipeline occurring 3 miles (4.8 kilometers)

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inland from one of its platforms. But an outside consultant concluded that a spill of that size was “very unlikely” at that location because the line is 120 feet deep and beneath a shipping lane where ships do not normally anchor.

The Beta oil field has been owned by at least seven different corporations since it was discovered by Royal Dutch Shell in 1976, records show. A corporate predecessor of Amplify bought the operation in 2012.

The Amplify subsidiary known as Beta Operating Co. has been cited 125 times for safety and environmental violations since 1980, according to a database from the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, the federal agency that regulates the offshore oil and gas industry. The online database provides only the total number of violations, not the details for each incident.

The company was fined a total of \$85,000 for three incidents. Two were from 2014, when a worker who was not wearing proper protective equipment was shocked with 98,000 volts of electricity. The worker survived. In a separate incident, crude oil was released through a boom where a safety device had been improperly bypassed.

In 1999, an undersea pipeline running between two platforms sprang two leaks totaling at least 3,800 gallons of oil, causing tar balls to wash up on beaches in Orange County.

The cause of the leaks was determined to be corrosion that caused pin-sized holes in the steel walls of the pipeline. The owner of the oil field at the time, a partnership between Mobil Oil Corp. and Shell Oil Co. called Aera Energy LLC, was fined \$48,000 by federal regulators — a penalty environmental groups criticized as a slap on the wrist.

Before the spill, Amplify had high hopes for the Beta oil field and was pouring millions of dollars into upgrades and new “side track” projects that would tap into oil by drilling laterally.

“We have the opportunity to keep going for as long as we want,” Willsher said in an August conference call with investors. He added there was capacity “up to 20,000 barrels a day.”

Investors shared Willsher’s optimism, sending the company’s stock up more than sevenfold since the beginning of the year to \$5.75 at the close of trading on Friday. The stock plunged 43% in trading Monday.

The company filed for bankruptcy in 2017 and emerged a few months later. It had been using cash generated by the Beta field and others in Oklahoma and Texas to pay down \$235 million in debt.

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Associated Press writers Michael Biesecker in Washington, Bernard Condon in New York, Matthew Brown in Billings, Montana, and Amy Taxin in Huntington Beach, California, contributed to this report.

## Hollywood’s behind-the-scenes crews vote to authorize strike

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Film and television production in North America is in jeopardy of coming to a standstill after its behind-the-scenes workers overwhelmingly voted to authorize a strike for the first time in its 128-year history.

The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees said Monday that nearly 99% of registered members who participated, or 52,706 people, voted in support of a strike over the weekend.

At issue is a contract standstill over requests for more reasonable conditions for the craftspeople, technicians and laborers working for streaming companies like Netflix, Apple and Amazon, including better pay, reasonable rest periods, safer hours and guaranteed meal breaks.

“I hope that the studios will see and understand the resolve of our members,” the alliance’s president, Matthew Loeb, said in a statement. “The ball is in their court. If they want to avoid a strike, they will return to the bargaining table and make us a reasonable offer.”

The most recent three-year contract expired in July, leading to four months of negotiations with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, the group that represents studios and streamers in negotiations. But on Sept. 20, the day after streaming shows like “The Crown,” “Ted Lasso” and “The Queen’s Gambit” swept the Emmy Awards, conversations came to a halt.

Loeb has said his goal is to reach an agreement, not to “have a dispute,” but noted the vote was about the “quality of life as well as the health and safety of those who work in the film and television industry.”

The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees has said it is "incomprehensible that the AMPTP, an ensemble that includes media mega-corporations collectively worth trillions of dollars, claims it cannot provide behind-the-scenes crews with basic human necessities like adequate sleep, meal breaks, and living wages."

The union added its members worked through the coronavirus pandemic to ensure their business emerged intact. "Now, we cannot and will not accept a deal that leaves us with an unsustainable outcome."

The Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers said in a statement it remains committed to reaching an agreement that will keep the industry working, particularly since it's still recovering from the economic fallout of the pandemic.

"A deal can be made at the bargaining table, but it will require both parties working together in good faith with a willingness to compromise and to explore new solutions to resolve the open issues," it said.

While unions like the Writers Guild of America have more frequently found themselves on the brink of a strike, and in 2007-08 did indeed go on strike for 100 days, Hollywood crews and the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees do not have a significant strike history. The only other previous dispute was when set decorators walked out for six months in 1945, resulting in a riot at the Warner Bros. studio gates that became known as "Bloody Friday." Should the stalemate this time result in a strike, it would be the first nationwide movement in the theatrical stage worker group's history.

Many prominent names in Hollywood have voiced public support for the crews demands, including actor and producer Octavia Spencer who tweeted her support Monday.

"I hope #AMPTP does the right thing and sits down again," Spencer wrote. "They're not asking for anything unreasonable."

## Refugee admissions hit record low, despite Biden's reversal

By JULIE WATSON Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Refugee admissions to the United States fell to a record low during the 2021 budget year, despite President Joe Biden's pledge to reverse the sharp cuts made by the Trump administration, according to figures obtained by The Associated Press.

A total of 11,445 refugees were allowed into the United States during the budget year that ended on Thursday, according to a person with access to the information who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to release the figure.

That number does not include the tens of thousands of Afghans brought to the United States as American troops withdrew from Afghanistan, ending the 20-year war there. Many of those Afghans were allowed into the country under a different legal status known as humanitarian parole, which is why they are not included in the refugee tally.

Still the number highlights Biden's challenges in reversing the restrictive refugee policies set by former President Donald Trump's administration, which targeted the program as part of a broader campaign to slash both legal and illegal immigration to the United States.

The U.S. president determines the cap on refugee admissions each budget year, which runs from Oct. 1 to Sept. 30. Biden didn't take office until almost four months after the last fiscal year began.

The State Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the number.

The 11,445 refugee admissions total falls far below the nation's cap of 62,500 for the 2021 budget year that Biden set in May. It's also below the record-low ceiling of 15,000 that Trump had initially set for the year.

Biden initially indicated he would not override the 15,000-person cap, saying in an emergency determination that it "remains justified by humanitarian concerns and is otherwise in the national interest."

But that brought sharp rebuke from Democratic allies who criticized him for not taking the symbolic step of authorizing more refugees this year. The White House quickly reversed course and raised the cap, though Biden said at the time that he did not expect the U.S. would meet the new 62,500 ceiling with only four months left in the 2021 budget year, given the ongoing restrictions put in place due to the coronavirus

pandemic and work the administration says is needed to rebuild the program.

Refugee advocates said the record-low number reflects the damage done by the Trump administration to the program. Before the 2021 budget year, the lowest number of refugees allowed in was during the 2020 budget year when the number hit 11,814.

The historical yearly average was 95,000 under previous Republican and Democratic administrations.

The Biden administration has expanded the narrow eligibility criteria put in place by his predecessor that had kept out most refugees, among other steps. But critics say it's not enough and that the Biden administration has moved too slowly.

It remains to be seen whether refugee admissions will reach anywhere near the 125,000 cap that Biden has set for the current budget year, which started Friday.

Krish O'Mara Vignarajah, president of the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, one of nine U.S. agencies working to resettle refugees, said efforts need to be accelerated to add personnel overseas, do more remote interviews and relieve the enormous backlog of refugee applications.

She said that while the program was gutted by the Trump administration, it is now Biden's responsibility to revive it.

"If we are to reach President Biden's goal of welcoming 125,000 refugees, the administration must be aggressive and innovative in ramping up processing," she said in a statement.

Mark Hetfield of HIAS, another resettlement agency, agreed that Biden "should have done better."

"What this record low number really shows ... is that the administration needs to remove the red tape and other obstacles that hinder the resettlement program from effectively responding to emergencies like Afghanistan," he said.

Biden, who co-sponsored legislation creating the refugee program in 1980, has said reopening the door to refugees is "how we will restore the soul of our nation."

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Associated Press writer Ellen Knickmeyer in Washington contributed to this report.

## Garland says authorities will target school board threats

By GARY FIELDS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General Merrick Garland on Monday directed federal authorities to hold strategy sessions in the next 30 days with law enforcement to address the increasing threats targeting school board members, teachers and other employees in the nation's public schools.

In a memorandum, Garland said there has been "a disturbing spike in harassment, intimidation, and threats of violence against school administrators, board members, teachers, and staff who participate in the vital work of running our nation's public schools."

To address the rising problem, Garland said the FBI would work with U.S. attorneys and federal, state, local, territorial and tribal authorities in each district to develop strategies against the threats.

"While spirited debate about policy matters is protected under our Constitution, that protection does not extend to threats of violence or efforts to intimidate individuals based on their views," he said.

The action is in response to an urgent request last week from the National School Boards Association. The group, which represents school board members around the country, asked President Joe Biden for federal assistance to investigate and stop threats made over policies including mask mandates, likening the vitriol to a form of domestic terrorism.

The association asked for the federal government to investigate cases where threats or violence could be handled as violations of federal laws protecting civil rights. It also asked for the Justice Department, FBI, Homeland Security and Secret Service to help monitor threat levels and assess risks to students, educators, board members and school buildings.

The group's letter documented more than 20 instances of threats, harassment, disruption, and acts of intimidation in California, Florida, Georgia, New Jersey, Ohio and other states. It cited the September arrest of an Illinois man for aggravated battery and disorderly conduct for allegedly striking a school official at a

meeting. In Michigan, a meeting was disrupted when a man performed a Nazi salute to protest masking.

"We are coming after you," a letter mailed to an Ohio school board member said, according to the group. "You are forcing them to wear mask — for no reason in this world other than control. And for that you will pay dearly." It called the member "a filthy traitor."

In making the announcement Garland said the Justice Department would use its authority and resources to discourage the threats and "prosecute them when appropriate. In the coming days, the Department will announce a series of measures designed to address the rise in criminal conduct directed toward school personnel."

School board members are largely unpaid volunteers, parents and former educators who step forward to shape school policy, choose a superintendent and review the budget, but they have been frightened at how their jobs have suddenly become a culture war battleground. The climate has led a growing number to resign or decide against seeking reelection.

In a statement, Chip Slaven, NSBA interim executive director and CEO, praised the Justice Department's swift action and pointed to the detrimental impact the threats of violence and intimidation have had on the education system.

"Over the last few weeks, school board members and other education leaders have received death threats and have been subjected to threats and harassment, both online and in person," Slaven said. The department's action "is a strong message to individuals with violent intent who are focused on causing chaos, disrupting our public schools, and driving wedges between school boards and the parents, students, and communities they serve."

## **UNICEF: Battered by pandemic, kids need mental health help**

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Governments must pour more money and resources into preserving the mental well-being of children and adolescents, the U.N.'s child protection agency urged in a report Tuesday that sounded alarms about blows to mental health from the COVID-19 pandemic that hit poor and vulnerable children particularly hard.

The United Nations Children's Fund said its "State of the World's Children" study is its most comprehensive look so far this century at the mental health of children and adolescents globally. The coronavirus crisis, forcing school closures that upended the lives of children and adolescents, has thrust the issue of their mental well-being to the fore.

UNICEF said it may take years to fully measure the extent of the pandemic's impact on young people's mental health. Psychiatrists quickly saw signs of distress, with children and adolescents seeking help for suicidal thoughts, anxiety, eating disorders and other difficulties as lockdowns and switching to remote learning severed them from friends and routines and as COVID-19 killed parents and grandparents.

"With nationwide lockdowns and pandemic-related movement restrictions, children have spent indelible years of their lives away from family, friends, classrooms, play — key elements of childhood itself," said UNICEF's executive director, Henrietta Fore.

"The impact is significant, and it is just the tip of the iceberg," Fore said. "Even before the pandemic, far too many children were burdened under the weight of unaddressed mental health issues. Too little investment is being made by governments to address these critical needs."

Pediatric psychiatrists say they were already short of resources before the pandemic brought a surge in caseloads. UNICEF said spending on promoting and protecting mental health "is extremely low" yet the needs are pressing. Citing pre-pandemic figures from 2019, UNICEF estimated nearly 46,000 children and adolescents ages 10 to 19 end their own lives every year.

The scale of pandemic-related distress among children and adolescents has jolted some governments into action. France, which is hosting a two-day global summit on mental health this week, has offered free therapy sessions for children and young people and pledged to extend that help from next year to everyone with a doctor's prescription. Elsewhere, counseling hotlines — some newly opened to help people

struggling with their mental health during the pandemics — saw surging demand.

UNICEF said multiple worries affect the mental health of children and adolescents, including anxieties over possible illness, lockdowns, school closures and other upheavals in their lives. Lockdowns also fueled behavior problems, and were particularly hard-felt by kids with autism and attention and hyperactivity disorders, UNICEF said.

Remote learning was beyond the reach of hundreds of millions of young people. One in three schoolchildren couldn't take part because they had no internet access or television, UNICEF said. Children in the poorest families were most affected. It estimated that two out of five children in eastern and southern Africa were still out of school as recently as July.

Even when they haven't been forced to drop out of school and work to help make ends meet, children also are being hit by the pandemic's destructive repercussions for jobs and economies. UNICEF said the crisis has triggered "a sharp uptick" in numbers of children in poverty, with an additional 142 million children thought to have slipped into poverty last year.

Financial hardship and school closures could also put more girls at risk of being forced into early marriage as child brides, UNICEF warned.

Although children and adolescents have been less likely to die from COVID-19 than older and more vulnerable people, UNICEF cautioned that the pandemic has clouded their long-term future and "upended their lives, and created real concern for their mental health and well-being."

"It will hang over the aspirations and lifetime earnings of a generation whose education has been disrupted," it said. "The risk is that the aftershocks of this pandemic will chip away at the happiness and well-being of children, adolescents and caregivers for years to come."

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Follow all AP stories on the coronavirus pandemic at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>.

## **Biden lifts abortion referral ban on family planning clinics**

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration on Monday reversed a ban on abortion referrals by family planning clinics, lifting a Trump-era restriction as political and legal battles over abortion grow sharper from Texas to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Department of Health and Human Services said its new regulation will restore the federal family planning program to the way it ran under the Obama administration, when clinics were able to refer women seeking abortions to a provider. The goal is to "strengthen and restore" services, said HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra.

Groups representing the clinics said they hope the Biden administration action will lead some 1,300 local facilities that left in protest over Trump's policies to return, helping to stabilize a longstanding program shaken by the coronavirus pandemic on top of ideological battles.

"I have heard that almost everywhere in the country people have made the decision that conditions will be good for them to return to the program," Clare Coleman, president of the umbrella group National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association, said in an interview. "My sense is that people have been waiting for the rule."

Planned Parenthood, the biggest service provider, said on Twitter its health centers look forward to returning. But the group criticized part of the Biden administration rule that allows individual clinicians who object to abortion not to provide referrals. The administration said that's "in accordance with applicable federal law."

Known as Title X, the taxpayer-funded program makes available more than \$250 million a year to clinics to provide birth control and basic health care services mainly to low-income women, many of them from minority communities. Under former President Donald Trump, clinics were barred from referring patients for abortions, prompting a mass exit by service providers affiliated with Planned Parenthood, as well as several states and other independent organizations.

Women's groups labeled the Trump policy a "gag rule," and medical organizations called it a violation of



the clinician-patient relationship.

But religious and social conservatives praised the policy for imposing a strict separation between family planning services and abortion. Under federal law, clinics cannot use federal family planning money to pay for abortions. However, abortion opponents argue that birth control funding for organizations like Planned Parenthood, the leading provider of abortions, amounts to an indirect subsidy.

On Monday, the National Right to Life Committee criticized the Biden administration for "supplementing the abortion industry through taxpayer funds."

Title X family planning clinics served about 3.9 million clients in 2018, but HHS estimates that number fell by nearly 40% after the Trump policy. The upheaval may have led to more than 180,000 unintended pregnancies, the agency said. In all, more than one-quarter of the clinics left the program. Although several states stepped up with their own no-strings-attached funding, women in some parts of the country still lost access.

Combined with service disruptions due to COVID-19 shutdowns, "this has just been a massive one-two punch to the system," said Coleman.

Biden campaigned on a promise to overturn the restrictions on family planning clinics, but abortion was not a central issue in the 2020 presidential race. It may become one in the 2022 midterm elections to determine who controls Congress.

Restrictive state laws in Texas, Mississippi and elsewhere have prompted a mobilization by abortion rights supporters, who fear a conservative-leaning Supreme Court will overturn the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion nationally. Hundreds of abortion-themed protests were held around the country Saturday, including one that brought thousands of abortion rights supporters to the steps of the court.

The Supreme Court has allowed the Texas law to take effect, but has not ruled on the substantive legal questions behind that statute, which bans most abortions in the state. The justices will hear arguments Dec. 1 on the Mississippi law, which bans most abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy.

The court now tilts decidedly to the right after Trump appointed three conservative justices. Twelve states have passed laws that would ban abortion entirely if Roe is overturned.

"Given the attacks on abortion in Texas and across the country, it's more important than ever that patients can access their choice of birth control and other health care through Title X," Planned Parenthood President Alexis McGill Johnson said in a statement.

The new abortion referral policy for family planning clinics will take effect Nov. 8.

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Associated Press writer David Crary contributed to this report.

## 2 win medicine Nobel for showing how we react to heat, touch

By DAVID KEYTON and MARIA CHENG Associated Press

STOCKHOLM (AP) — Two scientists won the Nobel Prize in medicine on Monday for their discoveries into how the human body perceives temperature and touch, revelations that could lead to new ways of treating pain or even heart disease.

Americans David Julius and Ardem Patapoutian separately identified receptors in the skin that respond to heat and pressure, and researchers are working on drugs to target them. Some hope the discoveries could eventually lead to pain treatments that reduce dependence on highly addictive opioids. But the breakthroughs, which happened decades ago, have not yet yielded many effective new therapies.

Julius, of the University of California at San Francisco, used capsaicin, the active component in chili peppers, to help pinpoint the nerve sensors that respond to heat, the Nobel Committee said. Patapoutian, of Scripps Research Institute at La Jolla, California, found pressure-sensitive sensors in cells that respond to mechanical stimulation.

"This really unlocks one of the secrets of nature," said Thomas Perlmann, secretary-general of the committee, in announcing the winners. "It's actually something that is crucial for our survival, so it's a very important and profound discovery."

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The committee said their discoveries get at “one of the great mysteries facing humanity”: how we sense our environment.

The choice of winners underscored how little scientists knew about that question before the discoveries — and how much there still is to learn, said Oscar Marin, director of the MRC Centre for Neurodevelopmental Disorders at King’s College London.

“While we understood the physiology of the senses, what we didn’t understand was how we sensed differences in temperature or pressure,” Marin said. “Knowing how our body senses these changes is fundamental because once we know those molecules, they can be targeted. It’s like finding a lock, and now we know the precise keys that will be necessary to unlock it.”

Marin predicted that new treatments for pain would likely come first, but that understanding how the body detects changes in pressure could eventually lead to drugs for heart disease, if scientists can figure out how to alleviate pressure on blood vessels and other organs.

Richard Harris, of the Chronic Pain and Fatigue Research Center at the University of Michigan, also said the new laureates’ work might help design new pain medications, but noted the field has long been stalled.

He said that because pain also includes a psychological component, simply identifying how it is triggered in the body isn’t necessarily enough to address it. Still, he said Julius’ and Patapoutian’s work would likely help doctors better treat pain that is caused by things like extreme temperatures and chemical burns.

“Their discoveries are giving us the first inkling of how this type of pain starts, but whether it’s involved in many chronic pain patients remains to be seen,” he said.

Still, Fiona Boissonade, a pain specialist at the University of Sheffield, said the Nobel laureates’ work was especially relevant for the one in five people globally that suffer from chronic pain.

Such pain — including from arthritis, migraines and chronic back problems — “is a huge medical problem, and it’s quite poorly treated across the board,” she said. “Their research may lead us to identify new compounds that are effective in treating pain that don’t come with the devastating impact of opioids,” which have spawned a crisis of addiction in the U.S.

In keeping with a long tradition of difficulties in alerting Nobel winners, Julius said he was awakened by what he thought was a prank phone call shortly before the prize was announced.

“My phone sort of bleeped, and it was from a relative who had been contacted by somebody on the Nobel Committee trying to find my phone number,” he said from his home in San Francisco, where it was the middle of the night.

It was only when his wife heard Perlmann’s voice and confirmed it was indeed the secretary-general of the committee who was calling, that he realized it wasn’t a joke. Julius said his wife had worked with Perlmann years ago.

Julius, 65, later said he hoped his work would lead to the development of new pain drugs, explaining that the biology behind even everyday activities can have enormous significance.

“We eat chili peppers and menthol, but oftentimes, you don’t think about how that works,” he said.

The Nobel Committee tweeted a photo of Patapoutian in bed with his son while he watched the announcement on his computer.

“A day to be thankful: this country gave me a chance with a great education and support for basic research. And for my labbies and collaborators for partnering with me,” Patapoutian, who was born in Lebanon, tweeted.

When the team made the discovery in 2009, “we were of course so excited and literally jumping up and down. It was something we were looking for for years,” Patapoutian said at a news conference.

Patapoutian is paid by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, which also supports The Associated Press’ Health and Science Department. Julius is an HHMI trustee.

The prestigious award comes with a gold medal and 10 million Swedish kronor (over \$1.14 million). The prize money comes from a bequest left by the prize’s creator, Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel, who died in 1895.

The prize is the first to be awarded this year. The other prizes are for outstanding work in the fields of

physics, chemistry, literature, peace and economics.

This story has been updated to correct the spelling of the pain specialist's last name to Boissonade.

Cheng reported from London. Associated Press writers Frank Jordans and Emma Tobin contributed.

## Missouri governor denies clemency to death row inmate

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

Missouri Gov. Mike Parson on Monday declined to grant clemency to death row inmate Ernest Johnson, despite requests for mercy from the pope, two federal lawmakers and thousands of petition signers.

Johnson, 61, was convicted of killing three convenience store workers during a closing-time robbery in 1994. He is scheduled to die by injection at 6 p.m. Tuesday at the state prison in Bonne Terre, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) south of St. Louis.

"The state is prepared to deliver justice and carry out the lawful sentence Mr. Johnson received in accordance with the Missouri Supreme Court's order," Parson, a Republican, said in a statement about his decision not to reduce the sentence to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Jeremy Weis, Johnson's lawyer, said he was "very disappointed" by the decision.

"We believe we made a compelling case to him that it was the right moral decision and I guess he disagreed," Weis said.

In a letter last week to Parson, a representative for Pope Francis wrote that the pope "wishes to place before you the simple fact of Mr. Johnson's humanity and the sacredness of all human life."

It wasn't the first time a pope has sought to intervene in a Missouri execution. In 1999, during his visit to St. Louis, Pope John Paul II persuaded Democratic Gov. Mel Carnahan to grant clemency to Darrell Mease just weeks before Mease was scheduled to be put to death for a triple killing.

In 2018, Pope Francis changed church teaching to say capital punishment can never be sanctioned because it constitutes an "attack" on human dignity. Catholic leaders have been outspoken opponents of the death penalty in many states.

Weiss said executing Johnson would violate the Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which prohibits executing intellectually disabled people. He said multiple IQ tests and other exams have shown that Johnson has the intellectual capacity of a child. He also was born with fetal alcohol syndrome and in 2008, he lost about 20% of his brain tissue to the removal of a benign tumor.

Racial justice activists and two Missouri members of congress — Democratic U.S. Reps. Cori Bush of St. Louis and Emmanuel Cleaver of Kansas City — had also called on Parson to show mercy to Johnson, who is Black.

Bush said in a phone interview that Black and Latino men are disproportionately likely to face the death penalty. She said executing someone who is intellectually disabled makes it even worse.

"Hopefully the governor will look at the fact that this would be a crime against humanity," Bush said.

The Missouri Supreme Court in August refused to halt the execution, and on Friday, it declined to take the case up again. Weis and other attorneys for Johnson on Monday asked the U.S. Supreme Court for a stay of execution.

"This is not a close case — Mr. Johnson is intellectually disabled," they wrote in their court filing.

Johnson admitted to killing three workers at a Casey's General Store in Columbia on Feb. 12, 1994 — manager Mary Bratcher, 46, and employees Mabel Scruggs, 57, and Fred Jones, 58. The victims were shot and attacked with a claw hammer. Bratcher also was stabbed in the hand with a screwdriver.

At Johnson's girlfriend's house, officers found a bag containing \$443, coin wrappers, partially burned checks and tennis shoes matching bloody shoeprints found inside the store.

Johnson previously asked that his execution be carried out by firing squad, but Missouri doesn't allow that method of execution. His lawyers argued that Missouri's lethal injection drug, pentobarbital, could trigger seizures due to the lost brain tissue.

Johnson was sentenced to death in his first trial and two other times. The second death sentence, in 2003, came after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that executing the mentally ill was unconstitutionally cruel. The Missouri Supreme Court tossed that second death sentence and Johnson was sentenced for a third time in 2006.

If the execution takes place as scheduled, it would be the seventh in the U.S. this year but the first not involving either a federal inmate or a prisoner in Texas.

The peak year for modern executions was 1999, when there were 98 across the U.S. That number had gradually declined and just 17 people were executed last year — 10 involving federal prisoners, three in Texas and one each in Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama and Missouri, according to a database compiled by the Death Penalty Information Center.

## **Ozy CEO: 'premature' to shut down after week of scandal**

By TALI ARBEL AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The CEO of Ozy Media on Monday said it had been "premature" to shut down the company and that he wants to keep operating, despite a scandal-ridden week that exposed Ozy as an outlet without much of an audience.

Carlos Watson, a former former cable-news commentator and host who founded Ozy in 2013, told CNBC that he met with advertisers and investors over the weekend and that he wants Ozy to continue.

In an emailed statement Monday, the company characterized the troubles of the past week as "a bump in the road" that it is "committed to getting past," saying "we are excited to reopen and expect to start resuming operations over the next few days." Ozy is trying to get employees to come back and said newsletters would resume this week and video production at the end of the month.

Ozy's board of directors said Friday that the company was ceasing operations. The shutdown came less than a week after a New York Times column raised questions about the media organization's claims of millions of viewers and readers, while also pointing out a potential case of securities fraud.

The story triggered canceled shows, an internal investigation, investor concern and high-level departures at the company before it shut down Friday.

The Times story also said Ozy's chief operating officer and co-founder, Samir Rao, impersonated a YouTube executive on a call with Goldman Sachs while attempting to raise money from the investment bank. Regarding that call, Watson said: "I don't know. I wasn't there." He then went on to say that they eventually "figured out what happened," but did not explain further. "Look — it's heartbreaking, it's wrong, it's not good, it's not OK," Watson said. "I love Goldman, I worked there, I've got a lot of friends there."

Mountain View, California-based Ozy, which had raised more than \$70 million from investors as of late 2019, according to the website Crunchbase, has long been suspected of inflating its audience size. Watson claimed last week that Ozy had 25 million subscribers to its newsletter and 30 million YouTube views. The New York Times, with a much bigger brand presence, says it has 15 million newsletter readers. The newspaper reported that fewer than 500,000 people went to Ozy's website in June and July, according to Comscore data. Ozy was seemingly paying for much of its audience rather than building a real base of readers and viewers.

To restart, the company would have to reestablish trust with employees, advertisers and investors. It shut down abruptly, distressing workers. It has been caught in several dishonest situations apart from traffic. It reportedly told people who worked on its interview series, "The Carlos Watson Show," that it would be on cable TV, but then episodes were just uploaded to YouTube. Watson interviewed celebrities like Bill Gates and Matthew McConaughey for the online show. On CNBC Monday, Watson said "We originally conceived the show with A&E," and then "shifted to YouTube," and there was "lots of miscommunication in that."

On Thursday, Marc Lasry, the hedge-fund billionaire and Milwaukee Bucks co-owner who had been named Ozy's chairman in September, resigned, citing Ozy's need for someone experienced in crisis management and investigations. He remained an investor. A high-profile employee, former BBC anchor Katty Kay, had resigned earlier in the week, and an early investor, a venture capital firm, gave up its Ozy shares. The

board had reportedly hired a law firm to review Ozy's business activities.

— Matt Ott contributed to this report.

## Billie Eilish becomes youngest star to headline Glastonbury

LONDON (AP) — Nineteen-year-old pop singer Billie Eilish has broken numerous records in her short career. Now she will become the Glastonbury Festival's youngest-ever solo headliner when she takes the stage at the 2022 event.

Eilish teased the news on Sunday on Instagram, posing herself wearing a Glastonbury hoodie in a photo captioned "2022." The festival's organizers confirmed Monday that the American singer will perform on June 24.

"This feels like the perfect way for us to return and I cannot wait!" organizer Emily Eavis said.

The festival was supposed to celebrate its 50th anniversary last year, but it was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. This year it hosted a five-hour livestream event featuring Coldplay and Damon Albarn, among others.

Eilish has taken the world by storm since she broke onto the scene in 2015 with her debut single "Ocean Eyes." The young singer has since won Grammys for record of the year, album of the year, song of the year and best new artist.

Eilish made her Glastonbury debut in 2019 after her set was upgraded from a slot on the John Peel stage during the five-day music festival held in Somerset, southwest England.

Eilish is also the youngest performer to write and record a James Bond theme song. She was among the stars at the "No Time To Die" Bond film world premiere in London last week.

Eilish will be 20 years and 6 months old when she headlines the Glastonbury festival in June 2022.

— This story corrects an erroneous reference to when Eilish's James Bond theme song came out. It was not last month.

## California spill came 52 years after historic oil disaster

By CHRISTINA LARSON AP Science Writer

The weekend oil leak along the Southern California coast happened not far from the site of the catastrophe more than a generation ago that helped give rise to the modern environmental movement itself: the 1969 Santa Barbara spill.

That still ranks in the top tier of human-caused disasters in the United States and is the nation's third-largest oil spill, behind only the 2010 Deepwater Horizon and 1989 Exxon Valdez calamities.

During a 10-day period in early 1969, between about 3.5 million and 4.2 million gallons of crude spilled into the Santa Barbara Channel after a blowout six miles offshore on a Union Oil drilling platform. The disaster area was about 115 miles from the site of the 126,000-gallon spill over the weekend that fouled Huntington Beach, a celebrated surfing spot.

The Union Oil rig had been controversial since its inception, but local California communities hadn't been given any voice in decisions about drilling in federal waters. And corners were cut during the construction process: Regulations called for protective steel casing to extend at least 300 feet below the ocean floor, but the company obtained a waiver allowing it to install only 239 feet of casing.

In the aftermath of the spill, thousands of oil-coated birds perished and photos of the carnage on beaches were widely circulated in newspapers and magazines.

President Richard Nixon visited the site in March 1969 and told reporters, "It is sad that it was necessary that Santa Barbara should be the example that had to bring it to the attention of the American people."

That example — of communities left out of crucial decisions and corners cut to save time or money for large companies — garnered national attention and caused outrage. It added momentum to the movement to organize the first Earth Day the next year.

Wisconsin Sen. Gaylord Nelson, an early environmentalist, visited the Santa Barbara oil spill site and later said it inspired him to organize "a nationwide teach-in on the environment."

The oil spill was not the only U.S. environmental crisis in the 1960s. The links between rampant overuse of the pesticide DDT and damaged ecosystems — including the dwindling population of bald eagles — were the subject of Rachel Carson's seminal 1962 book, "Silent Spring."

A raft of far-reaching federal environmental legislation was enacted in the early 1970s, including the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency (1970) and the passage of the Clean Air Act (1970) and Clean Water Act (1972).

"It's frustrating that spills like this keep happening," said Damon Nagami, a senior attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council, as he walked along cordoned-off areas of Huntington Beach. "I grew up near here, so this feels really personal."

"These are entirely preventable catastrophes," he said, though he added that managing offshore drilling is complex because "there are lots of regulatory bodies with overlapping responsibilities, depending on whether the activity is happening in federal waters, state waters or international waters."

Oil spills damage coastal ecosystems, marine life and, if the oil-laden water moves into storm drainage systems, local communities. "Once the oil gets into an ecosystem, it's hard to get out," Nagami said. "The impacts are felt for years, for decades."

Don Anair, a research and deputy director at the Union of Concerned Scientists, said oil spills are "a very visible image of our reliance on fossil fuels."

"We should be doing all we can to make sure the infrastructure is as safe as possible, but even that won't fully eliminate the risk of oil spills," he said. "The longer-term solution here has to be transitioning to using other sources of energy" to power our vehicles.

According to the EPA, the transportation sector is the country's largest primary contributor to climate change, responsible for around 29% of greenhouse gas emissions.

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Follow Christina Larson on Twitter: @larsonchristina

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

## Doctors grow frustrated over COVID-19 denial, misinformation

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

The COVID-19 patient's health was deteriorating quickly at a Michigan hospital, but he was having none of the doctor's diagnosis. Despite dangerously low oxygen levels, the unvaccinated man didn't think he was that sick and got so irate over a hospital policy forbidding his wife from being at his bedside that he threatened to walk out of the building.

Dr. Matthew Trunsky didn't hold back in his response: "You are welcome to leave, but you will be dead before you get to your car," he said.

Such exchanges have become all-too-common for medical workers who are growing weary of COVID-19 denial and misinformation that have made it exasperating to treat unvaccinated patients during the delta-driven surge.

The Associated Press asked six doctors from across the country to describe the types of misinformation and denial they see on a daily basis and how they respond to it.

They describe being aggravated at the constant requests to be prescribed the veterinary parasite drug Ivermectin, with patients lashing out at doctors when they are told that it's not a safe coronavirus treatment. People routinely cite falsehoods spread on social media, like an Illinois doctor who has people tell him that microchips are embedded in vaccines as part of a ploy to take over people's DNA. A Louisiana doctor has resorted to showing patients a list of ingredients in Twinkies, reminding those who are skeptical about the makeup of vaccines that everyday products have lots of safe additives that no one really

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understands.

Here are their stories:

**LOUISIANA DOCTOR:** 'Just stop looking at Facebook'

When patients tell Dr. Vincent Shaw that they don't want the COVID-19 vaccine because they don't know what's going into their bodies, he pulls up the ingredient list for a Twinkie.

"Look at the back of the package," Shaw, a family physician in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. "Tell me you can pronounce everything on the back of that package. Because I have a chemistry degree, I still don't know what that is."

He also commonly hears patients tell him they haven't done enough research about the vaccines. Rest assured, he tells them, the vaccine developers have done their homework.

Then there are the fringe explanations: "They're putting a tracker in and it makes me magnetic."

Another explanation left him speechless: "The patient couldn't understand why they were given this for free, because humanity in and of itself is not nice and people aren't nice and nobody would give anything away. So there's no such thing as inherent good nature of man. And I had no comeback from that."

People who get sick with mild cases insist that they have natural immunity. "No, you're not a Superman or Superwoman," he tells them.

He said one of the biggest issues is social media, as evidenced by the many patients who describe what they saw on Facebook in deciding against getting vaccinated. That mindset has spawned memes about the many Americans who got their degrees at the University of Facebook School of Medicine.

"I am like, 'No, no, no, no, no.' I shake my head, 'No, no. That is not right, no, no. Stop, stop, just stop looking at Facebook.'"

**DALLAS ER DOCTOR:** Baffled at how he's 'lost all credibility' with anti-vaccine patients

Dr. Stu Coffman has patients tell him they are scared about vaccine side effects. They don't trust the regulatory approval process and raise disproven concerns that the vaccine will harm their fertility. He said the most unexpected thing someone told him was that there was "actually poison in the mRNA vaccine" — a baseless rumor that originated online.

He is confounded by the pushback.

"If you've got a gunshot wound or stab wound or you're having a heart attack, you want to see me in the emergency department," he said. "But as soon as we start talking about a vaccine, all of a sudden I've lost all credibility."

He said the key to overcoming hesitancy is to figure out where it originates. He said when people come to him with concerns about fertility, he can point to specific research showing that the vaccine is safe and their issues are unfounded.

But he says there's no hope in changing the minds of people who think the vaccines are laced with poison. "I'm probably not going to be able to show you anything that convinces you otherwise."

And he thinks he could change people's minds about the vaccine if they could follow him around for a shift as he walks past the beds of the sick and dying, almost all of whom are unvaccinated.

**KENTUCKY:** Political views come into clear focus after diagnosis

Dr. Ryan Stanton recently had a patient who began their conversation by saying, "I'm not afraid of any China virus." From that point on, he knew what he was up against in dealing with the patient's politics and misguided beliefs about the virus.

Stanton blamed people like far-right conspiracy theorist Alex Jones for spreading some of the misinformation that has taken root among his patients. Among them is that the vaccine contains fetal cells. Another said it "is a simple fact that the vaccine has killed millions."

"In fact," he said, "that couldn't be more wrong."

It's tough to watch, especially after living through the early surges. On his worst shift last fall, an elderly nursing home patient arrived, close to death. She hadn't seen her family in months, so staff wheeled her outside in the ambulance bay so her relatives could say their goodbyes from 20 feet away. He snapped a picture of the scene so he could remember the horror.

There was hope after the vaccines arrived, but then came the delta variant and a slowdown in immu-

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nizations.

"Really it amazes me the number of people who have this huge fear, conspiracy theory about vaccines and will honest to God try anything, including a veterinary medicine, to get better," said Stanton.

**MICHIGAN PULMONOLOGIST:** Facebook post unleashes his frustration

For Trunsky, the vaccine pushback grew so intense that he turned to Facebook to describe the ire he confronts on a daily basis at Beaumont Hospital in Troy, Michigan. The post listed eight encounters he had in the two previous days alone in which COVID-19 patients explained misinformation-fueled reasons for not getting vaccines or made demands for unproven treatments.

Example No. 5 was a patient who said he'd rather die than take the vaccine. Trunsky's response: "You may get your wish."

He has heard a litany of misinformation about the vaccine: They say it's not proven and only experimental when in fact it is not. Others tell him the vaccine is a "personal choice and that the government shouldn't tell me what to do." He also has heard patients tell them they are too sick and didn't want to risk the side effects of the vaccine. One young mother told him she wasn't vaccinated because she was breastfeeding, although her pediatrician and obstetrician urged her it was safe. She had to be hospitalized but eventually got a shot.

Others, though, take out their anger on health care providers. Some threaten to call attorneys if they don't get a prescription for Ivermectin, commonly used by veterinarians to kill worms and parasites. The drug can cause harmful side effects and there's little evidence it helps with the coronavirus.

He estimates that he has cared for 100 patients who have died since the pandemic began, including the man who threatened to walk out of the hospital.

**ILLINOIS FAMILY PHYSICIAN:** Traces misinformation back to Scripture, Nicki Minaj

Dr. Carl Lambert hears lots of wild misinformation from his patients. Some comes from the Bible interpretations; some originates from the rapper Nicki Minaj.

Some of it is the stuff of internet conspiracy theories, like there's a chip in the vaccine that will take over their DNA.

"Impossible scientifically," says the family physician in Chicago. He also hears patients tell him that the vaccine will weaken their immune systems. He responds: "Immunology 101. Vaccines help your immune system."

Recently he received a flurry of messages from patients who were worried about damage to their testicles — a rumor he ultimately traced back to an erroneous tweet from Minaj alleging that the vaccine causes impotence.

"And I was like, 'That's outlandish. That's a bit outrageous.' So a lot of just kind of counseling that I did not expect to have to do."

Some of the misinformation is delivered from the pulpit, he said. People have sent him sermons of preachers saying the vaccine is "ungodly or there's something in it that will mark you," a reference to a verse in Revelation about the "mark of the beast" that some Christians cite in not getting vaccinated.

"There's a mixture of like almost fear ... and saying, 'Hey, if you do this, maybe you're not as faithful as you should be as, say, a Christian.'"

Most common, though, is patients just wanting to wait, uneasy with how quickly the vaccine was developed. But he warns them, "Please do not try to wait out a pandemic. A pandemic will win."

He said his job is "a lot of just dismantling what people have heard," answering their questions and reassuring them that "vaccines work like this just like when we were kids."

He has had some luck lately in changing minds. "I've had patients that maybe four months ago said 'You are wasting your time. Dr. Lambert, I don't want to hear you talking about it.' And they'll come back and say, 'Hey, you know what? I've been watching the news. I've seen some stuff. I think I'm ready now.'"

**UTAH DOCTOR:** Fear of vaccine side effects, then fear of dying

When Dr. Elizabeth Middleton talks to COVID-19 patients about why they aren't vaccinated, they often cite fear of side effects. But as they get sicker and sicker, a different sort of fear sets in.

"They sort of have this sinking look about them, like 'Oh, my God. This is happening to me. I should



have been vaccinated," said the pulmonary critical care doctor at the University of Utah hospital in Salt Lake City.

She hears often that the vaccine was developed too quickly. "Who are you to judge the speed of science?" she wonders.

Also frustrating is the idea among some patients that there is a "secret agenda" behind getting vaccinated. "There must be something wrong if everyone is forcing us to do this or everyone wants us to do this," patients tell her. "And my response to that is, 'They are urging you to do it because we are in an emergency. This is a pandemic. It is a national and international crisis. That is why we are pushing it.'"

Getting through to patients and their families is a "delicate line," she says. She tries not to disrupt the patient-doctor relationship by pushing vaccines too hard. But often the people who have been on ventilators need no convincing.

"They are like, 'Tell everyone that they have to be vaccinated. I want to call my family. They need to be vaccinated.'"

## Ethiopian PM begins 2nd term saying war exacts 'heavy price'

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (AP) — Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was sworn in Monday for a second five-year term running a country in the grip of a nearly year-long war against Tigray forces he described as "hateful" toward the nation, while a handful of visiting African leaders urged him to hold things together.

The Tigray conflict "has made us pay a heavy price," Abiy told a crowd in the capital, Addis Ababa. And he bristled at international pressure as concerns grow over the war's human toll, saying "there are those who showed us their true friendship and those who betrayed us." He didn't name names.

Abiy's Prosperity Party was declared the winner of parliamentary elections earlier this year in a vote criticized and at times boycotted by opposition parties, but described by some outside electoral observers as better run than those in the past.

The prime minister, the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize winner for restoring ties with neighboring Eritrea and for pursuing sweeping political reforms, now faces major challenges as war in the Tigray region spreads into other parts of the country, deadly ethnic violence continues and watchdogs warn that repressive government practices are on the return.

Abiy said the country will start an "inclusive national dialogue that includes everyone who believes in a roundtable discussion," led by Ethiopians.

The 11-month war is weakening Ethiopia's economy, once one of Africa's fastest-growing, and threatening to isolate Abiy, once seen as a regional peacemaker. Six African heads of state — from Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda and neighboring Somalia, Djibouti, Kenya and South Sudan — attended Monday's ceremony.

"Today, more than ever before, we hope to see an Ethiopian nation that is at peace with itself," Djibouti's president, Ismail Omar Guelleh, told the crowd. "We all know how fragile peace is in our region. ... We remain certain that the Ethiopian nation is bigger and stronger than whatever ails her."

Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta added that "Ethiopia is our mother. If our mother is not at peace, neither can the family be at peace."

Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki, in a message shared by his information minister, expressed hope that the trajectory of his country and Ethiopia "will be further enhanced and consolidated ... in spite of efforts by negative external forces of regression." The president, who has never allowed national elections since independence from Ethiopia, didn't attend Monday's events.

Ethiopia's government last week faced condemnation from the United Nations, the United States and several European nations after it expelled seven U.N. officials it accused of supporting the Tigray forces who have been battling Ethiopian and allied forces.

The government is under growing pressure as people begin to starve to death in Tigray under what the U.N. has called a "de facto humanitarian blockade." Last week the U.N. humanitarian chief told The Associated Press that the situation in Ethiopia is a "stain on our conscience."

The U.S. has threatened further sanctions if humanitarian access to Tigray isn't granted soon and the

warring sides don't take steps toward peace. Thousands of people have been killed in the war waged between the Tigray forces who once dominated the national government and Ethiopian and allied forces.

As Abiy faces another term, "I think it will give the government the chance to renew its commitment to reform and to enhance the human rights situation in the country," Amnesty International researcher Fisseha Tekle told The Associated Press. "They have a parliament which is dominated by one ruling party, so if they have the commitment, they also have the opportunity to do that."

The results of a joint investigation into the conflict by the U.N. human rights office and the government-created Ethiopian Human Rights Commission will be released on Nov. 1, a few days before the war's one-year mark.

## Jordanian king's properties undercut father figure image

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Jordan's King Abdullah II was meeting with the World Bank president, asking for more financial support for his country's battered economy, just around the time the news broke: A trove of leaked documents revealed the king had secretly bought more than a dozen luxury homes in the U.S. and Britain for over \$100 million in the past decade.

Abdullah was one of scores of public figures identified as holders of hidden offshore accounts. But perhaps nowhere was there a more evident contradiction between the public man and the private one, for the king has carefully cultivated an image as a caring father of a struggling nation, and it turns out he has amassed an empire of luxury real estate.

"Nobody's going to turn a blind eye to this," said Dave Harden, a former senior official at the U.S. Agency for International Development who is now running for Congress as a Democrat in Maryland. He said even a perception of misspending could lead to calls for greater oversight of future American assistance to Jordan.

Abdullah was on a long list of world leaders, politicians, billionaires, celebrities, religious leaders and drug dealers who have been hiding their investments in mansions, exclusive beachfront property, yachts and other assets for the past quarter-century, according to a report Sunday by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists.

The report, based on a review of nearly 12 million files obtained from 14 firms around the world, was dubbed the "Pandora Papers." There were no allegations of illegal activity or misuse of international aid money.

Still, the report came at a delicate time for Abdullah. The country's economy has struggled in recent years, and his leadership came under scrutiny earlier this year when his half-brother accused the "ruling class" of corruption. Seen by the West as a force of moderation and stability in the volatile Middle East, Abdullah relies on billions of dollars of international aid — a flow that could be disrupted if donors believe their assistance is being squandered.

Abdullah angrily denied any wrongdoing, saying the homes had been kept secret because of security concerns and were purchased with personal funds.

"Any allegations that link these private properties to public funds or assistance are baseless and deliberate attempts to distort facts," a statement from the Royal Hashemite Court said Monday.

It called any such suggestions "defamatory and designed to target Jordan's reputation as well as his majesty's credibility."

In the short term, Abdullah does not appear to face any threat at home. When his half-brother, Crown Prince Hamzah, leveled his accusations of corruption and incompetence last April, he was quickly placed under house arrest.

Hamzah has been seen in public just once since then and remains incommunicado. Two former top aides, meanwhile, have been sentenced to 15-year prison terms for incitement and sedition over their roles in an alleged plot with Hamzah.

In an apparent sign of concern, the Jordanian media, most of which is directly or indirectly controlled by the palace, made no mention of the Pandora Papers affair. Even independent Jordanian media outlets engage in self-censorship, avoiding criticism of the royal family and security forces.

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Jordan's economy has fallen onto hard times over the past decade, hit by an influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing war in neighboring Syria and, more recently, by the coronavirus pandemic.

According to the World Bank, Jordan's economy contracted slightly last year, while unemployment spiked to 25%. The country of 10 million is divided between a small middle and upper class with close ties to the government, and impoverished masses living in city slums, outlying villages and refugee camps.

"When anyone lives in hardship, difficult conditions and extreme poverty, it is difficult to see their rulers living in prosperous conditions," said Maisara Malas, a union activist who has joined antigovernment protests seeking lower taxes and an end to corruption.

Abdullah, who took power in 1999 after the death of his father, King Hussein, has sought to straddle these worlds by portraying himself as father figure.

He is careful not to flaunt his wealth. Though he spends lengthy periods overseas, he does so quietly, often at undisclosed locations.

He meets with powerful tribal leaders in Jordan's hinterlands to underscore his local roots. Posters in government offices and on billboards often show the king wearing a red Arab headdress or military uniform.

Last year, his then-prime minister, Omar Razzaz, launched an effort to crack down on tax evasion, corruption and "smuggling money into tax havens."

On Monday, the king paid a visit to tribal leaders and other dignitaries in Badia, a region south of the capital Amman, where he said Jordan was being threatened by destabilizing forces.

"There is a campaign against Jordan, and there are still those who want to sabotage and build suspicions," he said. "There is nothing to hide."

Labib Kamhawi, a Jordanian analyst, said that given the media blackout and lack of internet use among the poorest, he did not see any immediate threat to the king. But he said that as word of the scandal spread, it could be "very damaging" domestically.

But perhaps more troubling, he said, is that it could anger donor nations. According to Jordan's official Petra News Agency, the country received some \$5 billion in foreign aid last year, both in unrestricted budget assistance and specially earmarked grants. More than a quarter of that money came from the U.S. alone.

"It is bound to affect the ability of Jordan to solicit aid easily," Kamhawi said.

As a strategic Western ally and with a peace agreement with Israel, Jordan remains too important to be abandoned by the international community. President Joe Biden this year called Abdullah a "loyal and decent friend."

U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price would not comment specifically on Abdullah's real estate holdings but said: "When it comes to our assistance to Jordan, we have been helping to improve the lives of the Jordanian people for over six decades. We carefully conduct monitoring and evaluation of all of our assistance programs to ensure they're implemented according to their intended purpose."

Price said that American aid to Jordan is in the national security interest of the United States, because it helps the country secure its borders, promote stability and participate in countering the Islamic State group.

Harden, the former U.S. aid official, said it is a common concern in the profession that assistance ends up being misused and helping corrupt leaders instead of everyday people. He said to avoid that, money is often earmarked for specific development projects and tightly supervised.

He predicted a "serious review" of any unrestricted aid to Jordan but said he expects money to continue to flow to programs with tight safeguards. Even so, he said the disclosures in the Pandora Papers look bad for the king.

"It cuts against the core of what we are trying to achieve," he said.

## What's old is new again: Justices back at court for new term

By MARK SHERMAN and JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court returned to the courtroom Monday for the start of a momentous new term, after a nearly 19-month absence because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Abortion, guns and religion all are on the agenda for a court with a rightward tilt, including three justices