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Upcoming Events

Saturday, Oct. 9

Soccer Second Round Playoffs
Volleyball at Redfield Tourney (Warner at 9 a.m., Belle Fourche at 9:45 a.m., reseed pools after that. Keep up to date at GDILIVE.COM and watch the Groton Area matches!)

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, 8-11 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 6:55 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



Starting 10/24/21, you must dial the area code for all calls. This change supports 988 as the new 3-digit code to reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

Help Wanted

Applications will be accepted for skating rink manager and attendants for the City of Groton. Contact City Hall 397-8422 for an application or print one online at <http://city.grotonsd.gov/>. EOE.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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Groton Area wins NEC Championship outright; moves up to number two in the state

Clark/Willow Lake defeated Aberdeen Roncalli last night, 20-19. That was the second loss for Roncalli and that loss gave Groton Area the Northeast Conference championship outright in football. Groton has only one loss on the season in the conference while everyone else now has at least two losses. This was a bye week for Groton Area.

Meanwhile in the state power ratings, Groton Area has now moved up to the number two spot in the state, behind Winner.

#	Name	Season			Seed Pts	Home			Away			Opponents			vs .500 ↑			vs .500 ↓		
		W	L	PCT		PTS	W	L	PCT	W	L	PCT	W	L	PCT	W	L	PCT	W	L
1	 Winner	7	0	1.000	46.571	3	0	1.000	3	0	1.000	29	23	.558	5	0	1.000	2	0	1.000
2	 Groton Area	6	1	.857	43.286	2	1	.667	4	0	1.000	22	34	.393	3	1	.750	3	0	1.000
3	 Sioux Valley	5	1	.833	43.167	3	0	1.000	2	1	.667	26	26	.500	3	1	.750	2	0	1.000
4	 Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan	4	2	.667	42.833	3	1	.750	1	1	.500	30	23	.566	2	2	.500	2	0	1.000
4	 Woonsocket/Wessington Springs/Sanborn Central	4	2	.667	42.833	2	2	.500	2	0	1.000	30	22	.577	1	2	.333	3	0	1.000
6	 Mount Vernon/Plankinton	5	1	.833	42.667	3	0	1.000	2	1	.667	24	28	.462	0	1	.000	5	0	1.000
7	 Aberdeen Roncalli	5	2	.714	42.571	3	0	1.000	1	2	.333	28	28	.500	3	2	.600	2	0	1.000
7	 St. Thomas More	5	2	.714	42.571	2	0	1.000	1	0	1.000	27	28	.491	1	2	.333	4	0	1.000
9	 Redfield	5	2	.714	42.143	4	1	.800	1	1	.500	27	29	.482	2	2	.500	3	0	1.000
10	 Elk Point-Jefferson	4	2	.667	41.833	1	1	.500	3	1	.750	25	28	.472	1	2	.333	3	0	1.000

GFP Commission Holds October Meeting

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission held their October meeting at Cadillac Jack's in Deadwood. The commission finalized proposals from their September meeting.

The commission approved to standardize check out times for all modern lodging (lodges, camping and modern cabins, and suites) to 11 a.m., reducing customer confusion and allowing for adequate time to clean between stays. Campsite check out was not included in the changes and will remain 4 p.m.

The commission also approved to allow for the sale of the following year's park license earlier than Oct. 1 if necessary. Allowing some flexibility with the issue date will help meet customers expectations. An example is someone visiting a park on Sept. 30 would be able to purchase the new license for the upcoming year.

Due to increased use and the need for basic services, the commission approved to increase camping fees at Dude Ranch, Elm Creek and Sheps Canyon to \$11/day.

The commission also approved to reclassify Randall Creek from a preferred to a prime campground due to high occupancy rates. This increases the Randall Creek camping fee to \$22/day.

The camping fee for the Custer State Park French Creek Horse Camp was approved for an increase from \$31 to \$36/day by the commission in 2019. The increase was inadvertently omitted from the package that went to the Interim Legislative Rules Committee, and has been re-approved.

The next GFP Commission meeting will be held November 4-5 in Pierre.

Governor Noem Appoints First Members to Freedom Scholarship Board

PIERRE, S.D. — Governor Kristi Noem today announced the appointment of five board members for the Freedom Scholarship endowment. The appointments set the stage for the state to begin delivering awards for its first-ever needs based-scholarship program. Dana Dykhouse, Miles Beacom, Phyllis Heineman, Diana Vanderwoude, and Chris Houwman will serve as the inaugural board members for the Freedom Scholarship endowment.

"I am grateful to these five South Dakotans for volunteering their experience and talents to help us launch the Freedom Scholarship. This endowment will allow us to tap into a network of students who are eager to excel in their studies and professional pursuits," Governor Noem said. "This scholarship will ensure that South Dakota is securing some of the top talents in our colleges and universities. As more and more companies move to our state, we need today's workforce ready to take on tomorrow's jobs."

Dana Dykhouse is the CEO of First PREMIER Bank and currently serves on the board of the Build Dakota Scholarship Fund. Miles Beacom is the CEO of PREMIER Bankcard and has a strong record of community service, including as a member of the Board of Governors of the University of South Dakota Beacom School of Business. Phyllis Heineman is a former educator, South Dakota State University alum, and has previously served on numerous boards, including the South Dakota Partners in Education. Diana VanderWoude has 40 years of experience in healthcare administration and education and is currently the Vice President of Learning, Education, and development for Sanford Health. Chris Houwman is CEO and President of Malloy and currently serves on the South Dakota Workforce Development Council.

The Freedom Scholarship endowment was created in the 2021 legislative session. Senate Bill 171 initially authorized \$50 million to be allocated to the Freedom Scholarship endowment. In partnership with First Premier Bank, T. Denny Sanford, and other private donors, the fund is now at more than \$175 million in commitments.

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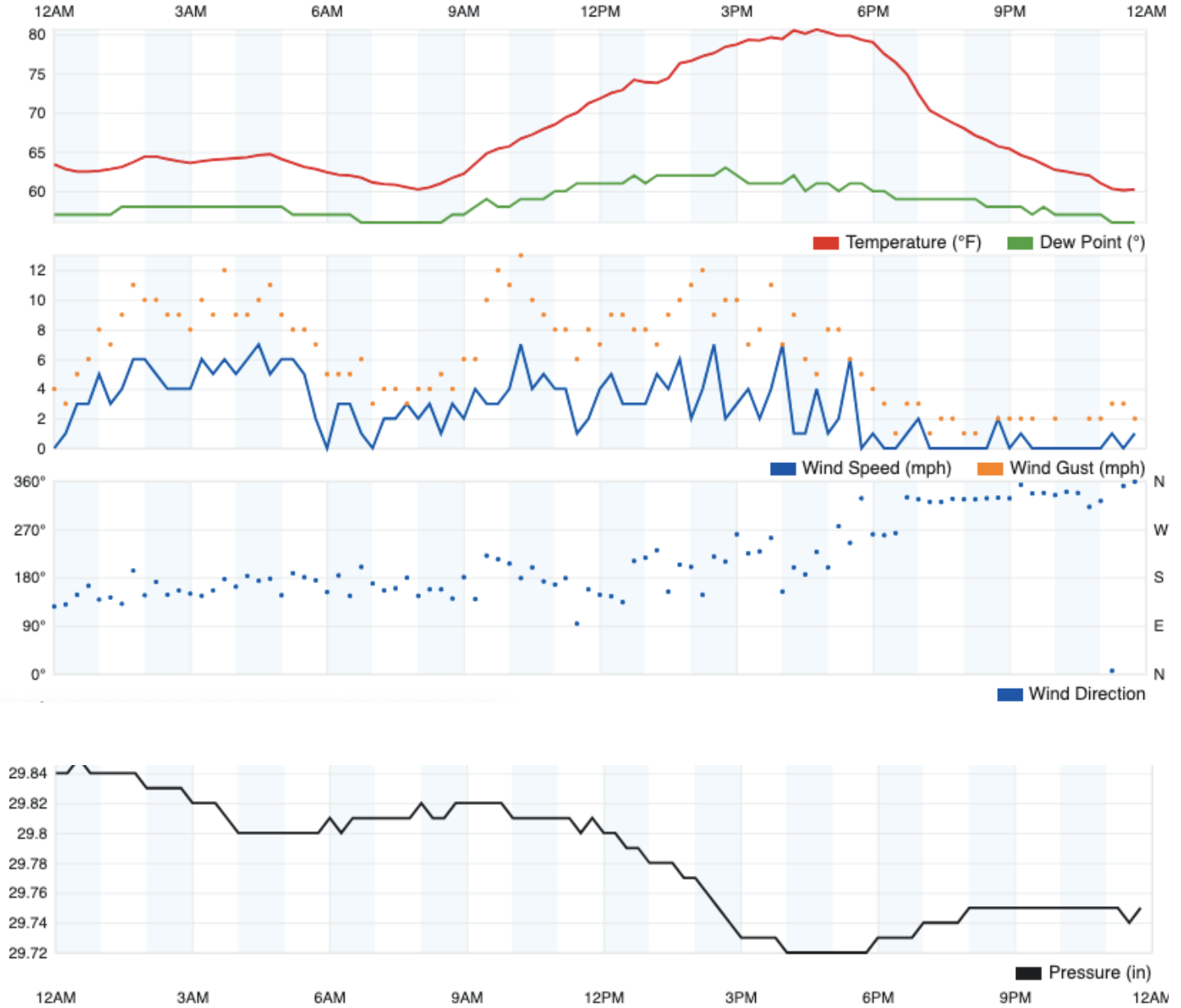
The Lake Region Marching Festival was held Friday in Groton. Above is the Groton Area High School Marching Band and below is the Junior High Band. (Photos lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)



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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Columbus Day
				
70% 90%	80% 80%	70%		
Shows Likely and Patchy Fog then Severe Thunderstorms	T-storms then Shows	Shows Likely and Breezy	Partly Cloudy	Sunny
High: 69 °F	Low: 50 °F	High: 62 °F	Low: 42 °F	High: 67 °F



Severe Storms Possible Later Today

October 9, 2021
1:23 AM

Timing



3 PM CDT - 9 PM CDT

Actions



Be weather aware and ready to act.
Have multiple ways to receive
warning information!

Severe Threats



Few Tornadoes

Isolated tornadoes possible in slight risk area



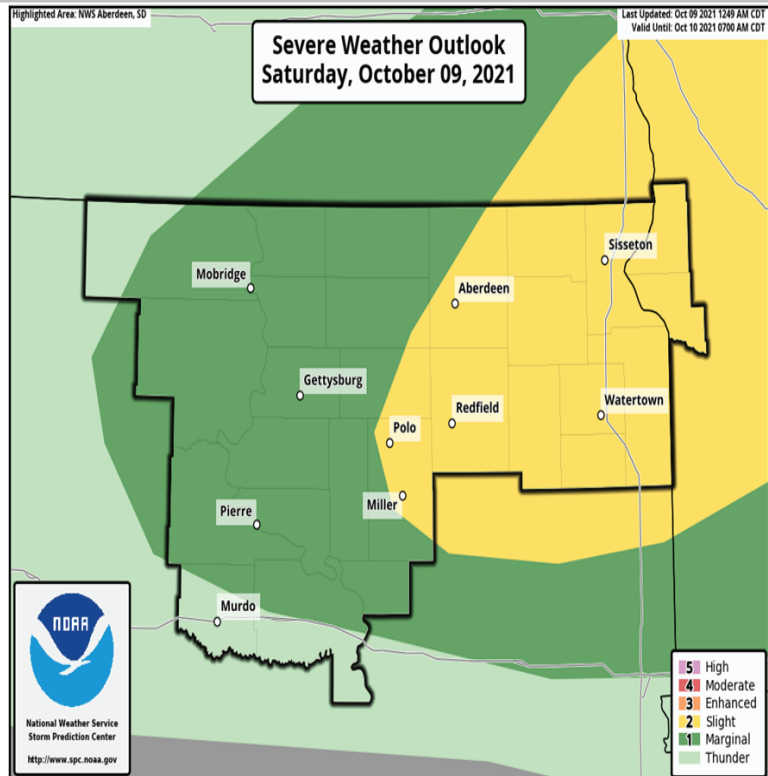
Large Hail

Hail up to golfball size



Damaging Wind

Gusts to 70 mph possible



Aberdeen, South Dakota

A system will move into the region this afternoon and evening, with showers and thunderstorms becoming increasingly likely. Some severe storms are possible toward late afternoon, with hail, heavy rain, strong winds and even isolated tornadoes possible. #sdwx #mnwx

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Today in Weather History

October 9, 1964: Record cold occurred on this day in 1964 across parts of central and northeast South Dakota with temperatures falling into the mid-teens to around 20 degrees at many locations. Sisseton had a record low of 20 degrees; Watertown had a record low of 16 degrees, with Kennebec recording the lowest temperature of 13 degrees on this day in 1964. Although not a record low, Aberdeen fell to 14 degrees.

October 9, 1980: On this day in 1980, hot air streamed across central and northeast South Dakota as well as west-central Minnesota with highs mostly in the 80s. Record highs were established at Watertown with 86 degrees and both Wheaton and Sisseton with 87 degrees. One of the warmest temperatures across the area was 89 degrees at Kennebec.

1804: The famous Snow Hurricane moved ashore near Atlantic City on this day. After briefly passing through Connecticut and into Massachusetts, cold air was entrained in the circulation with heavy snow falling between New York to southern Canada. Berkshires Massachusetts and Concord New Hampshire record two feet of snow with this hurricane. This storm produced the first observation of snow from a hurricane, but not the last. Hurricane Ginny of 1963 brought up to 18 inches (400 mm) of snow to portions of Maine.

1903 - New York City was deluged with 11.17 inches of rain 24 hours to establish a state record. Severe flooding occurred in the Passaic Valley of New Jersey where more than fifteen inches of rain was reported. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1981 - The temperature at San Juan, Puerto Rico, soared to 98 degrees to establish an all-time record for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Eighteen cities in the southeastern U.S. and the Middle Atlantic Coast Region reported record low temperatures for the date. Asheville NC dipped to 29 degrees, and the record low of 47 degrees at Jacksonville FL marked their fourth of the month. A second surge of cold air brought light snow to the Northern Plains, particularly the Black Hills of South Dakota. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Ten cities in the northeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Hartford CT with a reading of 28 degrees. Snow continued in northern New England through the morning hours. Mount Washington NH reported five inches of snow. Warm weather continued in the western U.S. Los Angeles CA reported a record high of 102 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Unseasonably cold weather continued in the Upper Midwest. Thirteen cities in Ohio, Michigan and Indiana reported record low temperatures for the date, including Marquette MI with a reading of 20 degrees. Unseasonably warm weather continued in the western U.S. as the San Francisco Giants won the National League pennant. San Jose CA reported a record high of 91 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

2001: An unusually strong fall outbreak of tornadoes spawned at least 23 twisters across parts of Nebraska and Oklahoma. Hardest hit was the town of Cordell, OK, but a 22 minute lead time led to an amazingly low casualty count: only nine injuries and no fatalities.

2013: The Puglia region of southern Italy saw tornadoes on this day.

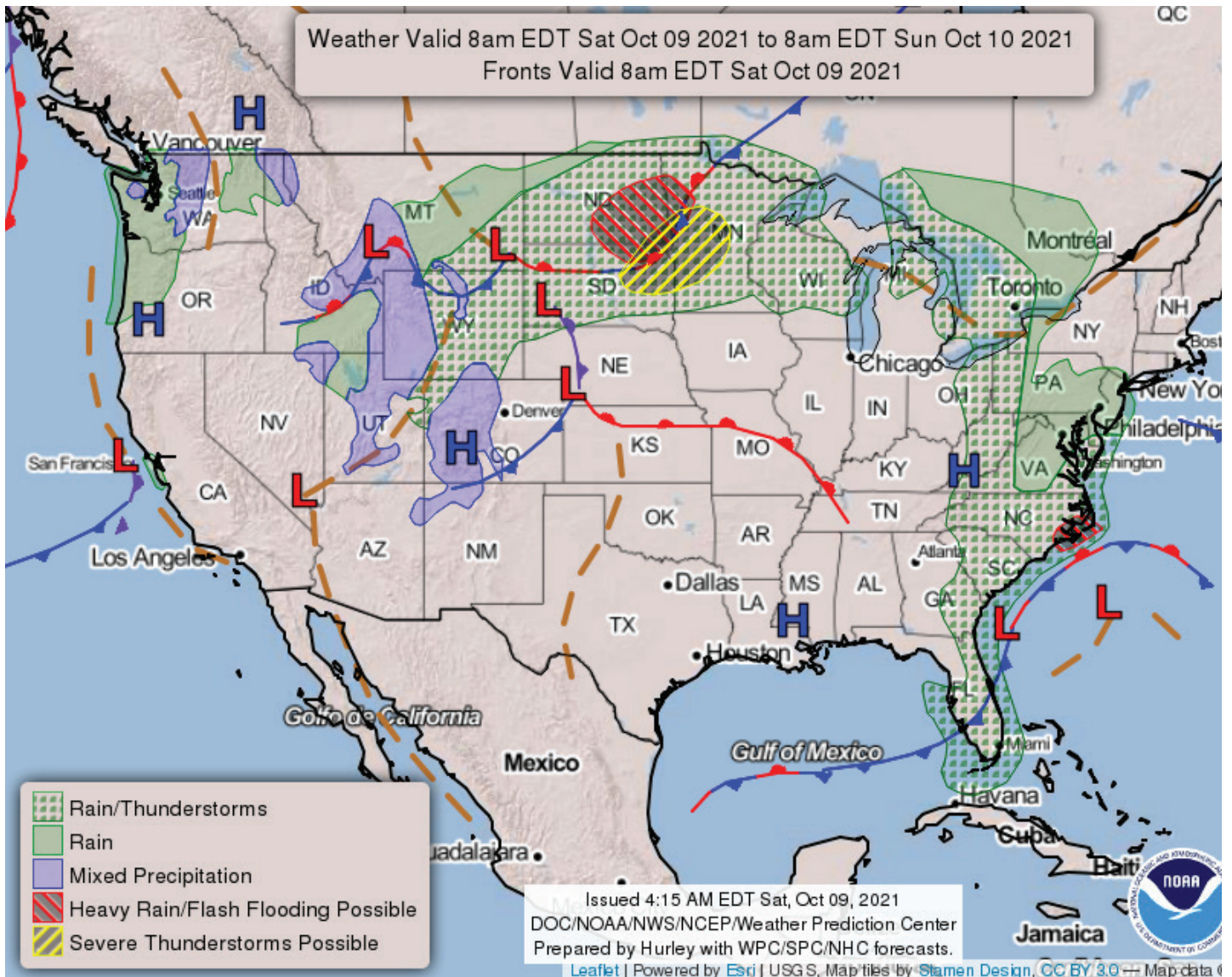
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 81 °F at 4:45 PM
Low Temp: 60 °F at 11:58 PM
Wind: 13 mph at 10:16 AM
Precip: 0.00

Record High: 86° in 2020
Record Low: 14° in 1964
Average High: 63°F
Average Low: 37°F
Average Precip in Oct.: 0.68
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.28
Average Precip to date: 19.01
Precip Year to Date: 15.70
Sunset Tonight: 6:59:02 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:41:18 AM



Issued 4:15 AM EDT Sat, Oct 09, 2021
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Hurley with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts.

Leaflet | Powered by Esri | USGS, Map tiles by Stamen Design, CC BY 3.0 | Map data ©

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GOD'S CHARACTER

The waiting passenger became furious with the gate attendant when the time of departure for his flight had been delayed. "What good are those numbers if you have to change them and tell us that the flight is being delayed?" he demanded.

"Well, sir," said the attendant, "no one would be prepared for the departure of the flight unless we keep our passengers informed. The numbers tell people what to do"

There is a strong statement about the character of God in Psalm 102. The people were suffering and felt separated from God because of the sin in their lives. We often forget that suffering and sin are inseparable. And instead of wanting to give up their sin, they wanted to be delivered from their suffering. But that's not the way God works!

"You will arise and have compassion," he wrote, "for it is time to show favor to Your chosen." There was no doubt in his mind that God would show compassion - but it would be in His time and on His terms. Our God is a righteous God, and we cannot expect Him to show us His favor if we are disobedient to His Word. It tells us what to do.

"You will arise," said the Psalmist in confidence. He knew that God was attentive to their needs. He knew that "the appointed time had come."

What determines the "appointed time" for God to respond to our prayers? Our attitude: repenting and asking for His forgiveness. When we take this first step, He will begin to respond to our requests for His help and begin to work His miracles in our lives.

Prayer: Father, may we understand the fact that we must confess and forsake our sins if we want Your help. Your gifts depend on our faithfulness to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: You will arise and have compassion for it is time to show favor to Your chosen. Psalm 102:13

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2021 Community Events

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

News from the Associated Press

A growing worry for charities: Tax havens for the rich

By HALELUYA HADERO AP Business Writer

A spotlight that has been thrown on how many of the rich and powerful shield their wealth is also intensifying a fear among philanthropy experts: That the tax havens being used by the wealthy will increasingly siphon money away from charitable causes.

Wealthy Americans have long sought to use charitable contributions to reduce their tax burdens. But the "Pandora Papers" report, issued Sunday by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, revealed how world leaders, billionaires and others have stashed trillions of dollars out of the reach of governments by using shell companies and offshore accounts, which are considered legal.

One maneuver described in the report, a "dynasty trust," can exist in perpetuity in states like South Dakota. Using these trusts, Americans can legally shield themselves from estate and other taxes — and thereby remove a major incentive for charitable giving.

When the wealth of an American individual or couple exceeds a threshold — \$11.7 million or \$23.4 million, respectively — each dollar value above that level, once bequeathed, is subject to a federal estate tax of up to 40% for each generation.

But a carefully crafted dynasty trust helps succeeding generations avoid those taxes. And the longer the trusts last, the longer the user can avoid taxes and the longer he or she may lack a financial incentive to donate to a charity.

Experts note some Americans are also legally able to avoid state income taxes on revenue generated by their assets by setting up trusts in states that don't levy income taxes. One of them is South Dakota, which also doesn't have its own estate, capital gains or inheritance tax, thereby making it an especially attractive destination to park wealth.

"There's every reason to think that the ultimate effect of this type of wealth being put into these vehicles will also be a long-term loss in revenue for charitable organizations," said Ray Madoff, a professor at Boston College Law School who teaches philanthropy policy and taxes. "The impact on the charitable sector, I would say, is probably already underway, but will grow over time."

Tax policy, after all, consistently affects charitable giving. After the tax law changes pushed through Congress by President Donald Trump in 2017, charitable donations dropped 1.3% in 2018 compared with the prior year, the Treasury Department reported. Normally, such donations tend to grow at roughly the same pace as the nation's gross domestic product, which climbed 5.2% that year.

As the Biden administration promotes its plans to raise taxes on wealthy Americans, it is building into its estimates the consideration that many people who would be affected by the tax increases would donate more to charities to lower their tax burden. But for many wealthy individuals, trusts like those outlined in the "Pandora Papers" would reduce their tax burden without the charitable giving.

Trusts allow one person, a grantor, to transfer assets to a trustee who then manages and directs them for a third beneficiary. In such states as South Dakota, Alaska and Nevada, though, the person who transfers assets could name themselves the beneficiary of a trust. These so called "self-settled trusts" can shield assets from creditors and further reduce tax burdens by moving the assets out of the taxable estate, said Mitchell Gans, a professor at Hofstra University who specializes in tax law.

South Dakota also deploys strict privacy laws to keep trusts out of the public eye. It is a feature that wealth advisors use as they appeal to potential clients with prospects of growing multi-generational wealth. According to the investigative report, the state's trust assets have skyrocketed to \$360 billion during the past decade alone.

For charities, it's difficult to know what the long-term consequences of the trusts will be. Officials at numerous philanthropies and lobbying organizations declined to comment on the impact of the "Pandora Papers" revelations on charitable giving because, they said, they lack data on how widespread the use of

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these tax havens is.

But some studies suggest there might be some impact. According to a recent study by the consulting firm CCS Fundraising, 25% of donors cited the tax deduction as a motivation for their charitable giving. A joint study from Bank of America and the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy found that 22% of the wealthy donors surveyed would reduce their donations if tax deductions for charitable giving were eliminated. The same study found that 51% of wealthy donors said they sometimes contribute to charity to receive a tax benefit.

Patrick Rooney, a professor of economics and philanthropic studies at Indiana University, said he believes that dynasty trusts will undermine philanthropic donations. Removing incentives for charitable contributions, he said, essentially raises the price of giving. On the other hand, Rooney noted, lower taxes could drive donors to contribute more to the causes they care about on their own terms.

"Most high-net-worth households are donors to different types of charities for different reasons," he said. "So we would expect some of these folks, even though they're trying to evade taxes, (to) also have some philanthropic impulses. But we won't know that for a while."

Chuck Collins, director of the Inequality and the Common Good program at the progressive think tank Institute for Policy Studies, said that many wealthy Americans view their philanthropy as part of their wealth preservation technique. Still, he noted, some who are charitably inclined might nevertheless want to avoid taxes.

"I think that's probably a pretty big category (of people)," he said.

AP Business Writer Glenn Gamboa contributed to this report.

The Associated Press receives support from the Lilly Endowment for coverage of philanthropy and nonprofits. The AP is solely responsible for all content. For all of AP's philanthropy coverage, visit <https://apnews.com/hub/philanthropy>.

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press undefined

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Harding County def. Newell, 25-11, 25-19, 27-25

East/West Tournament=

Brandon Valley def. Rapid City Stevens, 25-11, 25-19

Brandon Valley def. Sturgis Brown, 25-17, 25-5

Brookings def. Rapid City Stevens, 26-24, 25-20

Harrisburg def. Douglas, 25-3, 25-12

Harrisburg def. Rapid City Central, 25-13, 25-15

Harrisburg def. Spearfish, 25-14, 25-14

Sturgis Brown def. Brookings, 18-25, 25-22, 27-25

Watertown def. Douglas, 25-18, 17-25, 25-6

Watertown def. Rapid City Central, 25-9, 22-25, 25-23

Watertown def. Spearfish, 25-15, 29-27

Yankton def. Douglas, 25-13, 25-15

Yankton def. Rapid City Central, 27-25, 25-20

Yankton def. Spearfish, 25-17, 25-9

Scheels Metro Tournament=

Pool F=

Fargo Shanley, N.D. def. Sioux Falls Lincoln, 25-21, 25-18

Sioux Falls Lincoln def. Kindred, N.D., 25-11, 28-26

Sioux Falls Lincoln def. Valley City, N.D., 25-16, 21-25, 15-6

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

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

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press undefined

PREP FOOTBALL=

Arlington/Lake Preston 44, Deubrook 18

Avon 76, Centerville 42

Beresford 28, Baltic 0

Bon Homme 24, Viborg-Hurley 18

Brandon Valley 54, Mitchell 0

Britton-Hecla 62, Waverly-South Shore 7

Brookings 42, Huron 14

Canton 35, Chamberlain 7

Chester 42, Irene-Wakonda 14

Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 58, Oelrichs 8

Clark/Willow Lake 20, Aberdeen Roncalli 19

Colman-Egan 52, Estelline/Hendricks 20

Deuel 42, Sisseton 0

Elk Point-Jefferson 38, Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan 21

Faulkton 50, North Central Co-Op 14

Florence/Henry 34, Elkton-Lake Benton 20

Gayville-Volin 58, Colome 8

Gregory 28, Platte-Geddes 8

Hamlin 28, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 20

Hanson 32, Canistota 24

Harding County 66, Newell 14

Harrisburg 62, Rapid City Central 12

Herreid/Selby Area 56, Potter County 20

Hitchcock-Tulare 48, Great Plains Lutheran 23

Howard 42, Garretson 35

Ipswich 68, Leola/Frederick 20

Jim River 52, Tripp-Delmont/Armour/Andes Central/Dakota Christian 27

Kadoka Area 30, New Underwood 16

Lead-Deadwood 26, Custer 6

Little Wound 60, Standing Rock, N.D. 2

Lower Brule 56, Crow Creek 14

Lyman 50, Philip 0

Madison 35, Dell Rapids 7

McCook Central/Montrose 44, Parker 7

McLaughlin 66, Marty Indian 16

Milbank 41, Webster 3

Mobridge-Pollock 57, Dakota Hills 7

Pierre 52, Watertown 42

Red Cloud 26, Todd County 24

Sioux Falls Christian 21, Dakota Valley 20

Sioux Falls O'Gorman 62, Rapid City Stevens 14

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Sioux Falls Roosevelt 40, Sioux Falls Washington 27
Sioux Valley 48, Flandreau 14
Spearfish 24, Douglas 6
St. Thomas More 35, Belle Fourche 13
Stanley County 56, Sunshine Bible Academy 6
Sully Buttes 22, Langford 8
Tea Area 42, Aberdeen Central 20
Timber Lake 52, Faith 0
Tiospa Zina Tribal 66, Omaha Nation, Neb. 12
Vermillion 28, West Central 26
Warner 44, Northwestern 0
Winnebago, Neb. 54, St. Francis Indian 0
Wolsey-Wessington 48, Kimball/White Lake 13
Yankton 48, Sturgis Brown 7

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

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

Residents plagued by sinkhole call on Noem, others for help

By SIANDHARA BONNET Rapid City Journal

BLACK HAWK, S.D. (AP) — Hideaway Hills residents are tired of waiting for answers and, in some cases, feel abandoned by politicians who received their votes in previous elections.

"This was our nest egg," Valerie Smith said this week. "We planned to sell and now that's our house, our business. We're ready to retire and we don't know what to do. We're in our 50s, so what do we do?"

Smith and her husband, Cole, still live in their home on Prairie Violet Lane in the Black Hawk neighborhood where a sinkhole exposed an abandoned gypsum mine on April 27, 2020. About 40 people from 15 homes were forced to evacuate.

Since the sinkhole opened, two law firms representing more than 100 residents filed lawsuits, performed tests and studies. One law firm is trying to receive class-action certification, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Smith said they haven't heard from local or state governments officials, which only adds to the deepening frustration for the residents of Hideaway Hills.

"I wish our Gov. Kristi Noem would do something for us," she said. "It wouldn't take that much to fix our neighborhood versus worrying about big fireworks displays. Why don't you take the millions (of tax dollars) and fix neighborhoods for the people that actually voted for you?"

Smith asked the same of the Meade County Commission. She said the entire experience has made her belief in the government and elected officials worse.

"We do like Kristi Noem, we agree with a lot of the things she does, but I just won't understand why she won't help these middle-class people that voted for her and are going to lose everything," Smith said.

Courtney Ahrendt, who bought her house in November 2012 when her son was 8 years old, said no one with Meade County or the state has reached out or helped anyone in the neighborhood.

"It kind of feels like they turned their backs on us," she said. "It's like they threw their hands up and said, 'Not me!' ... It's nothing but a bunch of good ol' boys scratching each other's backs to make a buck."

Ahrendt said she's all for the government being less involved, but those who are involved should be vetted thoroughly.

She said all she wants from the county is a fair market value for her home and every dime she paid to the county in property taxes.

Ahrendt said her house, where she still lives, is in Rainier Court and has a basement that goes 12 feet underground. She said the master bedroom is on the bottom floor and it feels like the ground is hollow

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beneath her. She said she won't sleep down there anymore and instead sleeps upstairs in her daughters' room.

The Smiths bought their house around 2000 when it was brand new. She said when they found out about the sinkhole, they were in an absolute panic.

"We thought our home was also going to sink along with our business, everything we've worked for, and our retirement," Smith said. "We're too old to start over, and we really don't feel that it's fair that we should have to."

The Smith's home on a corner with its six bedrooms, three bathrooms and hot tub lot was valued at \$222,000. It is now worth \$111,000, Smith said.

Stephany Fischer said she and her family bought their house in September 2019. She said this is the second home for her and her husband and three kids. They have a yard, all the kids have their own room — it was going well.

When COVID-19 took over in 2020, the kids returned home and couldn't go to school and "everything was just a complete nightmare," Fischer said.

She said they knew nothing about the mine when they bought their home.

"I knew it was a good neighborhood from other people that live in Black Hawk," she said. "All of a sudden a sinkhole opens up. ... We just freaked out, like oh my gosh, what's going on? I mean who would have thought, you know, a mine."

Fischer said they're now in a constant state of worry about their home, and seeing how big the mine could be from the initial mapping to the studies now leaves them with more questions.

She said since the sinkhole opened, the neighborhood has become divided.

"Everybody made their decisions as far as what they felt was best for them, but instead of people coming together as a community, there's destruction happening where there's people upset with one law firm and these people are upset with the other law firm," Fischer said. "It's like living in a battlefield. Your neighbors, everybody, everything that's going on as far as who's responsible."

Fischer is one of three voting members on the Northdale Sanitary District Board, which governs the streets, sidewalks and utilities for the Hideaway Hills and Northdale subdivisions.

At the September meeting for the board, Fischer, the lone Hideaway Hills resident, was the only board member to vote against allowing Fox Rothschild and its contractors to continue drilling to find out what's truly beneath the surface.

She said she voted no because of a lack of communication and concerns that if utilities were hit, service would be disrupted.

Geologic consultant Nick Anderson, retained by Fox Rothschild, a national law firm trying to reach class-action certification, said drilling is the only way to confirm what's actually in the ground.

He said three organizations have done surface studies for the mine and all had different interpretations of the data. He said when they spoke with Western Engineers and Geologists of Rock Springs, Wyoming, they said drilling was the only way to confirm what the data was showing.

Anderson said Western Engineers and Geologists regularly works with complicated coal mines, some of which are on fire, and have a tested and true method for drilling while taking safety precautions. Drilling began the first week of September but was stopped due to residents' concerns.

After a 2-1 vote, Anderson and the drilling team resumed work this week.

The second of two studies commissioned by the Rapid City-based Fitzgerald Law Firm shows an additional 30 homes in the neighborhood could be at risk, along with a section of Interstate 90.

Mohamed Khalil, the geoscientist for the study, said the seasonal fluctuation of the groundwater table over the past few decades created conditions for a sinkhole in any weak spot.

Smith said right now their house is OK, but they don't know how long it will be. She said the drilling concerns her and her husband because of the dueling information from both law firms.

She also said there was drilling in front of her house recently and they were worried about the utilities.

Fischer said having the competing information and recommendations is nerve-racking.

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"Who's right, who's wrong, and that's not our job. That's what I originally thought, it wasn't our job to determine which scientist is correct," Fischer said. "None of this is normal. When it comes to any kind of decision-making, this is unheard of."

She said all she and her family do now is live their lives, take care of their kids, and compartmentalize what they can.

"There's nothing I can do about it, so when the information comes, you deal with it," she said. "I guess you just try to stay focused on your job, your kids, what's for dinner tonight. You can't let it consume you because I have absolutely no control over it and there's nothing I can do. It's a never-ending story of more bad news."

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

21-24-36-40-70, Mega Ball: 22, Megaplier: 5

(twenty-one, twenty-four, thirty-six, forty, seventy; Mega Ball: twenty-two; Megaplier: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$60 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$31 million

South Dakota woman convicted in her baby's 1981 death

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota woman was convicted of manslaughter Friday in the death of her newborn son whose body was discovered in a ditch 40 years ago.

Theresa Bentaas, 60, of Sioux Falls, entered an Alford plea to first-degree manslaughter in an agreement with prosecutors in which they dropped two murder charges, the Argus Leader reported. The Alford plea allows Bentaas to maintain her innocence while also authorizing the court to enter a guilty plea. Bentaas previously had pleaded not guilty to the three charges.

The newborn known as "Baby Andrew" was found wrapped in a blanket in a cornfield ditch in Sioux Falls in 1981. An autopsy determined he died of exposure.

Police arrested Bentaas in March 2019 after investigators reworked the case and determined through advanced DNA testing that she was the mother.

Mike Webb, a Sioux Falls police detective who worked on the cold case, discovered all testable DNA evidence had been destroyed in 1995, according to court documents.

The infant's body was exhumed in September 2009 after Webb learned that DNA could be extracted from bones and tissue. North Texas University Science Center conducted lab tests on the DNA that was extracted from the infant's remains, but no matches were found.

In 2019, police submitted the DNA to a Virginia-based genetics genealogy company, which found two potential matches.

Using those genetic links, police were able to use a family tree that led to Theresa Bentaas. Investigators found DNA in trash they seized at Bentaas' house that could not exclude her as the biological mother, according to a court documents.

Bentaas is scheduled to be sentenced Dec. 2 at the Minnehaha County Courthouse.

EXPLAINER: Could Facebook sue whistleblower Frances Haugen?

By TALI ARBEL AP Technology Writer

Facebook has recently taken a harsher tone toward whistleblower Frances Haugen, suggesting that the social network could be considering legal retaliation after Haugen went public with internal research that she copied before leaving her job earlier this year.

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U.S. law protects whistleblowers who disclose information about potential misconduct to the government. But that protection doesn't necessarily cover taking corporate secrets to the media.

Facebook still has to walk a fine line. The company has to weigh whether suing Haugen, which could dissuade other employees who might otherwise speak out, is worth casting itself as a legal Godzilla willing to stomp on a woman who says she's just doing the right thing.

Haugen may face other consequences. Whistleblowers often put themselves at risk of professional damage — other firms may be reluctant to hire them in the future — and personal attacks from being in the public eye.

Facebook did not respond to emailed questions.

WHAT DID HAUGEN DO?

Haugen secretly copied a trove of internal Facebook documents before leaving the company and subsequently had her lawyers file complaints with the Securities and Exchange Commission alleging that Facebook hides what it knows about the negative effects of its platform.

John Tye, her lawyer, said the team gave redacted documents to Congress, where Haugen testified on Tuesday, and also informed officials in California. Haugen also shared documents with the Wall Street Journal, which she started talking to in December, leading to a series of explosive stories that began in mid-September.

WHAT WAS FACEBOOK'S RESPONSE?

The company says it has been mischaracterized. "I think most of us just don't recognize the false picture of the company that is being painted," CEO Mark Zuckerberg wrote to employees on Tuesday.

Some company officials have also begun using harsher language to describe Haugen's actions that could be interpreted as threatening.

In an Associated Press interview Thursday, Facebook executive Monika Bickert repeatedly referred to the documents Haugen copied as "stolen," a word she has also used in other media interviews. David Colapinto, a lawyer for Kohn, Kohn and Colapinto who specializes in whistleblower cases, said that language was threatening.

In the same interview, asked if Facebook would sue or retaliate against the whistleblower, Bickert said only, "I can't answer that."

A week earlier, Antigone Davis, Facebook's head of global safety, testified in the Senate that Facebook "would never retaliate against someone for speaking to Congress," which left open the possibility that the company might go after her for giving documents to the Journal.

IS HAUGEN PROTECTED?

Various laws offer whistleblower protection at both the state and federal levels. The federal laws applicable to Haugen are the Dodd-Frank Act, a 2010 Wall Street reform law, and the Sarbanes Oxley Act, a 2002 law that followed the collapse of Enron and other accounting scandals.

Dodd-Frank expanded protections for whistleblowers and empowered the SEC to take action against a company that threatens a whistleblower. Protections exist for both employees and former employees, experts say.

Asked about her risk because she went to the media, Haugen's lawyer, Tye, maintains that because Haugen went to the SEC, Congress and state authorities, she's entitled to whistleblower protections. He said any suit from Facebook would be "frivolous" and that Facebook has not been in touch.

WHAT ABOUT HER LEAKS TO THE MEDIA?

Courts haven't tested whether leaking to the media is protected under Dodd-Frank, but Colapinto said the U.S. Secretary of Labor determined decades ago that environmental and nuclear-safety whistleblowers' communications with the media were protected. He argues that the language of Sarbanes-Oxley is modeled on those earlier statutes, and Haugen should have the same protections for any of her communications with reporters.

Facebook could allege that Haugen broke her nondisclosure agreement by sharing company documents with the press, leaking trade secrets or just by making comments Facebook considers defamatory, said

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Lisa Banks of Katz, Marshall and Banks, who has worked on whistleblower cases for decades. "Like many whistleblowers, she's extraordinarily brave and puts herself at personal and professional risk in shining a light on these practices," she said.

Haugen effectively used leaks to the media to turn up the pressure on Congress and government regulators. Colapinto said her disclosures had a public-interest purpose that could complicate enforcing the NDA if Facebook chose to do so.

COULD FACEBOOK FACE BLOWBACK?

Facebook probably wants its veiled threats to unnerve other employees or former employees who might be tempted to speak out. "If they go after her, it won't be because they necessarily think they have a strong case legally, but sending a message to other would-be whistleblowers that they intend to play hardball," Banks said.

But she said it would be a "disaster" for Facebook to go after Haugen. Regardless of potential legal vulnerabilities, Facebook might look like a bully if it pursued a legal case against her.

"The last thing Facebook needs is to rouse the ire of governmental authorities and the public at large by playing the role of the big bad giant company against the courageous individual whistleblower," said Neil Getnick, whose firm, Getnick and Getnick, represents whistleblowers.

China's Xi calls for 'peaceful' reunification with Taiwan

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Chinese leader Xi Jinping said on Saturday that a "peaceful" reunification of Taiwan with China's mainland was in Beijing's interests, despite ratcheted up military threats against the self-governing island.

Xi spoke at an official celebration in Beijing's Great Hall of the People that focused largely on the need for the ruling Communist Party to continue to lead China as the country rises in power and influence.

"Reunification of the nation must be realized, and will definitely be realized," Xi vowed before an audience of politicians, military personnel and others gathered in the hulking chamber that serves as the seat of China's ceremonial legislature.

"Reunification through a peaceful manner is the most in line with the overall interest of the Chinese nation, including Taiwan compatriots," the leader added.

Xi's remarks came just days after the Chinese military sent a record number of military aircraft flying towards Taiwan in exercises that the self-ruled island has called a threat. Over the course of four days, starting last week, the mainland People's Liberation Army flew fighter jets, bombers and airborne early warning aircraft 149 times towards Taiwan, with the largest single maneuver involving 52 jets.

Taiwan and China split in 1949 amid a civil war, with the then-ruling Nationalist Party fleeing to the island as Mao Zedong's Communists swept to power on the mainland.

Saturday's ceremony in Beijing was in honor of the 110th anniversary of the Chinese revolution that led to the overthrow of the Qing emperors and the establishment of the Republic of China under Sun Yat-sen. Taiwan celebrates Oct. 10 as National Day and Xi's address touched on common aspirations for a unified future, despite the stark differences between China's authoritarian one-party system and Taiwan's vibrant multi-party democracy.

Taiwan's National Day celebrations this year will feature a rare display of military equipment, including missiles and a performance by fighter jets to be held Sunday in front of the Presidential Office Building in the center of the capital, Taipei.

That marks the first inclusion of military hardware in Taipei's official celebrations in years, and the first since Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen took office in 2016.

Local media coverage of rehearsals for the celebration showed large missile launch vehicles driving on Taipei's streets, although the missiles themselves were not directly visible.

In the past, the Taiwanese government has kept its missile capabilities out of the public eye to avoid appearing provocative, said Kuo Yu-jen, a defense studies expert at the Institute for National Policy Re-

search in Taiwan.

Kuo added that Taipei feels it "must demonstrate that Taiwan has the ability to deter China's threat" as Beijing becomes "overly assertive."

In years past, the national day celebration has featured choreographed performances by motorcycle-riding military police and overflights by the island's air force. However, missiles were not part of that display.

"I think this is to raise Taiwan's people's morale," said Fan Shih-ping, a professor of political science at National Taiwan Normal University.

Taiwan's leader Tsai has placed a higher premium on national defense than her predecessor from the more China-friendly Nationalist Party, launching a revitalization of the island's shipbuilding industry and commissioning a program to build submarines domestically. She has also instituted reforms in the military, including improving benefits for military personnel and even increasing the quality of food served in the messes.

Taiwanese Defense Minister Chiu Kuo-cheng told legislators Wednesday that the situation with China "is the most severe in the 40 years since I've enlisted." Chiu later told reporters that he believed China would have "comprehensive" capabilities to invade Taiwan by 2025.

Since the split, Taiwan has been self-ruled, but its sovereignty is denied by Beijing, which has refused to renounce the option of using force to bring the island under its control. Beijing has also sought to isolate Taiwan internationally by barring it from the United Nations and other international organizations and opposing official contacts between its government and nations that recognize China, especially the United States, which is legally bound to consider threats against Taipei a matter of "grave concern."

U.S. and Japanese officials have warned that China's growing capabilities pose a rising threat to Taiwan's security and that of the region.

"The Taiwan question is purely China's internal affair, which tolerates no external interference," Xi said on Saturday. "No one should underestimate the Chinese people's strong determination, will and capability to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity."

Russians flock to Serbia for Western-made COVID-19 vaccines

By JOVANA GEC and DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — When Russian regulators approved the country's own coronavirus vaccine, it was a moment of national pride, and the Pavlov family was among those who rushed to take the injection. But international health authorities have not yet given their blessing to the Sputnik V shot.

So when the family from Rostov-on-Don wanted to visit the West, they looked for a vaccine that would allow them to travel freely — a quest that brought them to Serbia, where hundreds of Russian citizens have flocked in recent weeks to receive Western-approved COVID-19 shots.

Serbia, which is not a member of the European Union, is a convenient choice for vaccine-seeking Russians because they can enter the allied Balkan nation without visas and because it offers a wide choice of Western-made shots. Organized tours for Russians have soared, and they can be spotted in the capital, Belgrade, at hotels, restaurants, bars and vaccination clinics.

"We took the Pfizer vaccine because we want to travel around the world," Nadezhda Pavlova, 54, said after receiving the vaccine last weekend at a sprawling Belgrade vaccination center.

Her husband, Vitaly Pavlov, 55, said he wanted "the whole world to be open to us rather than just a few countries."

Vaccination tour packages for Russians seeking shots endorsed by the World Health Organization appeared on the market in mid-September, according to Russia's Association of Tour Operators.

Maya Lomidze, the group's executive director, said prices start at \$300 to \$700, depending on what's included.

Lauded by Russian President Vladimir Putin as world's first registered COVID-19 vaccine, Sputnik V emerged in August 2020 and has been approved in some 70 countries, including Serbia. But the WHO

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has said global approval is still under review after citing issues at a production plant a few months ago. On Friday, a top World Health Organization official said legal issues holding up the review of Sputnik V were "about to be sorted out," a step that could relaunch the process toward emergency use authorization. Other hurdles remain for the Russian application, including a lack of full scientific information and inspections of manufacturing sites, said Dr. Mariangela Simao, a WHO assistant director-general. Apart from the WHO, Sputnik V is also still awaiting approval from the European Medicines Agency before all travel limitations can be lifted for people vaccinated with the Russian formula. The long wait has frustrated many Russians, so when the WHO announced yet another delay in September, they started looking for solutions elsewhere.

"People don't want to wait; people need to be able to get into Europe for various personal reasons," explained Anna Filatovskaya, Russky Express tour agency spokeswoman in Moscow. "Some have relatives. Some have business, some study, some work. Some simply want to go to Europe because they miss it."

Serbia, a fellow-Orthodox Christian and Slavic nation, offers the Pfizer, AstraZeneca and Chinese Sino-pharm shots. By popular demand, Russian tourist agencies are now also offering tours to Croatia, where tourists can receive the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine, without the need to return for a second dose.

"For Serbia, the demand has been growing like an avalanche," Filatovskaya said. "It's as if all our company is doing these days is selling tours for Serbia."

The Balkan nation introduced vaccination for foreigners in August, when the vaccination drive inside the country slowed after reaching around 50% of the adult population. Official Serbian government data shows that nearly 160,000 foreign citizens so far have been vaccinated in the country, but it is unclear how many are Russians.

In Russia, the country's vaccination rate has been low. By this week, almost 33% of Russia's 146 million people have received at least one shot of a coronavirus vaccine, and 29% were fully vaccinated. Apart from Sputnik V and a one-dose version known as Sputnik Light, Russia has also used two other domestically designed vaccines that have not been internationally approved.

Russian Health Minister Mikhail Murashko recently said administrative issues were among the main hold-ups in the WHO's review process.

Judy Twigg, a political science professor specializing in global health at Virginia Commonwealth University, expects Sputnik V to be approved eventually, but "maybe not by the end of this year."

"The WHO has said that it needs more data, and it needs to go back and inspect some production lines where it saw issues early on. Those re-inspections are a multiweek process, with good reason. It's not something that they just gloss over lightly."

Amid low vaccination rates and reluctance by the authorities to reimpose restrictive measures, both Russia and Serbia have seen COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations reach record levels in the past weeks.

The daily coronavirus death toll in Russia topped 900 for a second straight day on Thursday — a day after reaching a record 929. In Serbia, the daily death toll of 50 people is the highest in months in the country of 7 million that so far has confirmed nearly 1 million cases of infection.

Pavlova said the "double protection" offered by the Pfizer booster shots would allow the family "to not only travel around the world, but also to see our loved ones without fear."

Since the vaccine tours exploded in popularity about a month ago, they have provided welcome business for Serbian tour operators devastated by the pandemic in an already weak economy. The owner of BTS Kompas travel agency in Belgrade, Predrag Tesic, said they are booked well in advance.

"It started modestly at first, but day by day numbers have grown nicely," Tesic said.

He explained that his agency organizes everything, from airport transport to accommodations and translation and other help at vaccination points. When they return for another dose in three weeks, the Russian guests also are offered brief tours to some of popular sites in Serbia.

Back in Russia, some Moscow residents said they understood why many of their fellow Russians travel abroad for vaccines. But Tatiana Novikova said homegrown vaccines remain her choice.

"I trust ours more, to be honest," she said.

Associated Press writers Dusan Stojanovic and Ivana Bzganovic in Belgrade, Serbia, and Daria Litvinova and Daniel Kozin reported from Moscow.

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

French envoy to Australia: Deceitful sub deal raises risks

By MASHA MACPHERSON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — France's ambassador to Australia says Australian officials lied to his face and raised the risk of confrontation in Asia by crafting a secret submarine deal with the United States and Britain that undermined trust in democratic alliances.

France is determined to protect its interests in the Indo-Pacific region, and to put "muscle" into Europe's geopolitical strategy toward an increasingly assertive China, Ambassador Jean-Pierre Thebault said Friday. He spoke in an interview with The Associated Press before heading back to his post in Canberra.

"The way you treat your allies does resonate in the region," Thebault said in a gilded chamber inside the French Foreign Ministry, located on the banks of the Seine River in Paris. "The logic of confrontation is not a good one for the peace and stability of the region. We think that we should act otherwise."

The French government recalled Thebault to Paris last month along with the French ambassador to the U.S. The unprecedented diplomatic move reflected the depth of France's anger at an agreement for Australia to obtain a fleet of eight nuclear-powered submarines built with U.S. technology.

The Indo-Pacific deal, concealed from French officials, scuppered a previous \$66 billion contract for Australia to buy 12 conventional diesel-electric submarines from a French manufacturer.

Apart from the ruptured contract, France thinks the deal trampled longstanding alliances, and its interests in the Pacific — where it has 2 million citizens in French territories and 7,000 military troops — were ignored.

"I don't understand how it was possible to commit such a lie. I don't understand how people, several of whom I know, were capable of lying to me...face to face for 18 months," Thebault said of the Australian officials he worked with.

The ambassador noted that France makes nuclear-powered submarines, and he said Australia refused them when their deal was first struck in 2016, opting for diesel-powered versions instead.

"You could at least have...had a frank and honest conversation, which never happened," he said.

"Rebuffing a country like France is almost sending a message that there are trusted partners and other partners, which is worrying in a region which needs...partnership and not antagonism," Thebault said.

So France is turning to other "trusted partners in the region," he said — naming India, Japan, Korea, New Zealand.

Strengthening the European Union's Indo-Pacific strategy will be a priority for France as it takes over the EU's rotating presidency on Jan. 1, he said.

"The rise of China...is an issue that needs to be addressed," along with climate change and its impacts on Pacific islands, Thebault said. He stressed the importance of "international rules, respect for human rights, the respect for freedom of navigation, respect for sovereignty of countries."

France last month returned its ambassador to the U.S., a NATO partner. French President Emmanuel Macron and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met in Paris this week, and Blinken told French TV that "we could and we should have communicated better." President Joe Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, met his French counterpart this week.

But Thebault has remained in Paris.

On Wednesday, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian told a parliamentary committee that the ambassador would return to Australia to help "redefine the terms" of the bilateral relationship and defend French interests in winding up the contract. Thebault is expected to leave for Canberra next week.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison welcomed the decision, saying the bilateral relationship was bigger than the canceled submarine contract. But Thebault suggested there is still work to do before the relationship returns to normal.

Morrison said Macron wouldn't take his calls. This week, Australian Trade Minister Dan Tehan was snubbed by French officials while in Paris. And negotiations on a free trade deal between Australia and the EU that were to take place this month have been postponed until November.

Angela Charlton in Paris contributed.

EXPLAINER: Why do Iraq's elections matter to the world?

By ZEINA KARAM and QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq's elections on Sunday come with enormous challenges: Iraq's economy has been battered by years of conflict, endemic corruption and more recently, the coronavirus pandemic. State institutions are failing, the country's infrastructure is crumbling. Powerful paramilitary groups increasingly threaten the authority of the state, and hundreds of thousands of people are still displaced from the years of war against the Islamic State group.

While few Iraqis expect meaningful change in their day-to-day lives, the parliament elections will shape the direction of Iraq's foreign policy at a key time in the Middle East, including as Iraq is mediating between regional rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia.

"Iraq's elections will be watched by all in the region to determine how the country's future leadership will sway the regional balance of power," said Marsin Alshamary an Iraqi-American research fellow with the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center.

So, what are the main things to watch for?

MANY FIRSTS

The elections are being held early, in response to mass protests that erupted in 2019. It's the first time a vote is taking place because of demands by Iraqi protesters on the streets. The vote is also taking place under a new election law that divides Iraq into smaller constituencies — another demand of the young activists — and allows for more independent candidates.

A U.N. Security Council resolution adopted earlier this year authorized an expanded team to monitor the elections. There will be up to 600 international observers in place, including 150 from the United Nations.

Iraq is also for the first time introducing biometric cards for voters. To prevent abuse of electronic voter cards, they will be disabled for 72 hours after each person votes, to avoid double voting.

But despite all these measures, claims of vote buying, intimidation and manipulation have persisted.

SHIITE DIVISIONS

Groups drawn from Iraq's Shiite factions dominate the electoral landscape, as has been the case since after Saddam was toppled, when the country's power base shifted from minority Sunnis to majority Shiites.

But Shiite groups are divided, particularly over the influence of neighboring Iran, a Shiite powerhouse. A tight race is expected between the political bloc of influential Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, the biggest winner in the 2018 election, and the Fatah Alliance led by paramilitary leader Hadi al-Ameri, which came in second.

The Fatah Alliance comprises of parties affiliated with the Popular Mobilization Forces, an umbrella group of mostly pro-Iran Shiite militias that rose to prominence during the war against the Sunni extremist Islamic State group. It includes some of the most hard-line pro-Iran factions such as the Asaib Ahl al-Haq militia. Al-Sadr, a nationalist and populist leader, is also close to Iran, but publicly rejects its political influence.

Kataib Hezbollah, a powerful Shiite militia with close ties to Iran, is fielding candidates for the first time.

CALLS FOR BOYCOTT

Activists and young Iraqis who took part in the protests calling for change have been divided over whether to take part in the vote.

The 2019 demonstrations were met with deadly force, with at least 600 people killed over a period of

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few months. Although authorities gave in and called the early elections, the death toll and the heavy-handed crackdown prompted many young activists and demonstrators who took part in the protests to later call for a boycott.

A series of kidnappings and targeted assassinations that killed more than 35 people, has further discouraged many from taking part.

Iraq's top Shiite cleric and a widely respected authority, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, has called for a large turnout, saying that voting remains the best way for Iraqis to take part in shaping their country's future.

The 2018 elections saw a record low turnout with just 44% of eligible voters casting ballots. The results were widely contested.

There are concerns of a similar or even lower turnout this time.

Mustafa al-Jabouri, a 27-year-old private sector employee, says he won't vote after seeing his friends killed in the demonstrations, "in front of my eyes."

"I have participated in every election since I turned 18. We always say that change will come, and things will improve. What I've seen is that things always go from bad to worse," he said as he sat smoking a hookah at a coffee shop in Baghdad. "Now it is the same faces from the same parties putting up campaign posters."

REGIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Iraq's vote comes amid a flurry of diplomatic activity in the region, partially spurred by the Biden administration's gradual retreat from the Middle East and icy relations with traditional ally Saudi Arabia. Current Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi has sought to portray Iraq as a neutral mediator in the region's crises. In recent months, Baghdad hosted several rounds of direct talks between regional rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran in a bid to ease tensions.

Alshamary, the research fellow, said Arab states will be watching to see what gains pro-Iranian factions make in the vote and, conversely, Iran will look at how Western-leaning politicians fare. "The outcome of these elections will have an impact on foreign relations in the region for years to come," she said.

Under Iraq's laws, the winner of Sunday's vote gets to choose the country's next prime minister, but it's unlikely any of the competing coalitions can secure a clear majority. That will require a lengthy process involving backroom negotiations to select a consensus prime minister and agree on a new coalition government.

Randa Slim, of the Washington-based Middle East Institute, said Iraq's regional mediation role is al-Kadhimi's achievement, a result of his success at balancing between U.S. and Iranian interests in Iraq.

"If he won't be the next prime minister, all of these initiatives might not be sustained," Slim said.

Karam reported from Beirut.

Red Sox flex muscles, power past Rays 14-6 to even ALDS 1-1

By FRED GOODALL AP Sports Writer

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — Boston slugger J.D. Martinez wasn't sure how well he'd run, but he thought his sprained left ankle would be OK in the batter's box Friday.

Lucky for him, the Red Sox took their time rounding the bases all night while turning an early deficit against the Tampa Bay Rays into a blowout win.

Martinez hit a tiebreaking, three-run homer in his return to the lineup and the Red Sox backed Tanner Houck's clutch relief effort with a franchise postseason record five home runs, rallying past the Rays 14-6 to even their AL Division Series at one game each.

Game 3 of the best-of-five showdown is Sunday in Boston.

Kiké Hernández had five of Boston's 20 hits, including a homer and three doubles, becoming Boston's first player with four extra-base hits in a postseason game.

Xander Bogaerts, Alex Verdugo and Rafael Devers also connected for the Red Sox, who stunned Tampa

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Bay after ace Chris Sale allowed a first-inning slam to Jordan Luplow and was pulled following just three outs.

"Obviously, we had to make adjustments, and Tanner came in and did an outstanding job," Boston manager Alex Cora said. "But offensively, it was like: 'Hey, don't panic.' We put up two (runs) in the first, and we still got eight innings. They did an amazing job the whole night."

Hernández's leadoff homer in the fifth off Collin McHugh tied it before Martinez went deep against Matt Wisler (0-1) four batters later.

"He is definitely a huge piece of that lineup, and I think he showed why today," Rays catcher Mike Zunino said of Martinez. "He came in, I know coming off an injury, and battling with that isn't easy. But he had great at-bats all day. You tip your cap."

Houck (1-0) kept Boston in the game after Sale was rocked for five runs in the first inning. The rookie right-hander came out of the bullpen to start the second inning and allowed one run and two hits over five frames, retiring his first 11 batters before yielding a two-out single to Wander Franco in the fifth.

Ji-Man Choi entered as a defensive replacement for Luplow and had the only other hit off Houck, a two-out solo homer in the sixth. Houck struck out five.

Martinez had four hits after missing Tuesday night's wild-card victory over the New York Yankees and Game 1 of the ALDS. He was injured stumbling over second base while heading to the outfield during last weekend's regular-season finale at Washington.

"It felt all right hitting," Martinez said. "Didn't feel good running, but felt all right hitting."

Bogaerts, Verdugo and Hernández had solo shots to steady the staggering Red Sox, who lost the opener 5-0 Thursday night. Martinez then delivered the lead.

Devers' two-run homer off Michael Wacha hiked Boston's advantage to 11-6 in the eighth. Christian Vazquez had an RBI infield single in the ninth, which Hernández followed with a two-run single. Bogaerts, Verdugo and Vazquez had three hits each.

The Rays hadn't allowed 14 runs in a game since Boston beat them 20-6 on Aug. 11.

"We knew coming in they have a very talented offense, and they just put together a lot of quality at-bats ... and just kind of put it on us," Rays manager Kevin Cash said.

"You chalk it up as a bad game," Zunino added. "It just wasn't our night."

Martinez and Cora both said Boston's medical staff deserved credit for helping the designated hitter get back on the field.

"Those guys guys, they work so hard, countless hours," Cora said.

Verdugo also stole an out in left field, leaning over the short wall in foul territory in the sixth inning to catch Nelson Cruz's popup.

A night after Randy Arozarena became the first player in major league history to homer and steal home in a postseason game, the Rays got off to another fast start that whipped a yellow towel-waving crowd of 37,616 — up from 27,419 for Game 1 — into a frenzy.

Rays rookie left Shane Bieber became the second pitcher in big league history to start a playoff game with three or fewer career regular-season appearances. Matt Moore was the other, doing it with the Rays in Game 1 of the 2011 ALDS at Texas.

In using Bieber and Game 1 winner Shane Bieber to begin the series, AL East-winning Tampa Bay joined Oakland as the only teams to start rookie pitchers in the first two games of a playoff series. The Athletics began the 2012 ALDS at Detroit with Jarrod Parker and Tommy Milone.

Boston, meanwhile, has only gotten 2 1/3 innings combined out of its starting pitchers through two games. Sale, who returned from Tommy John surgery in August to make nine starts down the stretch, was pulled after giving up five runs and four hits in the first inning. That followed an abbreviated outing by Eduardo Rodriguez on Thursday.

Luplow's grand slam was the sixth homer Sale has allowed 26 career postseason innings.

HE'S IN, HE'S OUT

Boston replaced injured right-hander Garrett Richards on the ALDS roster with reliever Matt Barnes. Richards has a left hamstring strain and will be ineligible for the AL Championship Series roster if the Red

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Sox advance.

UP NEXT

Nathan Eovaldi will start Game 3 for Boston. He allowed one run and four hits over 5 1/3 innings of Boston's wild-card win over the Yankees. The right-hander is 2-1 with a 1.63 ERA in seven career postseason appearances, including three starts.

Cash hasn't announced a starter for Sunday. He could go with right-hander Drew Rasmussen or opt for a bullpen day.

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

US appeals court lets Texas resume ban on most abortions

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A federal appeals court Friday night quickly allowed Texas to resume banning most abortions, just one day after clinics began racing to serve patients again for the first time since early September.

A one-page order by the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reinstated the nation's strictest abortion law, which bans abortions once cardiac activity is detected, usually around six weeks. It makes no exceptions in cases of rape or incest.

"Patients are being thrown back into a state of chaos and fear," said Nancy Northup, president of the Center for Reproductive Rights, which represents several Texas clinics that had briefly resumed normal abortion services.

She called on the U.S. Supreme Court to "step in and stop this madness."

Clinics had braced for the New Orleans-based appeals court to act fast after U.S. District Judge Robert Pitman, an appointee of President Barack Obama, on Wednesday suspended the Texas law that he called an "offensive deprivation" of the constitutional right to an abortion. Knowing that order might not stand long, a handful of Texas clinics immediately started performing abortions again beyond six weeks, and booked new appointments for this weekend.

But barely 48 hours passed before the appeals court accepted Texas' request to set aside Pitman's ruling — at least for now — pending further arguments. It gave the Biden administration, which had brought the lawsuit, until Tuesday to respond.

"Great news tonight," Republican Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton tweeted. "I will fight federal overreach at every turn."

Texas had roughly two dozen abortion clinics before the law took effect Sept. 1. During the brief period the law was on hold, many Texas physicians remained unwilling to perform abortions, fearful that doing so could still leave them in legal jeopardy.

The new law threatens Texas abortion providers with lawsuits from private citizens, who are entitled to collect at least \$10,000 in damages if successful. That novel approach to enforcement is the reason why Texas had been able to evade an earlier wave of legal challenges prior to this week.

The 5th circuit appeals court had already once allowed the law to take effect in September, and stepped in this time only hours after Paxton's office urged them to act.

His office told the court that since the state does not enforce the law, it cannot "be held responsible for the filings of private citizens that Texas is powerless to prevent."

It is unclear how many abortions Texas clinics performed in the short time the law was put on hold. On Thursday, at least six abortions providers had resumed normal services or were gearing up to do so, according to the Center for Reproductive Rights.

Prior to Pitman's blistering 113-page order, other courts had declined to stop the law, which bans abortions before some women even know they are pregnant. That includes the Supreme Court, which allowed it to move forward in September without ruling on its constitutionality.

One of the first providers to resume normal services this week was Whole Woman's Health, which oper-

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ates four clinics in Texas.

Amy Hagstrom Miller, president of Whole Woman's Health, said her clinics called in some patients early Thursday who were on a list in case the law was blocked at some point. Other appointments were in the process of being scheduled for the days ahead, and phone lines were again busy. But some of the clinics' 17 physicians were still declining to perform abortions because of the legal risk.

Pitman's order had amounted to the first legal blow to the law known as Senate Bill 8. In the weeks since the restrictions took effect, Texas abortion providers said the impact had been "exactly what we feared."

Planned Parenthood says the number of patients from Texas at its clinics in the state decreased by nearly 80% in the two weeks after the law took effect. Some providers have said Texas clinics are now in danger of closing while neighboring states struggle to keep up with a surge of patients who must drive hundreds of miles for an abortion.

Other women, they say, are being forced to carry pregnancies to term.

How many abortions have been performed in Texas since the law took effect is unknown. State health officials say additional reporting requirements under the law will not make September data available on its website until early next year.

A 1992 decision by the U.S. Supreme Court prevented states from banning abortion before viability, the point at which a fetus can survive outside the womb, around 24 weeks of pregnancy. But Texas' version has so far outmaneuvered the courts because it leaves enforcement to private citizens to file suits, not prosecutors, which critics say amounts to a bounty.

"This is an answered prayer," said Kimberlyn Schwartz, spokeswoman for Texas Right to Life, the state's largest anti-abortion group.

Associated Press Writer Jamie Stengle contributed from Dallas.

Marathon bomber faces revived death sentence in high court

By MARK SHERMAN and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration will try to persuade the Supreme Court this week to reinstate the death penalty for convicted Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev by arguing that a jury had no need to examine evidence that the government itself relied on at an earlier phase of the case.

Tsarnaev's guilt in the deaths of three people in the shocking bombing near the finish line of the marathon in 2013 is not at issue in the case the justices will hear Wednesday — just whether he should be sentenced to life in prison, or death.

Nor is the court likely to ponder the administration's aggressive pursuit of a capital sentence for Tsarnaev even as it has halted federal executions and President Joe Biden has called for an end to the federal death penalty.

Instead, the main focus will be on evidence that Tsarnaev's lawyers wanted the jury to hear that supported their argument that his older brother, Tamerlan, was the mastermind of the attack and that the impressionable younger brother was somehow less responsible. The evidence implicated Tamerlan Tsarnaev in a triple killing in the Boston suburb of Waltham on the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The federal appeals court in Boston ruled last year that the trial judge made a mistake in excluding the evidence and threw out Tsarnaev's death sentence. There's a second issue in the case: whether the trial judge did enough to question jurors about their exposure to extensive news coverage of the bombing.

The Trump administration, which carried out 13 executions in its last six months, quickly appealed. When the new administration didn't indicate any change of view, the court agreed to review the case.

Tsarnaev's lawyers have never contested that he and his brother set off the two bombs near the marathon finish line on April 15, 2013. Lingzi Lu, a 23-year-old Boston University graduate student from China; Krystle Campbell, a 29-year-old restaurant manager from Medford; and 8-year-old Martin Richard, who had gone to watch the marathon with his family, were killed. More than 260 people were injured.

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During a four-day manhunt for the bombers, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Police Officer Sean Collier was shot dead in his car. Boston Police Officer Dennis Simmonds also died a year after he was wounded in a confrontation with the bombers.

Police captured a bloodied and wounded Dzhokhar Tsarnaev in the Boston suburb of Watertown, where he was hiding in a boat parked in a backyard, hours after his brother died. Tamerlan Tsarnaev, 26, had been in a gunfight with police and was run over by his brother as he fled.

Tsarnaev, now 28, was convicted of all 30 charges against him, including conspiracy and use of a weapon of mass destruction and the killing of Collier during the Tsarnaev brothers' getaway attempt. The appeals court upheld all but a few of his convictions.

A convicted murderer who is pleading with a jury to lock him up for life, rather than vote for his execution, has wide leeway to present evidence that he thinks would make a death sentence less likely.

The 2011 killings, defense lawyers said, went to the heart of their argument that Tsarnaev was deeply influenced and radicalized by his revered brother, who already had shown a capacity for extreme violence. The younger sibling was less responsible for the marathon mayhem, they said.

"The evidence thus made it vastly more likely that Dzhokhar acted under Tamerlan's radicalizing influence and that Tamerlan led the bombings," Ginger Anders, Tsarnaev's leading Supreme Court lawyer, wrote in a high-court filing.

For its part, the administration contends that it does not contest the older brother's leadership role, and that defense lawyers were able to make that case. Still, the jury sentenced Tsarnaev to death, acting Solicitor General Brian Fletcher wrote.

Tsarnaev "made the choice to commit a terrorist attack against children and other innocent spectators at the marathon, and the jury held him accountable for that choice," Fletcher wrote.

The account of Tamerlan's involvement in the earlier killings came from a friend, Ibragim Todashev, whom investigators interviewed after the marathon attack. Todashev told authorities that Tamerlan recruited him to rob the three men, and they bound the men with duct tape before Tamerlan slashed their throats to avoid leaving any witnesses.

In a bizarre twist, while Todashev was being questioned in Florida, he was shot dead after authorities say he attacked the agents. The agent who killed Todashev was cleared of any criminal wrongdoing.

Dzhokhar also told a college friend that his brother was involved in the Waltham killings and had committed "jihad" there, a lawyer representing the friend told prosecutors. No one has ever been charged in the triple murder.

But prosecutors said the evidence linking Tamerlan to the Waltham killings was unreliable, was irrelevant to Dzhokhar's participation in the marathon attack and would only confuse jurors. The judge overseeing the trial agreed.

Yet, authorities previously used Todashev's statements to apply for a warrant to search Tamerlan's car after the bombings for blood, DNA and other evidence relevant to the triple murder.

Anders called the government's description of the statements as unreliable "a breathtaking about-face" after defending their reliability in order to obtain a warrant.

The Justice Department said different standards apply and that in asking for a search warrant, federal agents were not saying that every word of what Todashev said was true.

A court ruling for Tsarnaev would raise the possibility of a new sentencing trial that would force victims and their families to relive that horrific time, if the administration wanted to try again for a death sentence.

Two years after the attack, the parents of the youngest victim wrote an essay printed on the front page of The Boston Globe urging the Justice Department to abandon its pursuit of the death penalty. Denise and Bill Richard wrote that years of appeals that would keep Tsarnaev's name in the news would force them to keep reliving their ordeal and prevent them from beginning to heal.

"As long as the defendant is in the spotlight, we have no choice but to live a story told on his terms, not ours. The minute the defendant fades from our newspapers and TV screens is the minute we begin the process of rebuilding our lives and our family," they wrote.

Richer reported from Boston.

Man accused of threatening 2 US senators to remain in jail

By MARK THIESSEN Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — A man upset over the impeachment of former President Donald Trump, illegal immigration and the direction he thinks the country is headed is accused of threatening the lives of Alaska's two Republican U.S. senators in a series of profanity-laced voicemails that included saying he would hire an assassin to kill one.

"Your life is worth \$5,000, that's all it's worth," the message left at the office of U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski said. "And as you let in these terrorists, assassins, guess what? I'm going to use them. I'm going to hire them."

Some of the voicemails left for Murkowski and U.S. Sen. Dan Sullivan were played in U.S. District Court in Fairbanks on Friday by assistant U.S. Attorney General Ryan Tansey during the first appearance for Jay Allen Johnson, 65. The Delta Junction man was ordered detained until at least the preliminary hearing set for Oct. 19.

The hearing provided more details of the government's case against Johnson, who is retired and moved to the rural Alaska community from Texas in 2019 with his wife, Catherine Pousson-Johnson. He had earlier ties to the Fairbanks area.

The caller was also upset that Murkowski voted to convict Trump in his January impeachment trial.

"Nobody in this state wanted you to impeach Trump," the caller says. "Just resign and get the f--- gone."

In another voicemail, the caller warned the senator's staff if they didn't quit, "We are coming for you."

"The next insurrection, it will be an insurrection. Period," the voicemail says.

Murkowski in a statement asked the court not to release Johnson on bail, especially because she was traveling to Alaska for work.

"I'm concerned for my personal safety if he is not detained," she said in the statement read by Tansey. "And for some reason, he is released. I would like to know what the FBI is doing to ensure my safety and security for the time that I'm here in Alaska."

The government alleges that Johnson also left 13 voicemails for Sullivan over a five-month period, including one in which he warns Sullivan that he's tired of politicians destroying the country.

He vowed to get out his .50 caliber firearm out. "I will be having a Go Fund Me page for the shells, and I'm coming with ... with a (expletive) vengeance."

In one voicemail, he claimed he was a veteran. But the Navy, Air Force and Army said they did not have information about Johnson in their ranks. The Marines were still checking.

In some of the voicemails to Sullivan's office, the government alleges Johnson left his name and address.

In one voicemail, the caller vowed to use "illegals for target practice," Tansey said.

After Johnson was arrested Monday, authorities found seven guns in the home, which is illegal for Johnson to have because he's a felon. He has had several drunken driving charges and one related weapons charge while he was intoxicated, a loaded pistol in a shoulder holster, Tansey said.

Johnson's wife, Catherine Pousson-Johnson, testified on her husband's behalf in trying to have him released, saying she would drive him the 100 miles (161 kilometers) to Fairbanks for court proceedings.

She detailed a series of recent surgeries he has had, including on his spine, knee and shoulder.

"He's in pain right now. My husband is an old man, and he gets very angry listening to politics on the news," she said before being asked by public defender Gary Colbath to restrict her comments.

Tansey later asked her if she was aware her husband was making threats against two U.S. senators.

"Who hasn't?" she replied.

Against the advice of his lawyer, Johnson also made comments throughout the hearing.

"I'm just prepared to sit in prison the rest of my life, I guess," he said at one point. "I'm a senior citizen and I am highly disabled and I will not be carrying out any of these threats."

"I just apologize to everybody," he later said.

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Johnson has split his time between Alaska and Texas. In 2019, he appears to have moved from Tuscola, Texas, to Delta Junction.

Few people in Delta Junction, with a population of about 1,000 in town with another 4,000 or so in the surrounding area, know him, Mayor Lou Heinbockel said.

"I've lived here 50 years, and I've never heard of the name until I read it in the paper yesterday," he said.

Cody White sells guns at his Granite View Sports and Gifts store in Delta Junction and doesn't recall Johnson — a 65-year-old white male standing 5-foot-10 and weighing 180 pounds with black hair and green eyes, according to Texas court documents — ever shopping there. But he says some of his customers said they knew him. They described Johnson as "just a normal guy, quiet," White said.

"We see a ton of people in town and usually if they're here more than a year, I usually know who they are. But I don't know if this guy has ever been in the store," he said.

On June 18, 2019, Johnson registered to vote as a member of the Alaska Constitution Party, Tiffany Montemayor, a spokesperson for the Alaska Division of Elections, said in an email to The Associated Press.

It is not recognized as a party in the state, but it is a political group with about 680 members, she said.

"He does not register with me, I don't recall him at all," said J.R. Myers, the founder and chairman of the Alaska Constitution Party. "As far as I know, he's never been active in the party, so I'm not sure who he is."

Associated Press reporter Lolita Baldor in Washington and researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this report.

California pipeline likely damaged up to a year before spill

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD, MATTHEW BROWN and AMY TAXIN Associated Press

HUNTINGTON BEACH, Calif. (AP) — An underwater oil pipeline off the Southern California coast was likely damaged by a ship's anchor several months to a year before it ruptured and sent oil spewing into the ocean and then onto some of the area's best-known beaches, investigators said Friday.

Coast Guard Capt. Jason Neubauer, chief of the office of investigations and analysis, said after the first strike it's possible other ships' anchors subsequently struck the steel pipe that brings oil to shore from three platforms out at sea. Investigators previously said a large section of the pipe was bowed after being struck and dragged along the seabed.

It remains unknown when the slender, 13-inch (33-centimeter) crack began leaking oil, and investigators will pour over a year of data on ship movements near the area of the break. No ships have been identified as suspects at this point.

"We're going to be looking at every vessel movement over that pipeline, and every close encroachment from the anchorages for the entire course of the year," Neubauer said.

The accident scene is outside the Long Beach-Los Angeles port complex that is the largest in the country and handles some 4,000 vessels a year. Many of them are from overseas and that could complicate the process of boarding ships of interest in the investigation to get information.

The disclosure that the damage to the pipe could have occurred so long ago dramatically reshaped what was known about the leak that sent tens of thousands of gallons of crude into the Pacific. A search that initially appeared to focus on the hunt for one vessel now could send investigators to ports around the country to inspect many ships.

It now appears many factors played a role in the pipe's failure — possible repeated anchor strikes, stresses from being dragged along the seafloor and the corrosive forces of seawater.

Neubauer said investigators have narrowed their search to large cargo vessels that would be powerful enough to move a 4,000-foot (1,219-meter) section of pipeline 105 feet (32 meters) across the ocean floor. He also said investigators have zeroed in on a windy storm Jan. 24-25 that could have caused problems for ships trying to anchor in the vicinity of the twin ports.

Investigators believe the initial anchor strike occurred sometime after a survey of the pipeline a year ago that showed the line was in its original location. The extended timeline was partly based on visible marine

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growth on the damaged length of the pipe that was revealed in an underwater survey. The Coast Guard previously released video of the rupture spot and a wider view of the bowed pipe.

A crack suggests the pipe, which was installed in 1980, perhaps withstood an initial impact, but had been weakened over time by corrosion and became more prone to fail, said Ramanan Krishnamoorti, a petroleum engineering professor at the University of Houston.

Neubauer said a debris field is visible on the seafloor near the break. Investigators will now remove that section of the pipe for lab analysis. It wasn't clear how long the investigation would take.

So far, the impact on wildlife has been minimal — 10 dead birds and another 25 recovered alive and treated — but environmentalists caution the long-term impacts could be much greater. As cleanup continued on the shore and some beaches reopened Friday, though the public still can't go in the water.

Anchor strikes on pipelines are relatively rare, but have caused problems in the past.

An Associated Press review of more than 10,000 reports submitted to federal regulators found at least 17 accidents on pipelines carrying crude oil or other hazardous liquids have been linked to anchor strikes or suspected anchor strikes since 1986.

According to federal records, in some cases an anchor strike is never conclusively proven, such as 2012 leak from an ExxonMobil pipeline in Louisiana's shallow Barataria Bay, where a direct strike by a barge or other boat also were considered possibilities.

In others the evidence of an anchor strike was obvious. During 1992's Hurricane Andrew, a 30,000-pound (13,607-kilogram) anchor was dragged by a drifting drilling rig over a Texaco pipeline in the Gulf of Mexico, causing a dent that broke open when the line was later re-started.

In 2003, a 7,000-pound (3,175-kilogram) anchor was found about 10 feet (30 meters) from a small spill on a Shell Oil pipeline in the Gulf.

Capt. Morgan McManus, who spent 20 years at sea before taking command of the training ship at the State University of New York Maritime College, said he would find it difficult to believe any competent crew would drop anchor close to a pipeline. If a ship's anchor were to become entangled with a piece of infrastructure, the operator is required by federal law to notify the Coast Guard.

"That would be a big screw-up," McManus said. "I kind of have trouble believing that would happen because you notice that stuff on electronic charts. You're going to map out your position where you're going to drop the hook."

McManus said a more likely scenario is that a ship was either pulled off position by strong waves or tides, dragging its anchor with it and snagging the pipeline. A second possibility is that ship getting underway engaged its engines while still reeling in its anchor, pulling it along the seafloor.

The leak was discovered Saturday morning, more than 12 hours after initial reports of a possible spill came in. While the exact size isn't known, the Coast Guard slightly revised the parameters of the estimates to at least about 25,000 gallons (95,000 liters) and no more than 132,000 gallons (500,000 liters).

The Coast Guard said about 5,500 gallons (20,819 liters) of crude have been recovered from the ocean. The oil has spread southeast along the coast with reports of small amounts coming ashore in San Diego County, some 50 miles (80 kilometers) from the original site.

Amplify Energy, a Houston-based company that owns and operates three offshore oil platforms and the pipeline, said it didn't know there had been a spill until its workers detected an oil sheen on the water Saturday at 8:09 a.m. The leak occurred about 5 miles (8 kilometers) offshore at a depth of about 98 feet (30 meters), investigators said.

Questions remain about when the company knew it had a problem and a potential delay in reporting the spill.

A foreign ship anchored in the waters off Huntington Beach reported to the Coast Guard that it saw a sheen longer than 2 miles (3 kilometers) just after 6 p.m. on Oct. 1, and that evening a satellite image from the European Space Agency also indicated a likely oil slick, which was reported to the Coast Guard at 2:06 a.m. Saturday, after being reviewed by a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration analyst.

Federal pipeline safety regulators have put the time of the incident at 2:30 a.m. Saturday but say the

company didn't shut down the pipeline until 6:01 a.m. — more than three hours after a low-pressure alarm had gone off indicating a possible problem — and didn't report the leak to the Coast Guard until 9:07 a.m. Federal and state rules require immediate notification of spills.

Amplify said the line already had been shut down by 6 a.m., then restarted for five minutes for a "meter reading" and again shut down. A meter reading shows how much oil is flowing into and out of the line. The company could have been using that information to confirm if the pressure-change alarm was set off because the line was leaking, said Richard Kuprewicz, a private pipeline accident investigator and consultant.

Associated Press reporters Brian Melley in Los Angeles and Michael Biesecker in Washington contributed.

Biden will not block documents sought by House committee

By ERIC TUCKER, MARY CLARE JALONICK, ZEKE MILLER and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House says that President Joe Biden will not block the handover of documents sought by a House committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, setting up a showdown with former President Donald Trump, who wants to shield those White House records from investigators.

The Friday letter from White House counsel Dana Remus to the Archivist of the United States comes at the start of a potentially lengthy legal battle over the investigation. Trump, who told his supporters to "fight like hell" the morning of the insurrection and has defended the rioters who beat police and broke into the Capitol, is trying to block Congress from learning more. Biden has so far sided with House Democrats, who have asked for thousands of pages of documents and subpoenaed witnesses connected to Trump.

The House committee investigating the insurrection, which formed over the summer, now has the momentous task of sorting through the details and obtaining documents and testimony from witnesses who may or may not be cooperative. And the jockeying between the two administrations, Congress and the witnesses is certain to delay the investigation and set the stage for messy litigation that could stretch well into 2022.

In a separate development, a lawyer for Steve Bannon said the former White House aide won't comply with the House committee's investigation because Trump is asserting executive privilege. Bannon is the only one of the top Trump aides subpoenaed on Sept. 23 who was not working for the Trump administration on Jan. 6.

Two other aides, former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows and former Pentagon aide Kash Patel, are "engaging" with the committee, lawmakers said in a statement.

Remus wrote that Biden has determined that invoking executive privilege "is not in the best interests of the United States." The House panel had asked for the records, including communication within the White House under Trump and information about planning and funding for rallies held in Washington. Among those events was a rally near the White House the morning of Jan. 6 featuring remarks by Trump, who egged on a crowd of thousands protesting Biden's win.

Remus wrote that the documents "shed light on events within the White House on and about January 6 and bear on the Select Committee's need to understand the facts underlying the most serious attack on the operations of the Federal Government since the Civil War."

The Associated Press obtained a copy of the letter Friday. It was first reported by NBC News.

Trump responded with his own letter to the National Archives formally asserting privilege over nearly 50 documents.

Referring to the Presidential Records Act, Trump wrote, "I hereby make a protective assertion of constitutionally based privilege with respect to all additional records." He said if the committee seeks other information he considers privileged information, "I will take all necessary and appropriate steps to defend the Office of the Presidency."

The investigation sets up a unique clash, pitting the current administration against its predecessor. Since Biden now holds the office of the presidency, he will make the call on some of Trump's privilege claims.

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And while Biden has accommodated the first requests from Congress, the White House has said it will review new claims on a "case by case basis."

The final word may not rest with Biden, but the courts, if Trump decides to litigate — which is expected — or if the House votes to hold any of the witnesses in contempt of Congress. In the case of a House contempt vote, the Justice Department would then decide whether to prosecute.

If Trump were to win a case to block the documents, that would mark a dramatic expansion of the unwritten executive power. But he is expected to have an uphill battle, as courts have traditionally left questions of executive privilege up to the current White House occupant.

The leaders of the Jan. 6 panel, Democratic Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi and Republican Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming, said in a statement Friday that "we will not allow any witness to defy a lawful subpoena or attempt to run out the clock, and we will swiftly consider advancing a criminal contempt of Congress referral."

The committee's subpoenas had set a Thursday deadline for Bannon, Meadows, Patel and a fourth witness, former White House communications aide Dan Scavino, to provide documents. They also set dates for interviews next week. Patel said in a statement that "I can confirm that I have responded to the subpoena in a timely manner" but would not elaborate. A spokesman for the committee declined to comment on whether Scavino was cooperating.

In a Sept. 23 letter to Bannon, the committee said he had been in contact with Trump in the weeks ahead of the attack, urging him to focus his efforts in overturning the election on Jan. 6, when Congress certifies electoral votes. The letter noted that Bannon had been quoted on Jan. 5 as saying "all hell is going to break loose tomorrow."

Bannon's lawyer, Robert Costello, said in an Oct. 7 letter to the panel that until the issues over privilege are resolved, "we are unable to respond to your requests for documents and testimony." Costello wrote that Bannon is prepared to "comply with the directions of the courts" when and if they rule.

Costello's letter includes excerpts from a separate letter to Bannon by Justin Clark, a lawyer for Trump. Clark says documents and testimony provided to the Jan. 6 panel could include information that is "potentially protected from disclosure by executive and other privileges, including among others the presidential communications, deliberative process and attorney client privileges."

The committee has subpoenaed 13 other individuals connected to the planning of Jan. 6 and set deadlines for documents and interviews later this month.

Associated Press writers Ben Fox and Farnoush Amiri contributed to this report.

McConnell says he won't help Dems raise debt limit again

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said Friday he would not again help Democrats extend the government's borrowing authority, raising fresh doubts about how Congress will avert a federal default when a temporary patch expires in December.

McConnell issued his warning in a letter to President Joe Biden a day after the Senate approved a \$480 billion boost in the federal debt limit, enough to last about two months. In an eleventh-hour turnabout, the Kentucky Republican was among 11 GOP senators who provided decisive support Thursday for a procedural move that opened the door for subsequent Senate passage of that measure with only Democratic support.

Some GOP senators openly criticized their leaders not holding out longer against Democrats' efforts to extend the debt limit, which they said would have sharpened their message that a still-developing multibillion-dollar package of Biden's top domestic priorities is wasteful and damaging to the economy.

McConnell said Friday that he made his decision to refuse future help because of his opposition to the huge domestic bill and because of a "bizarre spectacle" on the Senate floor by Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. After the bill passed, Schumer criticized Republicans for trying to push the country over "the cliff's edge" by opposing the debt limit extension.

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"In light of Senator Schumer's hysterics and my grave concerns about the ways that another vast, reckless, partisan spending bill would hurt Americans and help China, I will not be a party to any future effort to mitigate the consequences of Democratic mismanagement," McConnell wrote.

It remains unclear how Democrats would push new legislation further extending federal borrowing authority come December without GOP backing.

One theoretical way is for them to change Senate rules and shield debt limit legislation from GOP filibusters, delays that require 60 votes to overcome in the 50-50 Senate.

At least two Democratic senators, West Virginia's Joe Manchin and Arizona's Kyrsten Sinema, have said they oppose doing that, effectively thwarting that option. Republicans said one factor in providing Democrats the two-month lifeline was fear that Manchin and Sinema might decide to support ending filibusters for debt limit legislation.

McConnell's letter included a string of insults aimed at Schumer, a remarkable broadside by one Senate leader against another.

"Last night, in a bizarre spectacle, Senator Schumer exploded in a rant that was so partisan, angry, and corrosive that even Democratic Senators were visibly embarrassed by him and for him," McConnell wrote. "This tantrum encapsulated and escalated a pattern of angry incompetence from Senator Schumer."

McConnell added: "This childish behavior only further alienated the Republican members who helped facilitate this short-term patch. It has poisoned the well even further."

A Schumer spokesperson declined to comment on McConnell's letter.

Since summer, McConnell repeatedly said Republicans would not assist Democrats in pushing a debt ceiling extension through the Senate by helping them reach the 60 votes needed for most legislation. He cited Democrats' proposed 10-year, \$3.5 trillion social, economic and tax measure, which Republicans unanimously oppose.

Hours before Thursday's vote, McConnell reversed course and proposed a short-term extension into December. Without a renewal of federal borrowing powers, the Treasury Department had projected it would run out of cash to pay the government's bills by Oct. 18.

Republicans lambasting McConnell's tactic included former President Donald Trump, still influential within the GOP. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., typically a McConnell ally, slammed the move as "complete capitulation."

If the government depletes its legal ability to borrow money, financial analysts have warned that it could deliver a serious blow to the U.S. and global economy and cause delays in government payments to Social Security recipients and others.

McConnell has insisted that Democrats can raise the debt ceiling by themselves by employing the same special budget process they're already using for their enormous domestic spending and tax measure. Those procedures forbid filibusters from being used against certain bills.

Democrats say they won't use that process, which they call too cumbersome. But it would also require them to raise the debt limit by a specific dollar amount that, they fear, Republicans will make a staple of campaign ads attacking them.

Democrats accused McConnell of creating a potential financial crisis. They noted that the current federal debt of around \$28 trillion is to cover spending that's already been approved, including around \$7 trillion under former President Donald Trump.

McConnell said it was Democrats who prompted the problem because he had warned them since summer that they would have to approve the debt limit extension on their own. Before Thursday, the House had approved debt ceiling extensions but Republicans blocked them in the Senate.

After the \$480 billion borrowing extension cleared the procedural hurdle thanks to GOP support Thursday, the Senate gave it final approval by 50-48 with only Democratic votes. Final congressional approval of the Senate-passed short-term debt ceiling extension is expected Tuesday by the House.

After the Senate vote, Schumer lauded Democrats for overcoming "this Republican-manufactured crisis. Despite immense opposition from Leader McConnell and members of his conference, our caucus held to-

gether and we have pulled our country back from the cliff's edge that Republicans tried to push us over."

Federal appeals court temporarily reinstates nation's strictest abortion law, letting Texas resume ban on most abortions

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Federal appeals court temporarily reinstates nation's strictest abortion law, letting Texas resume ban on most abortions.

Biden won't invoke executive privilege on Trump Jan. 6 docs

By ERIC TUCKER, MARY CLARE JALONICK, ZEKE MILLER and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House said Friday that President Joe Biden will not block the handover of documents sought by a House committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, setting up a showdown with former President Donald Trump, who wants to shield those White House records from investigators.

The letter from White House counsel Dana Remus to the Archivist of the United States comes at the start of a potentially lengthy legal battle over the investigation. Trump, who told his supporters to "fight like hell" the morning of the insurrection and has defended the rioters who beat police and broke into the Capitol, is trying to block Congress from learning more. Biden has so far sided with House Democrats, who have asked for thousands of pages of documents and subpoenaed witnesses connected to Trump.

The House committee investigating the insurrection, which formed over the summer, now has the momentous task of sorting through the details and obtaining documents and testimony from witnesses who may or may not be cooperative. And the jockeying between the two administrations, Congress and the witnesses is certain to delay the investigation and set the stage for messy litigation that could stretch well into 2022.

In a separate development, a lawyer for Steve Bannon said the former White House aide won't comply with the House committee's investigation because Trump is asserting executive privilege. Bannon is the only one of the top Trump aides subpoenaed on Sept. 23 who was not working for the Trump administration on Jan. 6.

Two other aides, former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows and former Pentagon aide Kash Patel, are "engaging" with the committee, lawmakers said in a statement.

Remus wrote that Biden has determined that invoking executive privilege "is not in the best interests of the United States." The House panel had asked for the records, including communication within the White House under Trump and information about planning and funding for rallies held in Washington. Among those events was a rally near the White House the morning of Jan. 6 featuring remarks by Trump, who egged on a crowd of thousands protesting Biden's win.

Remus wrote that the documents "shed light on events within the White House on and about January 6 and bear on the Select Committee's need to understand the facts underlying the most serious attack on the operations of the Federal Government since the Civil War."

The Associated Press obtained a copy of the letter Friday. It was first reported by NBC News.

Trump responded with his own letter to the National Archives formally asserting privilege over nearly 50 documents.

Referring to the Presidential Records Act, Trump wrote, "I hereby make a protective assertion of constitutionally based privilege with respect to all additional records." He said if the committee seeks other information he considers privileged information, "I will take all necessary and appropriate steps to defend the Office of the Presidency."

The investigation sets up a unique clash, pitting the current administration against its predecessor. Since Biden now holds the office of the presidency, he will make the call on some of Trump's privilege claims. And while Biden has accommodated the first requests from Congress, the White House has said it will review new claims on a "case by case basis."

The final word may not rest with Biden, but the courts, if Trump decides to litigate — which is expected

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— or if the House votes to hold any of the witnesses in contempt of Congress. In the case of a House contempt vote, the Justice Department would then decide whether to prosecute.

If Trump were to win a case to block the documents, that would mark a dramatic expansion of the unwritten executive power. But he is expected to have an uphill battle, as courts have traditionally left questions of executive privilege up to the current White House occupant.

The leaders of the Jan. 6 panel, Democratic Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi and Republican Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming, said in a statement Friday that “we will not allow any witness to defy a lawful subpoena or attempt to run out the clock, and we will swiftly consider advancing a criminal contempt of Congress referral.”

The committee’s subpoenas had set a Thursday deadline for Bannon, Meadows, Patel and a fourth witness, former White House communications aide Dan Scavino, to provide documents. They also set dates for interviews next week. Patel said in a statement that “I can confirm that I have responded to the subpoena in a timely manner” but would not elaborate. A spokesman for the committee declined to comment on whether Scavino was cooperating.

In a Sept. 23 letter to Bannon, the committee said he had been in contact with Trump in the weeks ahead of the attack, urging him to focus his efforts in overturning the election on Jan. 6, when Congress certifies electoral votes. The letter noted that Bannon had been quoted on Jan. 5 as saying “all hell is going to break loose tomorrow.”

Bannon’s lawyer, Robert Costello, said in an Oct. 7 letter to the panel that until the issues over privilege are resolved, “we are unable to respond to your requests for documents and testimony.” Costello wrote that Bannon is prepared to “comply with the directions of the courts” when and if they rule.

Costello’s letter includes excerpts from a separate letter to Bannon by Justin Clark, a lawyer for Trump. Clark says documents and testimony provided to the Jan. 6 panel could include information that is “potentially protected from disclosure by executive and other privileges, including among others the presidential communications, deliberative process and attorney client privileges.”

The committee has subpoenaed 13 other individuals connected to the planning of Jan. 6 and set deadlines for documents and interviews later this month.

Associated Press writers Ben Fox and Farnoush Amiri contributed to this report.

Nobel Peace Prize awarded to journalists Ressa and Muratov

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV, KIKO ROSARIO and VANESSA GERA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Journalists Maria Ressa of the Philippines and Dmitry Muratov of Russia won the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize on Friday for their fight for freedom of expression in countries where reporters have faced persistent attacks, harassment and even murder.

Ressa and Muratov were honored for their “courageous” work but also were considered “representatives of all journalists who stand up for this ideal in a world in which democracy and freedom of the press face increasingly adverse conditions,” said Berit Reiss-Andersen, chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee.

Ressa in 2012 co-founded Rappler, a news website that the committee noted had focused critical attention on President Rodrigo Duterte’s “controversial, murderous anti-drug campaign” in the Philippines.

She and Rappler “have also documented how social media is being used to spread fake news, harass opponents and manipulate public discourse,” it said.

Muratov was one of the founders in 1993 of the independent Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta, which the Nobel committee called “the most independent newspaper in Russia today, with a fundamentally critical attitude towards power.”

“The newspaper’s fact-based journalism and professional integrity have made it an important source of information on censurable aspects of Russian society rarely mentioned by other media,” it added, noting that six of its journalists were killed since its founding.

Ressa, the first Filipino to win the peace prize and the first woman to be honored this year with an award by the Nobel committee, was convicted last year of libel and sentenced to jail in a decision seen

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as a major blow to press global freedom.

Currently out on bail but facing seven active legal cases, Ressa, 58, said she hopes the award will bolster investigative journalism "that will hold power to account."

"This relentless campaign of harassment and intimidation against me and my fellow journalists in the Philippines is a stark example of a global trend," she told The Associated Press.

She also pointed to social media giants like Facebook as a serious threat to democracy, saying "they actually prioritized the spread of lies laced with anger and hate over facts."

"I didn't think that what we are going through would get that attention. But the fact that it did also shows you how important the battles we face are, right?" she said. "This is going to be what our elections are going to be like next year. It is a battle for facts. When you're in a battle for facts, journalism is activism."

Muratov, 59, said he sees the prize as an award to Novaya Gazeta journalists and contributors who were killed, including Anna Politkovskaya, who covered Russia's bloody conflict in Chechnya.

"It's a recognition of the memory of our fallen colleagues," he said.

"Since the Nobel Peace Prize isn't awarded posthumously, they came up with this so that Anya could take it, but through other, second hands," Muratov said, referring to Politkovskaya.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 17 media workers were killed in the Philippines in the last decade and 23 in Russia.

Muratov said he would use part of his share of the 10 million Swedish kronor (over \$1.14 million) prize money to help independent media as well as a Moscow hospice and children with spinal muscular problems. He said he wouldn't keep any of the money himself.

Former Soviet leader and 1990 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mikhail Gorbachev used some of his award to help fund what would become Novaya Gazeta. He congratulated Muratov, calling him "a wonderful, brave and honest journalist and my friend."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov also praised Muratov as a "talented and brave" person who "has consistently worked in accordance with his ideals."

But Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's envoy to international organizations in Vienna, tweeted that Novaya Gazeta's editorial policy "has nothing to do with strengthening peace" and that "such controversial decisions diminish the value of the Prize."

Moscow-based political analyst Abbas Gallyamov said the award marked "a painful strike to the Russian authorities ... because the freedom of speech and the principles of independent journalism are an evil in the eyes of Russian authorities."

As part of a new crackdown on independent journalists in Russia under President Vladimir Putin, the government has designated some of them "foreign agents," saying they received funding from abroad and engaged in undescribed "political activities." Muratov said he asked government officials who congratulated him if he would now also receive that designation, but received no reply.

The state RIA Novosti news agency quoted lawmaker Alexander Bashkin as saying the Nobel wouldn't fall under the definition of foreign funding under the bill on foreign agents. Hours after the prize announcement, the Russian Justice Ministry added nine more journalists to its list of foreign agents.

Muratov on Friday denounced the foreign agent bill as a "shameless" attempt to muzzle independent voices.

Referring to the hopes by many in Russia that the prize should go to imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny, Muratov said he would have voted for him if he were on the committee, saying that he admires Navalny's courage and adding that "everything is still ahead for him."

Some critics have questioned if honoring journalists respected the will of Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel and its original purpose to prevent war, but Reiss-Andersen said freedom of expression was essential to peace.

"Free, independent and fact-based journalism serves to protect against abuse of power, lies and war propaganda," she said. "Without freedom of expression and freedom of the press, it will be difficult to successfully promote fraternity between nations, disarmament and a better world order to succeed in

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our time.”

She also cited the danger of misinformation and attacks on journalists by leaders denouncing them as purveyors of “fake news.”

“Conveying fake news and information that is propaganda and untrue is also a violation of freedom of expression, and all freedom of expression has its limitations. That is also a very important factor in this debate,” she said.

Media rights group Reporters Without Borders celebrated the announcement, expressing “joy and urgency.”

Director Christophe Deloire called it “an extraordinary tribute to journalism, an excellent tribute to all journalists who take risks everywhere around the world to defend the right to information.”

“Journalism is in danger, journalism is weakened, journalism is threatened. Democracies are weakened by disinformation, by rumors, by hate speech,” said Deloire, whose group has worked with Ressa and Muratov to defend journalism in their countries and comes under regular criticism from authoritarian governments.

U.S. President Joe Biden congratulated Ressa and Muratov for the “much-deserved honor.”

“Ressa, Muratov, and journalists like them all around the world are on the front lines of a global battle for the very idea of the truth, and I, along with people everywhere, am grateful for their groundbreaking work to ‘hold the line,’ as Ressa so often says,” Biden said in a statement.

After the announcement, the Nobel committee itself was put on the spot when a reporter asked about its decision to award the 2019 peace prize to Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who has since become entangled in a domestic conflict with the powerful Tigray region.

“Today, I will not comment on other Nobel laureates and other issues than we have on the table today, but I can mention that the situation for freedom of press in Ethiopia is very far from ideal and is facing severe restrictions,” Reiss-Andersen said.

In other awards announced this week by the Nobel Committee:

— The medicine prize went to Americans David Julius and Ardem Patapoutian for their discoveries into how the human body perceives temperature and touch.

— The physics prize went to three scientists whose work found order in seeming disorder, helping to explain and predict complex forces of nature, including expanding understanding of climate change.

— The chemistry prize went to Benjamin List and David W.C. MacMillan for finding an easier and environmentally cleaner way to build molecules that can be used to make compounds, including medicines and pesticides.

— The literature prize went to U.K.-based Tanzanian writer Abdulrazak Gurnah, for his “uncompromising and compassionate penetration of the effects of colonialism and the fate of the refugee.”

The economics prize will be awarded Monday.

Gera reported from Warsaw, Poland, and Rosario reported from Manila. Kostya Manenkov in Moscow, Masha Macpherson in Paris, Jan M. Olsen in Copenhagen, Denmark, and Frank Jordans in Berlin contributed.

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

Reported racist comment from Jon Gruden draws NFL rebuke

By BARRY WILNER AP Pro Football Writer

A report that Jon Gruden used a racist comment about NFL Players Association leader DeMaurice Smith in an email 10 years ago drew a strong and quick rebuke Friday from the NFL.

A Wall Street Journal story noted that Gruden, then working for ESPN and now coach of the Las Vegas Raiders, referred in a racist way to Smith’s facial features.

“The email from Jon Gruden denigrating DeMaurice Smith is appalling, abhorrent and wholly contrary to

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the NFL's values," NFL spokesman Brian McCarthy said. "We condemn the statement and regret any harm that its publication may inflict on Mr. Smith or anyone else."

The league is looking into the matter and a person familiar with that probe told The Associated Press that disciplinary action is possible for Gruden. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because details of any league probe are not made public.

Gruden's comment in an email to then-Washington Football Team President Bruce Allen came during the 2011 lockout of the players by the NFL. Gruden told the newspaper he was angry about the lockout during labor negotiations and he didn't trust the direction the union was taking. He also apologized for the remark, the Journal reported.

"Dumboriss Smith has lips the size of michellin tires," Gruden wrote in the email reviewed by the newspaper.

Raiders owner Mark Davis said in a statement Gruden's email does not reflect the team's standards.

"The content of an email regarding DeMaurice Smith from Jon Gruden when he worked for ESPN 10 years ago is disturbing and not what the Raiders stand for," Davis said. "We were first made aware of the email late yesterday by a reporter and are reviewing it along with other materials provided to us today by the NFL. We are addressing the matter with Coach Gruden and will have no further comment at this time."

During a review of emails regarding workplace misconduct at the Washington Football Team that was completed during the summer, "the league was informed of the existence of emails that raised issues beyond the scope of that investigation," McCarthy added.

"Over the past few months, at the commissioner's direction," he added of Roger Goodell, "senior NFL executives reviewed the content of more than 650,000 emails, including this email which was sent to a club employee. Earlier this week, the executives presented a summary of that review to the commissioner and are sharing with Raiders executives emails pertaining to coach Gruden."

Smith told the newspaper: "This is not the first racist comment that I've heard and it probably will not be the last. This is a thick skin job for someone with dark skin, just like it always has been for many people who look like me and work in corporate America,"

Gruden defended his resume on racial equality and inclusion while admitting his email went "too far."

Gruden led the Raiders from 1998 until he was traded to Tampa Bay after the 2001 season. He immediately led the Buccaneers to a Super Bowl title — against the Raiders.

He lasted through the 2008 season in Tampa before being fired, then headed to the "Monday Night Football" booth.

The Raiders, then in Oakland, rehired Gruden in 2018 with a 10-year, \$100 million contract. The team moved to Las Vegas last year and has not made the playoffs since his return. But the Raiders are 3-1 in 2021.

More AP NFL coverage: <https://apnews.com/hub/NFL> and https://twitter.com/AP_NFL

Delta variant and worker shortage keep a lid on job growth

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. employers added just 194,000 jobs in September, a second straight tepid gain and evidence that the pandemic has kept its grip on the economy, with many companies struggling to fill millions of open jobs.

Friday's report from the Labor Department also showed that the unemployment rate sank last month from 5.2% to 4.8%. The rate fell in part because more people found jobs but also because about 180,000 fewer people looked for work in September, which meant they weren't counted as unemployed.

September's sluggish job gains fell shy of even the modest 336,000 that the economy had added in August and were the fewest since December, when employers actually cut jobs.

The economy is showing some signs of emerging from the drag of the delta variant of the coronavirus, with confirmed new COVID-19 infections declining, restaurant traffic picking up slightly and consumers

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willing to spend. But new infections remained high as September began. And employers are still struggling to find workers because many people who lost jobs in the pandemic have yet to start looking again. The persistence of that trend, with job openings at a record high, has confounded many economists.

Most of them had expected September to produce robust job growth as schools reopened, thereby freeing parents, especially working mothers, to return to jobs. Several enhanced unemployment benefit programs had expired Sept. 6, potentially providing incentives for more people to seek work. And at least before delta intensified, many companies had planned to return to working in offices, which would have revitalized still-dormant downtowns.

Instead, as a result of the delta variant, many office buildings remain vacant and fears of the disease rebounded. A Census Bureau survey found that the number of people not working because they had COVID or were caring for someone with the disease doubled between July and early September. COVID outbreaks have also temporarily closed some schools, making it harder for many mothers to hold down permanent jobs.

At the same time, many economists say that as COVID recedes further and Americans resume traveling, eating out and seeing movies, more people will likely re-enter the workforce, and hiring will strengthen.

"This report is a look in the rear-view mirror," said Daniel Zhao, senior economist at the jobs website Glassdoor, "and hopefully this means the worst is behind us, and the worst was just a slowdown in the recovery."

For now, people like Sarah Neumeier have chosen to stay on the sidelines. Neumeier, 32, of Natick, Massachusetts, who has 3-year-old twin sons, said she will wait until after the winter holidays to look for work again.

She had turned down a job just as the pandemic intensified in March 2020 because, out of concern for their health, she didn't want to place her children in daycare. Those concerns haven't lifted.

"I was waiting for the vaccine," she said. "My boys were preemies, and we did everything to keep them healthy. I don't want to jeopardize that now."

The delta variant has discouraged Neumeier in another way: Her work experience is in event planning, a field that was devastated by the pandemic and is unlikely to recover until the delta variant has faded further.

Neumeier has plenty of company. The proportion of Americans who either have a job or are looking for one — known as labor force participation — declined in September from 61.7% to 61.6%, well below the pre-pandemic level of 63.3%, Friday's report said.

The drop in labor force participation occurred entirely among women, suggesting that many working mothers are still caring for children at home. For men, labor participation was unchanged. Some after-school programs weren't yet in place last month to provide all-day care. And child care has become scarcer and costlier in many cases.

Lael Brainard, a member of the Federal Reserve's Board of Governors, noted in a recent speech that COVID outbreaks in late September caused 2,000 schools to close for an average of six days in 39 states.

John Lai, chief executive of Mister Car Wash, with about 350 locations, said he's seeking to hire 500 people in the next three months to add to the company's 6,000 workers. Mister Car Wash, based in Tucson, Arizona, has raised its average hourly-worker pay to \$14.50 an hour since the pandemic began and offers health and retirement benefits. Yet it's struggling to attract applicants.

"It is certainly the most challenging labor market that I have ever experienced in my 20 years in the business," Lai said.

Some of his female employees, he said, have had to quit to care for children. And despite the end of federal supplemental unemployment aid, Lai is seeing little increase in the number of job applicants.

"I think it's the big mystery of the economy," he said. "The folks that are sitting on the sidelines — why are they sitting on the sidelines?"

He suspects that one factor is lingering fear of becoming sick at work.

The enhanced unemployment aid that ended in early September included a \$300-a-week federal supple-

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ment, as well as programs that for the first time covered gig workers and people who were jobless for six months or more. The expiration of those programs cutoff aid for roughly 7 million people.

Many business owners and Republican political leaders argued that the extra \$300-a-week benefit was discouraging some people from seeking jobs because they could receive more money from unemployment aid. So far, though, the ending of those programs appears to have had little effect on the number of people looking for work.

Economists still think that most of the roughly 3 million people who lost jobs and stopped looking for work since the pandemic struck will resume their searches as COVID wanes. It took years after the 2008-2009 recession, they note, for the proportion of people working or seeking work to return to pre-recession levels.

September's meager job gain will likely still be enough for the Federal Reserve to proceed with its plans to pull back on its extraordinary assistance to the economy, said Lydia Boussour, an economist at Oxford Economics. The Fed is expected to announce in November that it will begin slowing its bond purchases, which are intended to lower long-term loan rates and encourage more borrowing and spending.

Tammy Browning, president of KellyOCG, a staffing agency, said she notices little urgency among some potential job-seekers. Some families have learned to live with less, she said, adapting to one income as mothers stay home. Household savings are, on average, still above pre-pandemic levels, thanks in part to stimulus checks.

"I think it's going to be several months before people come back in full force," Browning said.

One factor behind the weakness in hiring last month was a sharp drop in local government education jobs. The number of such jobs fell by 144,000 last month despite the reopening of schools. That decline suggested that many local school systems didn't hire as many people as they typically do. Many have had trouble finding enough bus drivers, cafeteria workers and other support staff.

Most industries added jobs last month, though at a reduced pace. Transportation and warehousing, for example, which has been boosted by a spike in online shopping, added 47,000 jobs. Manufacturers added 26,000. Restaurants, hotels and amusement parks, though, gained just 74,000 positions, more than in August but far below the pace in the summer, when they were adding hundreds of thousands of workers a month.

Another reason workers are scarce is a surge in retirements among older, more affluent workers whose home equity and stock portfolios have surged since the pandemic struck and who have managed to build up savings. Goldman Sachs estimates that about 1.5 million people have retired who wouldn't have before the pandemic upended the economy. Many of these people will likely stay retired, economists expect.

AP Writer Jennifer McDermott contributed to this report from Natick, Massachusetts.

Brazil tops 600,000 virus deaths amid doubts about delta

By MAURICIO SAVARESE Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — Bars in Brazil's biggest metropolis, Sao Paulo, are full again for Friday happy hours and lawmakers in the capital have nearly done away with video sessions via Zoom. Rio de Janeiro's beaches are packed and calls for strict social distancing seem but a memory.

These developments are part of Brazil's bid to return to pre-pandemic normalcy, even as its death toll tops 600,000, according to official data on Friday from the health ministry. Relief in both COVID-19 cases and deaths have been particularly welcome given experts' warnings that the delta variant would produce another wave of destruction in the country with the second-most victims. So far, that hasn't materialized.

The country's average daily death toll has hovered around 500 for a month, down sharply from more than 3,000 in April. Almost 45% of the population is fully vaccinated, and a booster shot is being administered to the elderly. A greater percentage of Brazilians are at least partially vaccinated compared to Americans or Germans, according to Our World in Data, an online research site.

Improvement has encouraged mayors and governors to admit fans into soccer matches, and let bars and restaurants stay open until the wee hours. Some are even contemplating the end of mask mandates,

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which people often ignore already. And Rio's mayor has announced plans to bring back the city's massive New Year's Eve party on Copacabana beach.

Gonzalo Vecina, a professor of public health at the University of Sao Paulo, told The Associated Press in July that delta, which is more contagious, would cause "a new explosion" of cases within weeks. He was hardly alone among experts sounding the alarm.

Now, Vecina believes the high number of Brazilians infected earlier this year with the gamma variant -- first identified in the Amazonian city Manaus -- may have slowed delta's advance.

"That isn't a conclusion from a study; it is a possibility we are raising in the face of what we are seeing," Vecina said. "We are seeing delta rise in countries that reopened just as much as Brazil, and our number of cases is still going down, with few very particular exceptions."

Some analysts remain worried about delta's potential to spread. Among them is Miguel Lago, executive director of Brazil's Institute for Health Policy Studies, which advises public health officials. He believes authorities are taking considerable risk by reopening too much and announcing celebrations, and that Brazil may soon see more hospital admissions.

"The pandemic has waned, but 500 deaths per day is far from good. And we don't even have half the population fully vaccinated," Lago said. "We just don't know enough and we have this horrific milestone to contemplate now."

Friday morning, on Copacabana where Rio's New Year's party will take place in less than three months, activist group Rio da Paz held a memorial on its sands to mourn the 600,000 dead, with hundreds of white kerchiefs strung on lines.

Across town, at a support group for family members of the virus' victims, Bruna Chaves mourned the loss of her mother and step-father.

"It's not just 600,000 people who are gone; it's a lot of people who die with them, emotionally," Chaves said in an interview. "It's absurd that people treat it like it's a small number. It's a big number."

Many in Brazil continue to downplay the pandemic's severity, chief among them President Jair Bolsonaro, whose popularity has sagged largely due to his government's chaotic pandemic response. But he hasn't veered from his positions, including staunch support for drugs proven ineffective against the virus, like hydroxychloroquine.

He also continues to criticize restrictions on activity adopted by mayors and governors, saying Brazil needed to keep the economy humming to avoid inflicting worse hardship on the poor. On Thursday night, during a live broadcast on Facebook, he showed a series of newspaper articles reporting economic turmoil in Europe and the U.S. last year in an attempt to prove he was right all along.

Months after its New Year's bash, Rio will also host Carnival, according to Mayor Eduardo Paes. And he said social distancing is out of the question.

"That would be ridiculous, asking people to keep one meter away. If that were the case, I would be the first to disrespect that," he told residents in a middle-class neighborhood on Monday. "Science has advanced, it won, it is allowing us to open."

Brazil's long history with vaccination campaigns has played a significant role in slowing the virus' spread, with broad uptake. Nearly three-quarters of Brazilians have received at least one dose so far -- despite the fact Bolsonaro spent months sowing doubt about their efficacy and remains unvaccinated himself. Even most of his supporters rolled up their sleeves.

As Brazil surpasses 600,000 deaths, a Senate inquiry on the government's handling of the pandemic is nearing its end. Sen. Renan Calheiros, who will write the investigation's final report, told journalists Wednesday that it will include the recommendation for at least 40 people to face charges, including Bolsonaro, his former health minister Gen. Eduardo Pazuello and several allies.

Luiz Davidovich, president of The Brazilian Academy of Sciences, said scientists performed their role in alerting Brazilians about the pandemic's dangers, but their advice should have been better heeded.

"What remains now is the memory of this tragedy that marks the history of the country and our lives, involved in collective grief, permeated by sadness and indignation," Davidovich said.

AP videojournalist Lucas Dumphreys contributed from Rio de Janeiro.

Feds won't seek charges against cop in Jacob Blake shooting

By TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Federal prosecutors announced Friday that they won't file charges against a white police officer who shot Jacob Blake in Wisconsin last year — a shooting that sparked protests that led to the deaths of two men.

Officer Rusten Sheskey shot Blake, who is Black, during a domestic disturbance in Kenosha in August 2020. The shooting left Blake paralyzed from the waist down and sparked several nights of protests, some of which turned violent. An Illinois man shot three people, killing two of them, during one of the demonstrations.

State prosecutors decided not to file charges against Sheskey earlier this year after video showed that Blake, who was wanted on a felony warrant, was armed with a knife.

The U.S. Department of Justice launched its own investigation days after the shooting. The agency announced Friday that a team of prosecutors from its Civil Rights Division and the U.S. attorney's office in Milwaukee reviewed police reports, witness statements, dispatch logs and videos of the incident, and determined there wasn't enough evidence to prove Sheskey used excessive force or violated Blake's federal rights.

"Accordingly, the review of this incident has been closed without a federal prosecution," the Justice Department said in a news release.

Blake's uncle, Justin Blake, called the decision "unconscionable" and said it "definitely steps on every civil right we can imagine this country owes every African American descendant."

"If we had a heart to be broken, it would be," he said. "But because we've been through all we've been, we're not."

The Justice Department's findings dovetail with Kenosha County District Attorney Michael Graveley's determination in January that Sheskey could successfully argue that he fired in self-defense.

Sheskey and other officers encountered Blake after they responded to a call from a woman who reported that her boyfriend wasn't supposed to be at her home. When they arrived at the scene the woman told them that Blake was trying to harm her kids and her SUV.

Blake fought the officers as they tried to take him into custody. Sheskey and another officer tried to shock him with their stun guns to no avail. Blake tried to get into the SUV with his young children in the backseat, prompting Sheskey to grab his shirt. Sheskey told investigators that he was afraid Blake would drive off with the children or use them as hostages.

Graveley said video shows Blake turning toward Sheskey with a knife and made a motion toward the officer with the knife, prompting Sheskey to fire.

The shooting came three months after George Floyd died while white Minneapolis police officers restrained him. Black Lives Matter supporters flooded downtown Kenosha for several nights, with some demonstrators setting fire to buildings and cars. Gov. Tony Evers was forced to call in the National Guard.

Kyle Rittenhouse, of Antioch, Illinois, answered a local militia's call to protect Kenosha businesses from looters and vandals during the third night of protests. He ended up shooting Joseph Rosenbaum, Anthony Huber and Gage Grosskreutz, killing Rosenbaum and Huber and wounding Grosskreutz in the arm. All four men involved were white.

Prosecutors have charged Rittenhouse with multiple counts, including homicide. He has argued that he fired in self-defense after the three men attacked him. He's set to stand trial next month.

Conservatives frustrated with Black Lives Matter protests have rallied around Rittenhouse. They raised \$2 million to cover his bail. Black Lives Matter supporters have painted him as a trigger-happy vigilante who made things worse in Kenosha by bringing a gun to the protests.

Follow Todd Richmond on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/trichmond1>

2 parents convicted in 1st trial of college bribery scandal

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Two wealthy parents were convicted Friday of buying their kids' way into school as athletic recruits in the first case to go to trial in the college admissions cheating scandal that embroiled prestigious universities across the country.

Gamal Abdelaziz, a former casino executive, and John Wilson, a former Staples Inc. executive, were found guilty after about 10 hours of deliberations in the case that exposed a scheme to get undeserving applicants into college by falsely portraying them as star athletes.

"What they did was an affront to hardworking students and parents, but the verdict today proves that even these defendants — powerful and privileged people — are not above the law," Acting Massachusetts U.S. Attorney Nathaniel Mendell told reporters.

Abdelaziz, of Las Vegas, was charged with paying \$300,000 to get his daughter into the University of Southern California as a basketball recruit even though she didn't even make it onto her high school's varsity team. Wilson, who heads a Massachusetts private equity firm, was accused of paying \$220,000 to have his son designated as a USC water polo recruit and an additional \$1 million to buy his twin daughters' ways into Harvard and Stanford.

They are to be sentenced in February. Abdelaziz's lawyer vowed to appeal.

"This is obviously not the result Mr. Abdelaziz was hoping for but that's why we have appellate courts," attorney Brian Kelly said in an email.

An email seeking comment was sent to Wilson's attorney.

They are among nearly 60 people charged in the investigation dubbed by authorities as "Operation Varsity Blues" that also ensnared athletic coaches at such prestigious schools as Georgetown and Yale. Other parents were accused of paying hefty bribes to have people cheat on their kids' entrance exams.

Thirty-three parents have pleaded guilty, including TV actors Felicity Huffman and Lori Loughlin and Loughlin's fashion designer husband, Mossimo Giannulli. The parents have so far received punishments ranging from probation to nine months in prison. All told, nearly four dozen people have admitted to charges.

Lawyers for Abdelaziz and Wilson argued they believed their payments were legitimate donations and pointed the finger at the admissions consultant at the center of the scheme, Rick Singer. The parents insisted they had no idea that Singer was using their money as bribes and was falsifying or exaggerating athletic credentials on behalf of their kids.

At the center of the case were a series of secretly recorded phone calls between Singer and the parents that prosecutors said proved Abdelaziz and Wilson were in on the scheme. The FBI wiretapped Singer's calls and then convinced the admissions consultant to begin cooperating with investigators in 2018 in the hopes of getting a lighter sentence. Singer has pleaded guilty to a slew of charges, including money laundering conspiracy, and has yet to be sentenced.

In one call, Wilson asked Singer which sports "would be best" for his twin daughters. Singer responded that it "doesn't matter" and that he would "make them a sailor or something" because Wilson lives on Cape Cod.

Wilson laughed and asked: "Is there a two-for-one special? If you got twins?"

In another call, Singer told Abdelaziz that Donna Heinel, former senior associate athletic director at USC, told him Abdelaziz's daughter's fake athletic profile was so well done that she wanted him to use that profile going forward for "anybody who isn't a real basketball player that's a female."

"I love it," Abdelaziz responded.

The defense sought to poke holes in the government's case by questioning why they chose not to call Singer to the stand. Abdelaziz and Wilson's lawyers portrayed Singer as a con man who manipulated the parents and assured them his so-called side-door scheme was legitimate and endorsed by the schools.

"John is not part of Singer's con. There is no evidence, not even a hint, that John figured out Singer's

scam. The truth is simple: John is Singer's victim, not once but twice," Wilson's lawyer, Michael Kendall, told jurors in his closing argument.

Wilson and Abdelaziz were both convicted of fraud and bribery conspiracy charges. Wilson was also convicted of additional charges of bribery, wire fraud and filing a false tax return.

The sprawling Varsity Blues case has been prosecuted out of Boston since authorities there began investigating the scheme years ago, thanks to a tip from an executive targeted in a securities fraud probe.

Heinel and two coaches — ex-USC water polo coach Jovan Vavic and former Wake Forest University women's volleyball coach William Ferguson — are scheduled to stand trial in November. Three other parents are expected to face jurors in January.

Boosters, employer mandates drive increase in US vaccines

By JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

The number of Americans getting COVID-19 vaccines has steadily increased to a three-month high as seniors and people with medical conditions seek boosters, and government and employer mandates push more workers to take their first doses.

Demand is expected to spike in a few weeks if regulators authorize the Pfizer vaccine for elementary school children, and some states are reopening mass vaccination clinics in anticipation.

In Missouri, a mass vaccination site at a former Toys R Us store is set to open Monday. Virginia plans to roll out nine large vaccination centers over the next few weeks, including one at the Richmond International Raceway.

Colorado opened four mass vaccination sites in mid-September, largely to deal with employer mandates, and officials saw a 38% increase in vaccinations statewide during the first week.

The total number of doses being administered in the U.S. is climbing toward an average of 1 million per day, almost double the level from mid-July — but still far below last spring. The increase is mainly due to boosters, with nearly 10% of the nation's over-65 population already getting third shots, but there are signs of increased demand from other groups as well.

On Thursday, 1.1 million doses were given, including just over 306,000 to newly vaccinated people, said Dr. Cyrus Shahpar, the White House COVID-19 data director.

Organizers of the effort to reach the roughly 67 million unvaccinated American adults say the rise in demand can be traced to approval of the Pfizer booster, mandates that have forced employees to choose between the shot and their jobs and sobering statistics that show nearly all COVID-19 deaths are among the unvaccinated.

"We're seeing people who need the shot to keep a job," said Dr. Ricardo Gonzalez-Fisher, who runs a mobile vaccine clinic mostly for Latinos in Colorado.

Last weekend, his clinic delivered 30 shots to people outside the Mexican Consulate in Denver. "On these days, 30 is a very good number," he said.

Virginia's state vaccine coordinator, Dr. Danny Avula, said opening the large vaccination centers, will allow local health departments to focus on reaching underserved communities. "This should really help relieve the burden for our local providers," he said.

Last week, the number of people getting shots at a mall in Charlottesville, Virginia, doubled over the previous week, said Ryan McKay, who oversees COVID-19 operations for the Blue Ridge Health District.

The big push now, he said, is in neighborhoods where rates are low. The health district has set up mobile clinics at weekend basketball tournaments, high school football games and even at a corner market where 20 people were vaccinated in a day.

"Those 20 vaccinations sound small, but it's really a huge success," McKay said.

Vice President Kamala Harris stopped Friday at vaccine center in Newark, New Jersey, where she met with patients and health care workers and encouraged people to get the shot.

"There will be an end to this," she said. "We really feel we are starting to get in front of this."

Alba Lopez in Ohio decided to get the Pfizer vaccine Friday at the Columbus Public Health Department

after tiring of twice-weekly testing required by her employer, Chase Bank, and filling out an online form each day indicating whether she had a fever and how she felt.

The vaccine "helped me to avoid all that," said Lopez, who also figured her company will eventually require it.

Health officials in Springfield, Missouri, an early epicenter of the delta surge, are opening the new vaccination site at the former toy store because they anticipate seeing an influx of people.

Roughly 28 million more U.S. children could be eligible for reduced-dose kids' shots as early as November if regulators give their approval. Regulators have yet to take up the question of booster shots for people who got the Moderna or the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, but that's likely coming soon.

"All told, in the coming weeks and months, we are expecting more than 120,000 people to seek vaccine," said Jon Mooney, assistant director of the Springfield-Greene County Health Department. "We are already experiencing increased demand in the last week or two."

Cases in the Springfield area are falling, but 78 people remain hospitalized in the city, and federal officials have determined that community transmission remains high.

Mitchell Maccarone, 24, got his second shot Thursday at a CVS Pharmacy in North Smithfield, Rhode Island. He wanted to wait until the vaccine received full FDA approval.

"Before I put something in my body, I want to make sure it's fully approved," he said. "I'm also not in a high-risk age group. I am healthy, and I had COVID, and it was really just the sniffles."

Vaccination sites that opened within the past week in Memphis, Tennessee, and Tampa, Florida, drew mostly people seeking booster shots and only a handful of people getting their first or second shots, said organizers who expect demand to rise.

A bump in vaccinations in Louisiana began in August, when so many were getting sick from the highly contagious delta variant, said Sheree Taillon, vaccine incentive coordinator for the state's health department.

But now there are few first-timers seeking shots, and most people coming for their boosters are older people and those who rushed to get vaccinated last winter, she said. And COVID-19 deaths and hospitalizations are dropping.

"The fear is leaving yet again," she said. "I feel that fear is the only thing to get folks vaccinated at this point."

Seewer reported from Toledo, Ohio. Associated Press writers Heather Hollingsworth in Mission, Kansas, Jennifer McDermott in Providence, Rhode Island, and Andrew Welsh-Huggins in Columbus, Ohio, contributed to this report.

IS bomber kills 46 inside Afghan mosque, challenges Taliban

By SAMYA KULLAB and TAMEEM AKHGAR Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — An Islamic State suicide bomber struck at a mosque packed with Shiite Muslim worshippers in northern Afghanistan on Friday, killing at least 46 people and wounding dozens in the latest security challenge to the Taliban as they transition from insurgency to governance.

In its claim of responsibility, the region's IS affiliate identified the bomber as a Uygher Muslim, saying the attack targeted both Shiites and the Taliban for their purported willingness to expel Uyghers to meet demands from China. The statement was carried by the IS-linked Aamaq news agency.

The blast tore through a crowded mosque in the city of Kunduz during Friday noon prayers, the highlight of the Muslim religious week. It was the latest in a series of IS bombings and shootings that have targeted Afghanistan's new Taliban rulers, as well as religious institutions and minority Shiites since U.S. and NATO troops left in August.

The blast blew out windows, charred the ceiling and scattered debris and twisted metal across the floor. Rescuers carried one body out on a stretcher and another in a blanket. Blood stains covered the front steps.

A resident of the area, Hussaindad Rezayee, said he rushed to the mosque when he heard the explosion, just as prayers started. "I came to look for my relatives, the mosque was full," he said.

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The worshippers targeted in Friday's were Hazaras, who have long suffered from double discrimination as an ethnic minority and as followers of Shiite Islam in a majority Sunni country.

The Islamic State group and the Taliban, who seized control of the country with the exit of the foreign troops, are strategic rivals. IS militants have targeted Taliban positions and attempted to recruit members from their ranks.

In the past, the Taliban managed to contain the IS threat in tandem with U.S. and Afghan airstrikes. Without these, it remains unclear whether the Taliban can suppress what appears to be a growing IS footprint. The militants, once confined to the east, have penetrated the capital of Kabul and other provinces with new attacks.

This comes at a critical moment, as the Taliban attempt to consolidate power and transform their guerilla fighters into a structured police and security force. But while the group attempts to project an air of authority through reports of raids and arrests of IS members, it remains unclear if it has the capability to protect soft targets, including religious institutions.

The Biden administration condemned Friday's attack. "The Afghan people deserve a future free of terror," State Department spokesman Ned Price said in a statement.

In Kunduz, police officials were still picking up the pieces Friday at the Gozar-e-Sayed Abad Mosque. Taliban spokesman Bilal Karimi told The Associated Press that 46 worshippers were killed and 143 wounded in the explosion. He said an investigation was under way.

The death toll of 46 is the highest in an attack since foreign troops left Afghanistan.

The United Nations mission in Afghanistan condemned the attack as "part of a disturbing pattern of violence" targeting religious institutions.

A prominent Shiite cleric, Sayed Hussain Alimi Balkhi, called on the Taliban to provide security for the Shiites of Afghanistan. "We expect the security forces of the government to provide security for the mosques since they collected the weapons that were provided for the security of the worship places," he said.

Dost Mohammad Obaida, the deputy police chief in Kunduz pledged to protect minorities in the province. "I assure our Shiite brothers that the Taliban are prepared to ensure their safety," he said.

The new tone struck by the Taliban, at least in Kunduz, is in sharp contrast to the well-documented history of Taliban fighters committing a litany of atrocities against minorities, including Hazaras. The Taliban, now feeling the weight of governing, employed similar tactics to those of IS during their 20-year insurgency, including suicide bombings and shooting ambushes.

And they have not halted attacks on Hazaras.

Earlier this week, a report by Amnesty International found the Taliban unlawfully killed 13 Hazaras, including a 17-year-old girl, in Daykundi province, after members of the security forces of the former government surrendered.

In Kunduz province, Hazaras make up about 6% of the province's population of nearly 1 million people. The province also has a large ethnic Uzbek population that has been targeted for recruitment by the IS, which is closely aligned with the militant Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.

Friday's attack was the third to target a place of worship or religious study in a week.

IS has also claimed two deadly bombings in Kabul, including the horrific Aug. 26 bombing that killed at least 169 Afghans and 13 U.S. military personnel outside of Kabul airport in the final days of the chaotic American pullout from Afghanistan.

IS also claimed a bombing on Sunday outside Kabul's Eid Gah Mosque that killed at least five civilians. Another attack on a madrassa, a religious school, in Khost province on Wednesday was not claimed.

If Friday's attack is claimed by IS, it will also be worrying for Afghanistan's northern Central Asian neighbors and Russia, which has been courting the Taliban for years as an ally against the creeping IS in the region.

Akhgar reported from Istanbul. Associated Press writers Kathy Gannon in Islamabad and Sarah El Deeb in Beirut contributed to this report.

Anti-vaccine chiropractors rising force of misinformation

By MICHELLE R. SMITH, SCOTT BAUER and MIKE CATALINI Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — The flashy postcard, covered with images of syringes, beckoned people to attend Vax-Con '21 to learn "the uncensored truth" about COVID-19 vaccines.

Participants traveled from around the country to a Wisconsin Dells resort for a sold-out convention that was, in fact, a sea of misinformation and conspiracy theories about vaccines and the pandemic. The featured speaker was the anti-vaccine activist who appeared in the 2020 movie "Plandemic," which pushed false COVID-19 stories into the mainstream. One session after another discussed bogus claims about the health dangers of mask wearing and vaccines.

The convention was organized by members of a profession that has become a major purveyor of vaccine misinformation during the pandemic: chiropractors.

At a time when the surgeon general says misinformation has become an urgent threat to public health, an investigation by The Associated Press found a vocal and influential group of chiropractors has been capitalizing on the pandemic by sowing fear and mistrust of vaccines.

They have touted their supplements as alternatives to vaccines, written doctor's notes to allow patients to get out of mask and immunization mandates, donated large sums of money to anti-vaccine organizations and sold anti-vaccine ads on Facebook and Instagram, the AP discovered. One chiropractor gave thousands of dollars to a Super PAC that hosted an anti-vaccine, pro-Donald Trump rally near the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6.

They have also been the leading force behind anti-vaccine events like the one in Wisconsin, where hundreds of chiropractors from across the U.S. shelled out \$299 or more to attend. The AP found chiropractors were allowed to earn continuing education credits to maintain their licenses in at least 10 states.

Public health advocates are alarmed by the number of chiropractors who have hitched themselves to the anti-vaccine movement and used their public prominence and sheen of medical expertise to undermine the nation's response to a COVID-19 pandemic that has killed more than 700,000 Americans.

"People trust them. They trust their authority, but they also feel like they're a nice alternative to traditional medicine," said Erica DeWald of Vaccinate Your Family, who tracks figures in the anti-vaccine movement. "Mainstream medicine will refer people out to a chiropractor not knowing that they could be exposed to misinformation. You go because your back hurts, and then suddenly you don't want to vaccinate your kids."

The purveyors of vaccine misinformation represent a small but vocal minority of the nation's 70,000 chiropractors, many of whom advocate for vaccines. In some places, chiropractors have helped organize vaccine clinics or been authorized to give COVID-19 shots.

And chiropractic is not the only health care profession whose members have been associated with COVID-19 misinformation: Some medical doctors have spread dangerous falsehoods about vaccines, a problem so concerning that the national group representing state medical boards warned in July that doctors who push vaccine disinformation could have their licenses revoked.

But the pandemic gave a new platform to a faction of chiropractors who had been stirring up anti-vaccine misinformation long before COVID-19 arrived, driven by interpretations of 19th century chiropractic beliefs that medicine interferes with the body's natural flow of energy.

Chiropractic was founded in 1895 by D.D. Palmer, a "magnetic healer" who argued that most disease was a result of misaligned vertebrae. Its early leaders rejected the use of surgery and drugs, as well as the idea that germs cause disease. Instead, they believed the body has an innate intelligence, and the power to heal itself if it is functioning properly, and that chiropractic care can help it do that.

This led many to reject vaccines -- even though vaccines are not within their scope of practice. Instead, they treat conditions through spine and musculoskeletal adjustments, as well as exercise and nutritional counseling. A 2015 Gallup survey found an estimated 33.5 million adults had seen a chiropractor in the previous 12 months.

Even before the pandemic, many chiropractors became active in the so-called "health freedom" movement, advocating in state legislatures from Massachusetts to South Dakota to allow more people to skip vaccinations.

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Since 2019, the AP found, chiropractors and chiropractor-backed groups have worked to influence vaccine-related legislation and policy in at least 24 states. For example, an organization started by a chiropractor and a co-owner of a chiropractic business takes credit for torpedoing a New Jersey bill in early 2020 that would have ended the state's religious exemption for vaccines.

Then the pandemic hit, creating new avenues for profit.

The first complaint the Federal Trade Commission filed under the COVID-19 Consumer Protection Act was in April against a Missouri chiropractor. It alleges he falsely advertised that "vaccines do not stop the spread of the virus," but that supplements he sold for \$24 per bottle plus \$9.95 shipping did. He says he did not advertise his supplements that way and is fighting the allegations in court.

Nebraska chiropractor Ben Tapper landed on the "Disinformation Dozen," a list compiled by the Center for Countering Digital Hate, which says he is among the small group of people responsible for nearly two-thirds of anti-vaccine content online. Tapper went viral with posts downplaying the dangers of COVID-19, criticizing "Big Pharma," and stoking fears of the vaccine.

Tapper said he has been called a "quack" and lost patients, and that Venmo and PayPal seized his accounts. In his view, the public is being told that they need a vaccine to be healthy, which he doesn't believe is true. He said vaccines have no place in what he calls the "wellness and prevention paradigm."

"We're trying to defend our rights," Tapper told AP, when asked why so many chiropractors are involved in the anti-vaccine movement. "We're defending our scope of practice."

Another chiropractor, who has frequently appeared on the right-wing show operated by conspiracy theorist Alex Jones to sell supplements, was also a donor to an organization that was behind the anti-vaccine demonstration on Jan. 6.

It's unclear how widespread anti-vaccine sentiment is in the ranks of chiropractors, but there are some clues.

Stephen Perle, a professor at the University of Bridgeport School of Chiropractic, recently surveyed thousands of chiropractors across the United States. He said his and other surveys show that less than 20% of chiropractors have "unorthodox" views, such as opposition to vaccines. Perle called that group an "exceedingly vocal, engaged minority."

AP could find no national numbers of vaccination rates among chiropractors, but Oregon tracks vaccine uptake among all licensed health providers, and the numbers show chiropractors and their assistants are by far the least likely to be vaccinated -- and far less than the general public.

Just 58% of licensed chiropractors and 55% of chiropractic assistants in Oregon were vaccinated as of Sept. 5. That's compared to 96% of dentists, 92% of MDs, 83% of registered nurses, 68% of naturopathic physicians, and 75% of the general public.

Vaccines save millions of lives around the world by preventing diseases such as measles and flu, and they have shown to be overwhelmingly effective in reducing hospitalization and death from COVID-19. More than 400 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in the U.S. alone -- and hundreds of millions more worldwide -- and serious side effects are exceedingly rare.

But dozens of chiropractors spread doubt on their own websites about vaccines, including those for COVID-19. One chiropractor in North Carolina says people who get flu shots are "poisoning themselves."

A patient testimonial on the website of a chiropractor in Georgia proclaims, "Dr. Lou has taught me how toxic shots and vaccinations are." Another, for a chiropractor in Pennsylvania, says that in less than two months of treatments, "the vaccination against contracting diphtheria (that was given to me as a child over 50 years ago) had been expelled from my body!" A chiropractor in Hollywood warns of the "dangers and unfortunately the EVIL associated with the new covid-19 vaccine."

A Michigan chiropractor, Kyle McKamey, tells patients on a pediatric intake form "If you would like information regarding the dangers of vaccines and how to refuse them, let us know!" The line is punctuated by a smiley face emoji.

McKamey offered to write notes exempting people from vaccine and mask mandates, and said even if they weren't a patient, they could become one and get a note, according to a Facebook post spotted by

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the ABC affiliate in South Bend, Indiana. He wrote in the post that "as a licensed Doctor of Chiropractic, I have the same authority" as a medical doctor to write exemption notes. McCamey did not return messages seeking comment.

The AP also found some chiropractors were selling anti-vaccine ads on Facebook and Instagram, including one in California who pushed a link to a disinformation-filled video series about vaccines that AP previously reported has paid out millions to affiliates who helped sell the product.

The pandemic has also led to huge fundraising opportunities for chiropractors and anti-vaccine groups. On the West Coast, a chiropractic seminar and expo called Cal Jam, run by chiropractor Billy DeMoss, said in 2019 it raised a half-million dollars for a group led by one of the world's most prominent anti-vaccine activists, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Photographs posted online show DeMoss and others presenting Kennedy with a giant check for \$500,000. The check's signature line read "Chiropractic Rebels."

The amount represents a huge portion of Children's Health Defense's 2019 revenues, about one-sixth of the nearly \$3 million it raised that year, according to the group's tax forms. In the weeks and months that followed the chiropractors' fundraiser, Kennedy traveled around the U.S., including to Connecticut, California and New York, to lobby or sue over vaccine policies.

This summer, DeMoss and Children's Health Defense raised another \$45,000, DeMoss said in an Instagram post, adding that he and Kennedy "have graced many stages together and raised hundreds of thousands of dollars" for Kennedy's organization.

Children's Health Defense is a ubiquitous source of false and misleading information about vaccines, and Kennedy has been banned on Instagram and was also labeled a member of the "Disinformation Dozen."

DeMoss and Cal Jam did not respond to emails seeking more information about the donations. Laura Bono of Children's Health Defense said the group does not make donor information public.

Another group, Stand for Health Freedom, was co-founded in 2019 by another member of the "Disinformation Dozen," Sayer Ji, along with chiropractor, Joel Bohemier, and Leah Wilson, who co-owns a chiropractic business in Indiana with her chiropractor husband.

Stand for Health Freedom says it has an estimated reach of 1 million "advocates," and it takes credit for killing the 2020 New Jersey bill on religious exemption for vaccines.

The group's website says that in just one week, more than 80,000 emails were sent to New Jersey lawmakers through its portal. In a video presentation earlier this year at the Health Freedom Summit, an online conference populated with anti-vaccine figures, Wilson said another round of advocacy resulted in 30,000 more emails to lawmakers.

"We heard numerous times from these elected officials that they've never had such an outpouring of communication coming into their inboxes and coming through their phone lines as they did with this specific issue," Wilson said.

The group, which has not filed as a lobbying organization in any state, is currently pushing people to send messages opposing vaccine mandates to lawmakers in states including Iowa and South Dakota, and says it has gathered more than 126,000 signatures on a petition to oppose vaccine mandates for air travel. Wilson said during an appearance at an anti-vaccine event on Sept. 19 in Indianapolis that over the past month, "120,000 new advocates had taken action through Stand for Health Freedom."

The group reported nearly \$200,000 in revenue in 2020, an amount Bohemier said in an email came from "advocate donations."

New Jersey Senate Democratic President Steve Sweeney told AP that he was concerned some chiropractors were running afoul of the state's truth-in-advertising law because they're spreading anti-vaccine misinformation.

"Chiropractors are violating the law and giving medical advice, and the ones that are found to violate the law should have their licenses stripped from them," he said. "They're not medical doctors, and they're giving advice as if they're experts and they're not."

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In Wisconsin, Vax-Con was not just a way to spread anti-vaccine conspiracy theories. It was a way to make money.

Tickets cost \$299 for chiropractors who were members of the event's organizer, The Chiropractic Society of Wisconsin, and \$129 for chiropractic technicians. Nonmember chiropractors paid \$399.

Georgia-based Life University, which bills itself as the world's largest single-campus chiropractic university, acted as Vax-Con's sponsor and vouched for the program as "viable postgraduate materials" in a letter to state regulators. For its role, the school was paid \$35 per attendee, according to its president, Robert Scott.

Brian Wussow, a chiropractor and vice president of the Chiropractic Society of Wisconsin, later told a state Senate committee that more than 400 chiropractors and 100 chiropractic technicians from Minnesota, South Dakota, Illinois, Iowa and Kansas attended.

"In fact, the demand for this CE program was so great the numbers do not reflect the actual interest to attend, but the capacity of the room at the hotel," he said, according to written testimony.

Based on ticket prices, the event would have generated revenue of at least \$130,000.

Offering continuing education courses is so lucrative that the Chiropractic Society of Wisconsin has been pushing the Legislature to allow it to sponsor such courses directly, without going through a provider such as Life University.

Wussow contended Vax-Con's program was not against vaccines.

But that was not supported by a review of some of the course materials found by the AP on the Chiropractic Society of Wisconsin website. The featured speaker, "Plandemic's" Judy Mikovits, for example, included a number of false and unsupported claims in her 34-page presentation, including that vaccines drive pandemics and that vaccines and masks contribute to the development of chronic disease.

Life University President Scott told AP that 10 states have accepted the Vax-Con program for continuing education credit.

Brian Castrucci, CEO of the de Beaumont Foundation, which advocates for public health, was appalled that chiropractors were earning continuing education credit to attend Vax-Con.

"When you are a licensed professional and you are spreading misinformation, should you maintain your license?" Castrucci said. "When chiropractors and physicians and medical professionals and elected leaders and social media start spreading disinformation, where are people to go for information? Where are people to go for facts?"

James Damrow, a third-generation chiropractor in Janesville, Wisconsin, has been practicing for 29 years and served as a member of the Wisconsin Chiropractic Examining Board for three. When Vax-Con sought approval to have its session count as continuing education credit for chiropractors, Damrow allowed it, but with an explicit reminder that it was meant for information only and advice on vaccines falls outside the scope of practice for chiropractors.

"I wasn't happy with the name of the course, but when I looked into the materials, it was fairly well-referenced, peer-reviewed science, so I felt like it was good information that was something that would be OK for the doctor to know," Damrow said. "My preference would have been to call it something different, a little less controversial."

Damrow said he did not investigate the background of the speakers.

He said chiropractors were being unfairly cast as anti-science and "that's not accurate."

As recently as October 2020, the International Chiropractors Association carried what it called a "formal policy statement" on its website, saying the group "questions the wisdom of mass vaccination programs" and opposes compulsory vaccine programs which infringe upon "freedom of choice."

The statement has since been removed but could be found in the Internet Archive.

Beth Clay, executive director of the International Chiropractors Association, said in an email that the group "takes no official position" on vaccines, but when asked whether its formal policy statement had been rescinded, she replied that it "technically" remained official. The group's policy statements were scheduled to be reviewed in the next 18 months, she said.

Clay has been an anti-vaccine activist for decades, DeWald said. In articles for the website of Kennedy's group in 2019, she downplayed the danger of measles and pushed a link between vaccines and autism,

a claim that is unsupported by science and has been widely debunked.

Meanwhile, the American Chiropractic Association, a larger and more mainstream chiropractic group, adopted a new position statement on vaccines in June that does not take a position for or against them.

The aftershocks of Vax-Con continue in Wisconsin. One of the highest-ranking Democrats in the state pulled support for a bill that would have benefited Vax-Con's organizers by allowing them to sponsor events that count as continuing education credits. More mainstream chiropractors are worried about what impact the meeting and its anti-vaccine message will have on the profession.

John Murray, executive director of the Wisconsin Chiropractic Association, which had nothing to do with Vax-Con, said he couldn't understand why the state examining board approved continuing education credits for the event, given that vaccinations aren't in the scope of practice for chiropractors.

"The way the program was marketed and the lineup of pretty much publicly avowed anti-vaxxers, any pretense of an objective treatment of the topic I think is laughable," Murray said.

For Murray, whose group took a neutral position on recommending vaccinations, there is a clear danger when chiropractors stray from their service offering spinal adjustments.

Vax-Con, he said, was an example of a small group of chiropractors who are pushing the envelope, and diminishing the credibility of the profession.

The Chiropractic Society of Wisconsin has recently held a series of "Health Freedom Revivals" around the state, with featured speakers including Tapper and DeMoss.

One recent Sunday alongside a lake in a public park, participants paid \$20 per ticket to hear speakers talk about "health freedom" and the risks of vaccines. The agenda also included some other decidedly chiropractic touches, including participants joining in group stretching exercises.

Bauer reported from Madison, Wisconsin. Catalini reported from Trenton, New Jersey. Associated Press writers Casey Smith and Lauran Neergaard contributed to this report.

Biden is first president to mark Indigenous Peoples' Day

By ZEKE MILLER and ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Friday issued the first-ever presidential proclamation of Indigenous Peoples' Day, lending the most significant boost yet to efforts to refocus the federal holiday celebrating Christopher Columbus toward an appreciation of Native peoples.

The day will be observed Oct. 11, along with Columbus Day, which is established by Congress. While Native Americans have campaigned for years for local and national days in recognition of the country's indigenous peoples, Biden's announcement appeared to catch many by surprise.

"This was completely unexpected. Even though we've been talking about it and wanting it for so long," said Hillary Kempenich, an artist and member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa. In 2019, she and other tribal members successfully campaigned for her town of Grand Forks, N.D., to replace Columbus Day with a day recognizing Native peoples.

"I'm kind of overwhelmed with joy," said Kempenich. She was waiting Friday afternoon for her eighth-grade daughter, who grew up challenging teachers' depictions of Columbus, to come home from school so Kempenich could share the news.

"For generations, Federal policies systematically sought to assimilate and displace Native people and eradicate Native cultures," Biden wrote in the Indigenous Peoples' Day proclamation. "Today, we recognize Indigenous peoples' resilience and strength as well as the immeasurable positive impact that they have made on every aspect of American society."

In a separate proclamation on Columbus Day, Biden praised the role of Italian Americans in U.S. society, but also referenced the violence and harm Columbus and other explorers of the age brought about on the Americas.

Making landfall in what is now the Bahamas on Oct. 12, 1492, Columbus, an Italian, was the first of a wave of European explorers who decimated Native populations in the Americas in quests for gold and

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other wealth, including people to enslave.

"Today, we also acknowledge the painful history of wrongs and atrocities that many European explorers inflicted on Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities," Biden wrote. "It is a measure of our greatness as a Nation that we do not seek to bury these shameful episodes of our past — that we face them honestly, we bring them to the light, and we do all we can to address them."

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Biden "felt strongly" about recognizing Indigenous Peoples Day. Asked if Biden might seek to end marking Columbus Day as a federal holiday, she replied, "I don't have any predictions at this point."

John Echohawk, executive director of the Native American Rights Fund, said the president's decision to recognize Indigenous Peoples Day was an important step.

"Big changes happen from each small step, and we hope this administration intends to continue making positive steps towards shaping a brighter future for all citizens," Echohawk said.

Biden's acknowledgment of the suffering of Native Americans also marked a break from President Donald Trump's ardent defense of "intrepid heroes" like Columbus in his 2020 proclamation of the holiday.

"Sadly, in recent years, radical activists have sought to undermine Christopher Columbus' legacy," Trump said at the time. "These extremists seek to replace discussion of his vast contributions with talk of failings, his discoveries with atrocities, and his achievements with transgressions."

Biden made the announcement on the same day the White House was disclosing its plans to restore territory to two sprawling national monuments in Utah that Trump had stripped of protections. One, Bears Ears, is on land that Native American tribes consider sacred.

Biden's campaign against Trump saw tribal activists mobilize to get out votes for the Democrat, in activism that tribal members credited with helping Biden win some Western states.

Trump hotel lost \$70M despite millions in foreign business

By BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former President Donald Trump's company lost more than \$70 million on his Washington, D.C., hotel during his four years in office despite taking in millions from foreign governments, according to documents released Friday by a congressional committee investigating his business.

The House Committee on Oversight and Reform said the luxury hotel just a few blocks from the White House was struggling so badly that the Trump Organization had to inject \$27 million from other parts of its business and got preferential treatment from a major lender to delay payments on a \$170 million loan.

The committee said the losses came despite an estimated \$3.7 million in revenue from foreign governments, business that ethics experts say Trump should have refused because it posed conflicts of interest with his role as president.

The Trump Organization said in a statement that the findings of the Democrat-led committee were misleading and false, and it did not receive any special treatment from a lender.

"This report is nothing more than continued political harassment in a desperate attempt to mislead the American public and defame Trump in pursuit of their own agenda," the company said.

The documents from the committee, the first public disclosure of audited financial statements from the hotel, show steep losses despite a brisk business from lobbyists, businesses and Republican groups while Trump was in office.

The alleged loan delay by Deutsche Bank to the president was an "undisclosed preferential treatment" that should have been reported by the president because the bank has substantial business in the U.S., the committee said in a letter to the General Services Administration, the federal agency overseeing the hotel. The hotel is leased by the federal government to the Trump Organization.

"The documents ... raise new and troubling questions about former President Trump's lease with GSA and the agency's ability to manage the former president's conflicts of interest during his term in office when he was effectively on both sides of the contract, as landlord and tenant," the committee's Democratic co-chairs, Carolyn Maloney of New York and Gerald Connolly of Virginia, wrote in their letter.

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The GSA did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

For its part, Deutsche Bank said in a statement that the committee made "several inaccurate statements" about the loan agreement but declined to elaborate, citing loan privacy concerns.

The committee's letter to the GSA said the hotel losses contradict the "exaggerated image of financial success" that the president was portraying in the personal financial disclosure reports he sent to a federal ethics agency each year. But those reports require only revenue to be disclosed, not profits, an apples-to-oranges comparison that one of Trump's sons seized upon in a tweet blasting the committee.

"Please learn the difference between Gross Revenue and Net Profit before writing us long letters," Eric Trump wrote, calling the committee "incompetent."

Trump's company has been trying to sell the 263-room hotel since the fall of 2019 but has struggled to find buyers during the coronavirus pandemic at a reported initial asking price of more than \$500 million.

The head of government ethics watchdog CREW said the losses shed new light on Trump's refusal to ban foreign governments from patronizing his business.

"The only lifeline was the corrupt business coming from people and organizations and governments seeking to influence him," said Noah Bookbinder, president of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington. "His use of the presidency to get business was absolutely essential to stemming the flow of losses."

To allay concerns about conflict of interest, Trump promised to send payments to the U.S. Treasury on foreign government earnings from his business annually. The committee said the Washington hotel payments under this deal totaled more than \$350,000 in the first three years of his presidency. Critics of the voluntary deal say Trump's definition of earnings is unclear and gave the president plenty of room to lowball the figure.

Though the Washington hotel was hurt badly by pandemic-related shutdowns last year, the audited financial statements released by the committee show it was suffering every year it was open before that, too. It lost a nearly \$50 million in the first three years of his presidency, then \$22 million last year.

EXPLAINER: 5 key takeaways from the September jobs report

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — September wasn't exactly the robust month for hiring that many had expected and hoped for.

With the delta variant still disrupting the economy and employers struggling to find enough workers, the gain for the month amounted to 194,000 jobs — not even half of what economists had expected. In August, the economy had added a modest 366,000 jobs. Taken together, hiring for the past two months marked a steep drop-off from the 962,000 jobs that were added in June and the 1.1 million in July.

The job market has endured wild swings since COVID-19 hammered the United States beginning in March 2020, triggering a short but harsh recession that erased 22 million jobs. Since then, employers have added back 17 million jobs as huge infusions of federal aid put money in people's pockets and the rollout of vaccines gave many the confidence to return to shops, restaurants and bars — at least before the delta variant erupted.

Last month, private-sector businesses added 317,000 jobs, down from 332,000 in August and from a January-July average of 553,000. The leisure and hospitality sector, which includes the hotels, restaurants and bars that were most devastated by the pandemic, added 74,000 jobs. Though that figure was up from 38,000 in August, it fell far short of the January-July average of 296,000 a month.

Friday's employment news wasn't all bad. The Labor Department revised up its hiring estimate for July and August up by a combined 169,000 jobs. And the unemployment rate dropped to 4.8% in September from 5.2% in August.

In normal times, 194,000 jobs would be considered a decent monthly gain. But as Robert Dye, chief economist at the Comerica banking company, noted: "These are not normal times. A further disappointing result in October would suggest that this is a fundamentally different labor market than what we thought

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a few months ago.”

Here are five takeaways from the September jobs report:

DELTA TAKES A TOLL

From January through July this year, employers had added a sizzling average of more than 640,000 jobs a month. Then delta hit. COVID-19 cases began rising again and weakening the economic rebound. Job growth decelerated in August and September. Since mid-September, though, confirmed COVID cases have been dropping, possibly setting the stage for the job market’s recovery to regain momentum.

“This is quite a deflating report,” said Nick Bunker, director of economic research at the Indeed Hiring Lab. “The hope was that August was an anomaly, but the fact is, the delta variant was still with us in September. One optimistic interpretation is that COVID-19 case counts are receding, so future months should be stronger. But the reality is that we are still in a pandemic.”

BEHIND THE DROP IN UNEMPLOYMENT

The unemployment rate tumbled to 4.8%, the lowest level since March 2020. But the reasons for the drop were a mix of good and not-so-good.

The good: The number of people who reported that they were employed jumped by 526,000 last month. And those who reported being jobless fell by 710,000.

The not-so-good: One reason the unemployment rate slid was that 183,000 people stopped looking for work last month and were no longer counted among the jobless. The share of Americans who either have a job or are looking for one — the so-called labor force participation rate — slipped to 61.6% in September. Before the pandemic, the participation rate had exceeded 63%.

Economists don’t know exactly why so many Americans have chosen to stay on the labor market sidelines even as demand for workers surges. Some may have lingering fears about becoming infected while handling public-facing jobs.

Others are struggling with childcare arrangements at a time when school schedules are so uncertain. Some have chosen early retirement or are taking time to rethink their careers after spending time locked down with their families during the pandemic.

HELP WANTED

Hiring has slowed partly because companies simply can’t find nearly as many workers as they need.

“Labor availability remains the biggest challenge to hiring right now,” Wells Fargo economists Sarah House and Michael Pugliese said in a research note.

In July, employers posted a record 10.9 million job openings and struggled to fill them.

Businesses had hoped the labor shortages would ease and the jobless would look more eagerly for work after the federal government last month ended enhanced aid for the unemployed, including an extra \$300 a week on top of state benefits. But the end of federal aid doesn’t appear to have had much of an effect — so far.

Likewise, supply shortages, caused mainly by the unexpected speed with which the economy rebounded from last year’s coronavirus recession, have prevented companies from being able to operate at full strength.

SCHOOL SQUEEZE

September’s overall hiring was pulled down by the loss of 144,000 jobs at local public schools. The drop, however, reflected the way the Labor Department adjusts the numbers to account for seasonal fluctuations.

The upshot: Schools actually were hiring — though less than seasonal models had suggested they would — perhaps because of previous COVID-related closings or shortages of available teachers.

“As we feared, fewer teachers were hired than in typical years despite many schools reverting to in-person learning,” Lydia Boussour and Gregory Daco, economists at Oxford Economics, said in a research note. “This corroborates anecdotal evidence of schools struggling to find qualified teachers amid lingering virus fears and early retirements.”

IMPROVING PROSPECTS FOR ALL RACES

White, Black and Hispanic workers all benefited from last month’s job market.

For whites, the ranks of the employed rose by 326,000. The number of unemployed fell by 436,000. And the unemployment rate dipped from 4.5% to 4.2%.

For Black Americans, the number of people with jobs rose by 104,000. The jobless fell by 187,000. And the unemployment rate slipped from 8.8% to 7.9%. On a percentage basis, employment for African Americans grew twice as fast in September as it did for whites — 0.6% versus 0.3%.

For Hispanics, the improvement was more modest: The number of employed rose by 86,000. The number of unemployed slipped by 2,000. And the unemployment rate ticked down from 6.4% to 6.3%.

AP Economics Writer Christopher Rugaber contributed to this report.

Impact of forest thinning on wildfires creates divisions

By DON THOMPSON Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Firefighters and numerous studies credit intensive forest thinning projects with helping save communities like those recently threatened near Lake Tahoe in California and Nevada, but dissent from some environmental advocacy groups is roiling the scientific community.

States in the U.S. West and the federal government each year thin thousands of acres of dense timber and carve broad swaths through the forest near remote communities, all designed to slow the spread of massive wildfires.

The projects aim to return overgrown forests to the way they were more than a century ago, when lower-intensity blazes cleared the underbrush regularly and before land managers began reflexively extinguishing every wildfire as soon as possible.

Such so-called fuel reduction efforts also include using fire to fight fire, with fires deliberately set in the cooler, wetter months to burn out dangerous fuels. Forest managers credit such burns with helping protect the Giant Forest in Sequoia National Park. The state of California eased some regulations to increase the use of that tactic.

While most scientific studies find such forest management is a valuable tool, environmental advocates say data from recent gigantic wildfires support their long-running assertion that efforts to slow wildfires have instead accelerated their spread.

The argument is fueling an already passionate debate.

It has led to a flurry of citations of dueling studies and fed competing claims that the science may be skewed by ideology.

The debate came to a head over this year's giant Bootleg Fire in southern Oregon.

"Not only did tens of thousands of acres of recent thinning, fuel breaks, and other forest management fail to stop or slow the fire's rapid spread, but ... the fire often moved fastest through such areas," Los Padres ForestWatch, a California-based nonprofit, said in an analysis, joined by the John Muir Project and Wild Heritage advocacy groups.

James Johnston, a researcher with Oregon State University's College of Forestry, called the groups' conclusions "pretty misleading," "irresponsible" and "self-contradicting."

"Claims that modern fuel-reduction thinning makes fire worse are not credible," Johnston said.

The debate focused on a project where the Klamath Tribes and The Nature Conservancy have spent a decade thinning smaller trees and using planned fires.

They and the U.S. Forest Service said the treatments slowed the fire's spread and lessened its intensity, while critics said the blaze made its fastest northern run through the same area, spreading 5 miles (8 kilometers) in about 13 hours.

Scientists say climate change has made the American West much warmer and drier and will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive, accelerating the need for more large-scale forest treatments.

Critics say forest thinning operations are essentially logging projects in disguise.

Opening up the forest canopy and leaving more distance between trees reduces the natural humidity and cooling shade of dense forests and allows unimpeded winds to push fire faster, said Chad Hanson, forest and fire ecologist with the John Muir Project.

Such reasoning defies the laws of physics, said other experts: Less fuel means less severe fire. Fewer

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trees means it's more difficult for fires to leap from treetop to treetop.

The critics contend recent massive California wildfires also moved quickly through thinned areas that failed to protect communities.

Timothy Ingalsbee, a former federal firefighter who heads Oregon-based Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics and Ecology, said this year's giant Dixie Fire blew sparks past containment lines, igniting piles of dry branches left by a thinning operation near Paradise. The town was nearly destroyed in 2018 in the nation's deadliest and most destructive wildfire in modern times.

Thom Porter, director of California's firefighting agency, said critics miss the point: Fuel breaks are one tool that can help slow and channel wildfires while protecting rural homes and communities.

"The problem is, when you have a head fire that is a mile or miles wide and it's running through timber like it's grass, there isn't a fuel break out there that's going to stop it," Porter said.

Each side can point to plenty of competing examples, said John Bailey, professor of silviculture and fire management at Oregon State University. Some forest thinning has indeed been mishandled, yet "anywhere that we've done an effective fuels treatment, we have modified fire behavior and reduced the intensity."

The contrasting views prompted a contentious debate, with one paper suggesting supporters of spotted owl habitat, including Hanson of the John Muir Project, are "selectively using data that support their agendas." Another paper said such dissenting views have "fostered confusion" and can slow what the authors contend are necessary forest treatments.

Hanson dismissed the criticism as "character assassination" driven by those who benefit from logging or are reluctant to embrace what he insists is the evolving science.

"On average, all things being equal, the thinned areas tend to burn more rapidly and more intensely most of the time," he said, citing his own research, including a broad 2016 review of three decades of 1,500 fires across the Western U.S. conducted with the Arizona-based Center for Biological Diversity and Oregon-based Geos Institute.

The division "reflects both evidence and understandable emotion" when wildfires destroy homes or ecological treasures, said Erica Fleishman, a professor at Oregon State University's College of Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Sciences.

The competing arguments are part of the legitimate policy and scientific debate, according to Char Miller, a professor of environmental analysis at California's Pomona College who has written extensively about wildfires, including with Hanson.

Forest managers cite examples like where a 400-foot-wide (120-meter) fuel break helped protect rural Sierra Nevada homes.

The U.S. Forest Service produced a video called "Fuels Treatments Work — A Creek Fire Success Story," and Cal Fire featured it in a fuels reduction guide.

"Clearly it's a matter of debate in policy arenas and management, but I think in terms of the scientific literature, the evidence is overwhelming," said John Battles, a professor of forest ecology at the University of California, Berkeley.

The Latest: Pennsylvania virus cases rise among vaccinated

By The Associated Press undefined

HARRISBURG, Pa. — The proportion of coronavirus infections and hospitalizations among vaccinated Pennsylvania residents has risen sharply in the past month, although the shot remains broadly protective.

That's according to new statewide health data. The latest Department of Health statistics on so-called "breakthrough" infections show from Sept. 5 to Oct. 4, vaccinated people represented just over a quarter (26%) of more than 135,000 new infections and nearly 5,000 hospital admissions across the state.

That's up from just 6% of cases and 5% of hospitalizations between January and September. Pennsylvania residents who remain unvaccinated are still far more likely to contract the coronavirus, become hospitalized and die than those who got the shot.

Dr. Denise Johnson, the state's acting physician general, says the data reinforced the case for booster

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shots. Last month, U.S. health officials approved a third dose of the Pfizer vaccine for all Americans 65 and older, along with younger people with health issues or those in high-risk, frontline jobs.

MORE ON THE PANDEMIC:

- Boosters, employer mandates drive increase in US vaccines
- Los Angeles County sheriff won't enforce vaccine mandate
- Home care workers in NY face shot deadline
- In California, inconsistent school virus rules often the norm

— See all of AP's pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

LOS ANGELES — The Los Angeles County sheriff says he won't enforce the county's vaccine mandate in his agency.

Sheriff Alex Villanueva oversees the largest sheriff's department in the county with roughly 18,000 employees. He said Thursday in a Facebook Live event that he doesn't plan to carry out the county's mandate.

Los Angeles County employees had to be fully vaccinated by Oct. 1. The mandate was issued by executive order in August and allows only religious and medical exemptions.

Villanueva says his employees are willing to be terminated rather than get vaccinated. More than 26,000 people have died of the coronavirus in Los Angeles County.

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Alabama's top health official is urging people who've not been vaccinated for the coronavirus to get a shot within the next week to help prevent another holiday spike of infections and deaths.

Dr. Scott Harris says it takes five or six weeks for someone to gain the maximum amount of immunity after the initial vaccine in a shot-two process. He says that means time is running out for people to have "the safest possible Thanksgiving."

Harris says he was "cautiously optimistic" the holidays won't be as deadly as last year because of vaccinations and the large number of people who have antibodies after contracting the virus.

NEW YORK — A panel of vaccine experts will meet in early November to consider whether to recommend the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for children younger than 12.

The Advisory Committee of Immunization Practices scheduled a two-day meeting for Nov. 2-3, health officials said Friday. The Pfizer topic is expected to take up part of the agenda.

The experts are anticipating the U.S. Food and Drug Administration will have decided by then whether to authorize use of the Pfizer vaccine for children between ages 5 to 11. The committee's job is to help the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention develop recommendations for doctors and the public about which vaccines should be used and how they should be given.

Currently, Pfizer vaccines are authorized only for people 12 and older.

WARSAW — Polish biotechnology company Mabion S.A. has signed a \$372 million contract to produce one of the raw materials that American company Novavax needs to make its COVID-19 vaccine.

Under the four-year deal, Mabion will produce a protein antigen beginning in December at its facilities in Konstanynow Lodzki, central Poland. It is Poland's largest contract in the biotechnology sector.

Novavax has partnered with Serum Institute of India and asked regulators in India, Indonesia and Philippines this week to allow emergency use of its NVX-CoV2373 vaccine, which is easier to store, cheaper to make and not already reserved by rich nations.

Serum Institute CEO Adar Poonawalla had said the company had hoped to launch the vaccine in India by June, but manufacturing was hobbled by the U.S. embargo on exports of critical raw materials. The company hopes to sell the vaccine in September, and Mabion will be part of the supply chain going forward.

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"The addition of Mabion's technical expertise and production capacity to Novavax' global manufacturing network expands our ability to provide broad access to our vaccine across multiple regions," Novavax Executive Vice President and Chief Operations Officer Rick Crowley said.

ALBANY, N.Y. — Home health aides who refuse to get a COVID-19 vaccination are barred from working in New York under a new state mandate.

The mandate, put in place by Gov. Kathy Hochul, also applies to workers at assisted living homes, hospice care, treatment centers and AIDS home care programs. It comes on top of another mandate, implemented last month, that covered hospital and nursing home workers.

Data on how many of the state's more than 210,000 home health aides had been vaccinated ahead of the deadline Friday wasn't immediately available from the state.

The Home Healthcare Workers of America recently estimated approximately 70% of the group's 32,000 members had received the coronavirus shot.

PORTLAND, Ore. — A judge has rejected a request by 33 Oregon State Police troopers to temporarily halt a mandate that requires them to get fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by Oct. 18.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports retired Oregon Supreme Court Justice Jack Landau said in a written opinion Thursday that based on case law "the police power of the state includes the authority to enact public health laws that may have the effect of curtailing individual rights."

Landau went on to say that Gov. Kate Brown is acting within her legislatively granted authority in issuing the vaccine mandate. Brown has mandated vaccinations for the state's executive branch employees, including the troopers, and for hundreds of thousands of health care workers and K-12 educators and volunteers.

Religious or medical exemptions can be requested. At least eight lawsuits have been filed.

LAS VEGAS — Nevada's governor says a decrease in coronavirus case rates and an increase in vaccinations is partly due to a nearly two-month deployment of federal emergency management "surge teams" in areas of Las Vegas.

Gov. Steve Sisolak says test positivity, a key measure of the spread of the coronavirus, has decreased statewide to 8.5%.

The rate, measured as a 14-day average, stood Thursday at 6.7% in Las Vegas and surrounding Clark County. It was higher in some parts of the state, including 22.6% in Elko County. The World Health Organization goal is 5% for relaxing measures limiting the coronavirus.

Statewide, Sisolak says 63% of the eligible population age 12 and older has received at least one shot.

MOSCOW — Russia's daily coronavirus death toll has hit a record 936 deaths amid a sluggish vaccination rate and the government's reluctance to tighten restrictions.

Russia's state coronavirus task force reports the third straight day of deaths topping 900. A steep rise in infections and deaths began in late September, with authorities blaming it on the low vaccination rate. About 33% of Russia's 146 million people have received at least one shot of a coronavirus vaccine. Only 29% are fully vaccinated.

On Friday, the government's task force reported 27,246 new confirmed cases, slightly less than Thursday's 27,550, which was the highest so far this year.

Kremlin officials haven't imposed a new nationwide lockdown, delegating the power to tighten restrictions to regional authorities.

Russia has Europe's highest death toll, with more than 214,000 deaths and 7.7 million confirmed cases during the pandemic. Health experts says those numbers likely are an undercount.

LJUBLJANA, Slovenia — Slovenia's interior minister has rejected accusations that police used excessive force to curb anti-government protests with water cannons and tear gas on the eve of a major European

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Union summit in the country earlier this week.

The demonstrations were the third in a month against virus measures and the use of COVID-19 passes. Interior Minister Ales Hojs said Friday in Brussels that "police did their job very well during Tuesday's intervention" and were "within their jurisdiction."

He added an investigation has opened into police actions. About 25 protesters were detained and several were injured or hospitalized mostly for inhaling tear gas.

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Finland has joined other Nordic countries in suspending or discouraging the use of Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine in certain age groups because of a slight increased risk of heart inflammation, a rare side effect associated with the shot.

The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare says authorities won't give the shot to males under age 30. They'll be offered the Pfizer vaccine instead.

The government agency says it found young men and boys were at a slightly higher risk of developing myocarditis. The move by Finland followed similar decisions by Sweden, Denmark and Norway on Wednesday.

MELBOURNE, Australia — Australia's Victoria state on Friday reported a record of 1,838 new COVID-19 cases and five deaths.

The daily tally of confirmed cases is the highest in a 24-hour period of any Australian state or territory. It was the ninth consecutive day Australia's second-most populous state has reported more than 1,000 cases, with active infections soaring to 16,823.

The deaths brought Victoria's toll from an outbreak of the delta variant that began in early August to 75.

Infections are declining in New South Wales state. Australia's most populous state reported 646 confirmed cases and 11 deaths on Friday.

NICOSIA, Cyprus — The president of Cyprus has received a booster dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and urged people who haven't yet received a first shot to do so.

President Nicos Anastasides says those who are eligible for booster shots should take advantage.

"We owe it to those closest to us and to our community overall. It's a matter of social responsibility," the 75-year-old Anastasiades said.

As of the end of September, 78% of the Mediterranean island nation's adult population had been fully vaccinated and 81% had received a first dose.

Cyprus has administered booster shots to more than 17,000 people age 75 and over and plans to start giving them to residents 70 and over next week.

ROME — Discos in Italy will reopen their dance floors after remaining one of the last public places off limits under the country's regulations to combat COVID-19.

The Italian government approved the opening of discos and ballrooms starting Monday on condition that indoor venues fill only to 50% capacity and outdoor venues to 75%. Nearly 73% of Italy's population is fully vaccinated.

Experts advising the government on anti-pandemic strategies had for months warned close mingling of unmasked dancers and the shouting over the din of blasting music were ripe conditions for spreading the coronavirus. But transmission rates lately have been on a downward trajectory in Italy.

The government also approved boosting to 100% capacity the number of patrons permitted in cinemas, theaters, museums and concert halls. The higher occupancy applies to venues where guests must wear protective masks and show a "Green Pass" attesting to having at least one vaccine dose or a recent negative COVID-19 test.

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — A Colorado woman has been denied a kidney transplant because she won't be vaccinated against COVID-19 due to her religious views.

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Leilani Lutali, 56, has stage 5 kidney disease that puts her at risk of dying without a new kidney, She says she could not agree to be vaccinated because of the role that fetal cell lines played in some vaccine development. Several types of cell lines created decades ago using fetal tissue are widely used in manufacturing or testing of medical products, although the cells used today are clones of the early cells, not the original tissue.

The UHealth hospital group says transplant recipients need to be vaccinated because they are at significant risk of contracting COVID-19 and being hospitalized.

The American Hospital Association says many transplant centers require vaccinations. It says organ recipients are vulnerable to COVID-19 because of the drugs they must take to suppress their immune systems. (This item has been corrected to indicated fetal cells, not stem cells.)

More than 130 countries reach deal on corporate minimum tax

By DAVID McHUGH and DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — More than 130 countries have agreed on sweeping changes to how big global companies are taxed, including a 15% minimum corporate rate designed to deter multinationals from stashing profits in low-tax countries.

The deal announced Friday is an attempt to address the ways globalization and digitalization have changed the world economy. It would allow countries to tax some of the earnings of companies located elsewhere that make money through online retailing, web advertising and other activities.

U.S. President Joe Biden has been one of the driving forces behind the agreement as governments around the world seek to boost revenue following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The agreement among 136 countries representing 90% of the global economy was announced by the Paris-based Organization for Cooperation and Economic Development, which hosted the talks that led to it. The OECD said that the minimum tax would reap some \$150 billion for governments.

"Today's agreement represents a once-in-a-generation accomplishment for economic diplomacy," U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in a statement. She said it would end a "race to the bottom" in which countries outbid each other with lower tax rates.

"Rather than competing on our ability to offer low corporate rates," she said, "America will now compete on the skills of our workers and our capacity to innovate, which is a race we can win."

The deal faces several hurdles before it can take effect. U.S. approval of related tax legislation proposed by Biden will be key, especially since the U.S. is home to many of the biggest multinational companies. A rejection by Congress would cast uncertainty over the entire project.

The big U.S. tech companies like Google and Amazon have supported the OECD negotiations. One reason is that countries would agree to withdraw individual digital services taxes they have imposed on them in return for the right to tax a part of their earnings under the global scheme.

That means the companies would deal with just the one international tax regime, not a multitude of different ones depending on the country.

"This accord opens the way to a true tax revolution for the 21st century," said French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire. "Finally the digital giants will pay their just share in taxes in the countries — including France — where they produce."

On Thursday, Ireland announced that it would join the agreement, ditching a low-tax policy that has led companies like Google and Facebook to base their European operations there.

Although the Irish agreement was a step forward for the deal, developing countries have raised objections and Nigeria, Kenya, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have indicated they will not sign up.

Anti-poverty and tax fairness advocates have said the bulk of new revenue would go to wealthier countries and offer less to developing countries that are more dependent on corporate taxes. The G-24 group of developing countries said that without a bigger share of revenue from reallocated profits, the deal would be "sub-optimal" and "not sustainable even in the short run."

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The deal will be taken up by the Group of 20 finance ministers next week, and then by G-20 leaders for final approval at a summit in Rome at the end of October.

Countries would sign up to a diplomatic agreement to implement the tax on companies that have no physical presence in a country but earn profits there, such as through digital services. That provision would affect around 100 global firms.

The second part of the deal, the global minimum of at least 15%, would apply to companies with more than 750 billion euros (\$864 billion) in revenue and be passed into domestic law by countries according to model rules developed at the OECD. A top-up provision would mean tax avoided overseas would have to be paid at home. So long as at least the major headquarters countries implement the minimum tax, the deal would have most of its desired effect.

Kirka reported from London.

NOT REAL NEWS: A look at what didn't happen this week

By The Associated Press undefined

A roundup of some of the most popular but completely untrue stories and visuals of the week. None of these are legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked them out. Here are the facts:

Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine does not contain fetal cells, contrary to online claims

CLAIM: Newly leaked emails among Pfizer employees show that the company's COVID-19 vaccine contains fetal cells.

THE FACTS: A widely shared video by the group Project Veritas has led to a false claim online that purported emails among Pfizer officials show that the pharmaceutical company's COVID-19 vaccine contains aborted fetal cells. But the video — an interview between Project Veritas founder James O'Keefe and a self-identified Pfizer employee who claims to show internal emails from the company — does not support that erroneous conclusion. Instead, it shows that the company used a fetal cell line when testing the efficacy of its vaccine. Cell lines, which are key to medical research, are cloned copies of cells from the same source that have been adapted to grow continuously in labs. Nevertheless, users spread the falsehood about the contents of the vaccine widely on social media. "You are mandated to inject dead babies into your body," one Twitter account sharing the video falsely claimed. "Fetal cells in the vaccines yet they are denying people religious exemptions." At the heart of the widely shared video spurring the false claims are purported emails among Pfizer officials from early 2021. The messages displayed show an alleged conversation about the company's reluctance to publicize that testing of its vaccine — not production — used a cell line that was originally derived from fetal tissue. One of the main emails cited specifically says, "Human fetal derived cell lines are not used to produce our investigational vaccine, which consists of synthetic and enzymatically produced components." It adds: "One or more cell lines with an origin that can be traced back to human fetal tissue has been used in laboratory tests associated with the vaccine program." The video also shows an email referencing the HEK293T cell line — or Human Embryonic Kidney 293 — which was first established in the early 1970s using cells from a kidney of a fetus. What's not made clear in the video is that it is already public record that Pfizer's vaccine was tested using such cells. In a paper published in September 2020 detailing the vaccine's development and success in mice and monkeys, Pfizer and BioNTech scientists said that the vaccine had been tested using the HEK293T cell line. And the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in a January document about the COVID-19 vaccines noted: "Neither Pfizer nor Moderna used an abortion-derived cell line in the development or production of the vaccine. However, such a cell line was used to test the efficacy of both vaccines." The conference recommended that, in the absence of a vaccine with no connection at all to such a cell line, vaccines that use them "only for testing would be preferable to those that use such cell lines for ongoing production." Dr. Saahir Khan, an assistant clinical professor of infectious diseases at the University of Southern California, said about

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the Pfizer shot, "There are no components of fetal cells in the vaccine, and none used in manufacturing." Khan said it is very common to use such cell lines somewhere along the way in the research or development of vaccines and other medicine for humans. He said such cell lines, started decades ago, are grown in labs — so the cells being used for research are not the original cells. One COVID-19 vaccine used in the U.S., from Johnson & Johnson, is produced by using an adenovirus that is grown using retinal cells that trace back to a fetus from 1985, according to the Vaccine Education Center at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Vaccines for chickenpox and other diseases also use this type of process. But none of these vaccines contain fetal cells. Pfizer did not respond to questions about the Project Veritas video, but a spokesperson pointed out that information about the testing has been publicly disclosed through a number of sources and news reports.

— Associated Press writer Angelo Fichera in Philadelphia contributed this report.

The FBI is not targeting opponents of critical race theory

CLAIM: "Attorney General Merrick Garland has instructed the FBI to mobilize against parents who oppose critical race theory in public schools, citing 'threats.'"

THE FACTS: A memo Garland issued on Monday to address a rise in criminal conduct targeting school personnel is being misrepresented online. Garland did not single out opponents of critical race theory. Rather, he stated the FBI would work with U.S. attorneys and federal, state and local authorities to develop strategies to combat what he called "a disturbing spike" in violent threats facing educators, administrators and school boards. The trend was highlighted in a Sept. 29 letter from the National School Boards Association to President Joe Biden requesting federal assistance to investigate mounting threats and crimes against educators and school officials. Following Garland's memo, an activist known for speaking out against critical race theory — a way of thinking about America's history through the lens of racism — shared the erroneous claim that the FBI was specifically targeting public school parents who oppose such race education. Wyn Hornbuckle, the Justice Department's deputy director of media affairs, told The Associated Press the claim was misleading and stated that the Attorney General's guidance and the Justice Department's efforts are focused on rooting out criminal threats of violence for any reason, not targeting a particular ideology. "There has been misinformation circulated that the Attorney General's directive is an effort to silence those with particular views about COVID-related policies, school curricula, or other topics of public discussion. This is simply not true," Hornbuckle wrote in an email. Critical race theory, developed by scholars during the 1970s and 1980s, centers on the idea that racism is systemic in the nation's institutions and that they function to maintain the dominance of white people in society. The concept has drawn condemnation by conservative commentators, lawmakers and former President Donald Trump. The NSBA's letter did not specifically focus on threats surrounding critical race theory. It asked for the federal government to investigate any cases where threats or violence could be handled as violations of federal civil rights laws — no matter what prompted them. "NSBA and school board members don't want to stop parents from expressing their First Amendment rights," the NSBA said in a statement emailed to the AP. "We want to stop the death threats, threats to family members, and other harassment and acts of intimidation that school board members are facing." The group documented more than 20 instances of threats, harassment, disruption and acts of intimidation across multiple states. While the letter did cite several threats it had flagged in response to false assertions that school boards were adopting critical race theory curriculum, the majority of the threats it documented were in response to coronavirus-related restrictions, including mask and vaccine requirements in schools.

— Associated Press writer Sophia Tulp in Atlanta contributed this report, with additional reporting from Terrence Fraser in New York.

Infrastructure bill doesn't include tax on cows

CLAIM: Under the proposed infrastructure bill, farmers will be taxed for each cow, including \$6,500 a year for dairy cows.

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THE FACTS: The infrastructure bill, a \$1 trillion package that was approved in August by the Senate, does not include such a provision. Yet in a tweet shared by thousands that also circulated on Facebook, a conservative commentator falsely claimed the legislation would impose taxes on cows that would cripple American agriculture. "Just one example cattle farmers have to pay \$2600 PER COW a year," Melissa Tate wrote. "Dairy cows \$6500 a year. This will put millions of cattle farmers out of business." Tate did not respond to a request for comment. The erroneous claim follows a congressman's false assertion about a separate, \$3.5 trillion reconciliation bill, referred to as the Build Back Better Act, that is supported by many Democrats. In a statement criticizing that bill, Oklahoma Rep. Markwayne Mullin said the legislation "would impose a 'fee' on all methane emissions, including in our agriculture industry. ... The tax is estimated to cost \$6,500 per dairy cow, \$2,600 per head of cattle, and \$500 per swine each year." But the reconciliation bill as currently drafted includes taxes on methane emissions relating to oil and gas production — not from livestock. A spokesperson for Mullin acknowledged that the bill does not currently contain those provisions. "This is what could happen if the methane fee were applied to agriculture," Meredith Blanford said in an email. She said that while the text of the bill only specifies the oil and gas industry, it also references the Environmental Protection Agency's greenhouse gas inventory "and leaves too much room for the EPA to expand its regulatory reach." Blanford said the numbers were derived from an analysis by the American Farm Bureau Federation, a lobbying group. The organization's vice president for public affairs, Sam Kieffer, said in a Sept. 30 statement that the group's economists over the summer conducted an analysis of potential costs on agriculture using proposals relating to the methane tax on oil and gas. "To clear up any confusion, I want to make clear that the current language of the reconciliation bill does not impose a methane tax on agriculture," Kieffer said.

— Angelo Fichera

Parents don't need to be vaccinated to take their newborns home in New York

CLAIM: New York hospitals, including NYU Langone Health, will not release newborn babies or infants in neonatal intensive care units, frequently referred to as NICUs, to parents who have not been vaccinated.

THE FACTS: No such restrictions exist. The false information, which claimed to stem from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines, circulated widely on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. "New Forced Control: NYU Langone and other Hospitals in New York and Long Island are Forcing that if the parent is not VAXXED they will not release Babies from the NICU to Parents or after birth as per CDC Guidelines. You Need to Show VAX-Passport to see your own New Born Baby," the false post states. State health officials said there was no truth to the claim. "The New York State Department of Health is deeply disturbed by the grossly inaccurate messages being spread on social media regarding the false claim that there's a prohibition on parents/guardians taking a baby home from the hospital based upon vaccination status," Jill Montag, director of communications at the state Department of Health, told the AP in an email. NYU Langone Health addressed the baseless claims on Twitter last week. "In response to the false & completely unfounded post circulating on social media: NYU Langone DOES NOT prohibit a parent/guardian from taking a child home from the NICU due to their vaccination status — we vehemently discourage the spread of this inaccurate, harmful information," the statement said.

— Associated Press writer Arijeta Lajka in New York contributed this report.

Teen's death in England misrepresented by vaccine opponents

Adam Ali, a high school student from Solihull, a town in West Midlands, England, died from the COVID-19 vaccine.

THE FACTS: Ali, a 17-year-old student who died in September, had not been vaccinated against COVID-19. His death was misrepresented online. The actual cause of Ali's death is unknown, according to a spokesperson from the University Hospitals Birmingham NHS. One false tweet claimed, "Adam Ali 17 years old from Alderbrook school, had his first jab, had instant adverse reaction, convulsing, blood clots," adding "he died the other day within two weeks and not a word from the media." Ali, a student at Alderbrook Sixth

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Form in Solihull, died at Birmingham's Queen Elizabeth Hospital on Sept. 19. "We can confirm that Adam did not have a COVID-19 vaccination; the cause of his tragic death is currently unknown," a spokesperson for the Birmingham and Solihull vaccination program at University Hospitals Birmingham NHS said in an emailed statement.

— Arijeta Lajka

Posts falsely claim sex offenders don't carry identifying cards for privacy reasons

CLAIM: Sex offenders are not required to carry cards identifying them as sex offenders because it is an invasion of their privacy.

THE FACTS: Several states require registered sex offenders to carry special identification, and when states have rejected such laws, it has been based on the First Amendment, not privacy. Social media users are misrepresenting sex offender laws as they criticize requirements to show proof of COVID-19 vaccination, and incorrectly compare the two. "So we need a vaccine card to drink a beer at a bar, but sex offenders don't need to carry anything?" reads the text on one widely shared TikTok video. "The U.S. has over 750,000 registered sex offenders and NONE of them are required to carry a passport because it violates their privacy," another video's text read. Those claims rest on the false premise that privacy protections prevent sex offenders from being required to carry special identification. But experts on sex offender laws confirmed that in at least nine states, sex offenders do have to carry a state ID card with a special label. "In some states this says Sex Offender while in others the designation is a code that is known to law enforcement," said Elizabeth Jeglic, a professor and psychologist at John Jay College in New York who researches sexual violence prevention. Courts in some states have struck down laws requiring sex offenders to identify themselves in this way, but judges have not cited privacy reasons. Instead, they have pointed to the First Amendment's compelled speech doctrine, which says the government can't force an individual or group to convey a certain message. The claims spreading online this week also fail to recognize that registered sex offenders have limited access to privacy as it is, according to Alissa Ackerman, an assistant professor of criminal justice at California State University, Fullerton. When sex offenders are required to register, they must upload their full name, demographic information, aliases, birthday, address and other information to a public database, Ackerman said. "So they don't have a lot of privacy," she said. "This claim that is being made online is just asinine."

— Associated Press write Ali Swenson in New York contributed this report.

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Lashana Lynch on making history as 007 in 'No Time to Die'

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Lashana Lynch was in stunt training when she found out she was going to play a 00 agent in the James Bond film "No Time to Die."

Lynch had already been cast by director Cary Joji Fukunaga and the producers, Barbara Broccoli and Michael Wilson. But who she was to play had remained a mystery to her. She was doing her best to prep for an undetermined but apparently butt-kicking role.

"Nothing made sense. I'm plunged into stunts and they're teaching me everything under the sun," Lynch said in an interview. "And I'm like: Why are you teaching me this? What does it mean?"

Instead, Lynch just heard bits and pieces as she went. It felt, she says, like a TV series that carefully reveals a little each episode. Only when she was in the midst of summersaulting and firing fake guns did the full reveal come. Lynch would be the first Black woman to play a 00 agent in the six decades of James Bond movies.

Not only that, Lynch's character, Nomi, takes the codename 007, with Daniel Craig's James Bond AWOL

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and out of the British Secret Service.

"Auditioning for a mysterious film and a mysterious character turned into a possible Bond film and mysterious character," Lynch recalls. "That turned into definite Bond film and the possibility of someone entering and creating a really beautiful storm."

"No Time to Die," which opened in U.S. theaters on Friday, is Craig's fifth and final performance as the super spy. But the film, perhaps more than any previous Bond movie, derives much of its punch from its women. That includes Léa Seydoux, as Bond's most lasting romance and a character with her own complicated history, and Ana de Armas, in a brief but action-packed appearance.

Lynch's role, though, is a landmark in the franchise. With that history has come a brighter spotlight than ever before on the 33-year-old British Jamaican actor, who played a single-mother fighter pilot in "Captain Marvel." Lynch has been widely celebrated for expanding the historically homogenous world of Bond in a role that — like others who have brought wider representation to decades-old franchises — has also brought online hostility. When news first leaked in 2019 that Lynch would be 007, her Instagram lit up with racist and misogynistic comments.

"I was reminded of the institution that I was walking into and the world that doesn't support people like me, necessarily," Lynch says. "Once I got through that initial reaction, I plunged straight into work. I turned that energy into stunts, into filming, into spending time with family and also reevaluating how I use my phone. I now put them in cupboards. I take two-hour breaks."

"It's something that should always be brought up," she adds of the response. "Young people need to hear it."

Lynch first caught Broccoli's attention in Debbie Tucker Green's "Ear for Eye," a play at the Royal Court that Broccoli produced. Lynch was part of a largely Black ensemble that give individual testimonies of bias they experience in their lives.

"I was just blown away by her," says Broccoli, who also produced an upcoming film adaptation of "Ear for Eye," co-starring Lynch, premiering Oct. 16 at the London Film Festival. "She's an extraordinary, beautiful, talented actor. She seemed an obvious choice for Nomi, the 00 character. I think she's a big star."

Before Craig took over Bond, Lynch says, she had had little relationship to the Bond films. But being invited to audition, she says, made her feel she was maybe entering the franchise at the right time.

"As a Black Londoner, I didn't have the opportunity to be able to connect to James Bond in a way that made sense," says Lynch. "Now, Daniel Craig entering the franchise and making him raw and dark and dangerous — I questioned his trauma for the first time — it really got me intrigued about how the new characters in the franchise respond to him."

In "No Time to Die," Bond eventually returns to the service where he's surprised to learn his trademark number has been taken. What follows between him and Nomi is part rivalry, part partnership. Nomi asserts herself, with proud confidence and moments of uncertainty. Bond adapts to her. To Lynch, she's most proud of how Nomi's strength doesn't also come with vulnerability.

"Like a lot of us, it's always a front. It's a front just to be in the world," Lynch says of Nomi's posture. "I want there to be a really natural, realistic and easy influence on our young people in that when talking about 'strong Black women,' we don't just assume that their strength fell out of the sky and landed in their brain."

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

In California, inconsistent school COVID rules are the norm

By JOCELYN GECKER Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Now that schools are back in session, parents are mastering this year's new school vocabulary: Modified quarantine, antigen vs. PCR testing and the so-called Swiss cheese model for keeping classrooms safe, which has become the butt of a few jokes.

But aside from a common pandemic lingo there is little similarity in how California schools are applying

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COVID-19 rules, leading to a dizzying patchwork of approaches that parents and teachers say can be confusing and frustrating.

While California has a few statewide requirements for all schools, such as requiring all public and private school teachers and students to wear face masks indoors, and a vaccinate-or-test rule for teachers starting in mid-October, many other details are left to local school officials. That includes the who, when, where and how to test for COVID-19, and ever-shifting quarantine rules.

Some large urban districts like Los Angeles, San Francisco and Oakland tell students to mask up for outdoor recess, while many others do not.

Some schools have rigorous on-site mandatory COVID-19 testing programs, but many don't.

Across the state, parents who want to see more testing are looking to the Los Angeles Unified School District — the nation's second-largest — as a model. The state's largest school district has an ambitious program that mandates weekly on-site testing for all 600,000 students and 75,000 employees.

"It's crazy that a school district as huge as Los Angeles can pull it off, and we're just twiddling our thumbs over here," said Samantha Benton, a mother of two in Sacramento, where only voluntary testing is offered.

Last week, California became the first in the nation to say it will require the coronavirus vaccine for all public and private schools once the shot receives full regulatory approval, which may not kick in until the next academic year. Until then, the decision is up to local districts.

A few of California's biggest school districts, including Los Angeles and Oakland, have mandated vaccinations for students 12 and over. San Diego Unified will require vaccines for staff and students 16 and up.

The California School Boards Association calls it "a patchwork of different methods" that is not the most effective approach and is troublesome because it asks school officials to act as medical experts.

Pandemic-era conflicts between school districts and teachers have entered a new phase. The Oakland teachers union said its district guidelines are "contradictory or confusing" and not enforced. The union is seeking mandatory weekly testing and monitors to enforce mask wearing.

Teachers "are tired of waiting for a major outbreak ... to uphold commonsense safety measures," the union said in a statement this week.

Nationwide, as in California, the rules depend on where you live, and often on politics. Republican governors in Arizona, Iowa and Florida have banned school mask mandates, but many parents, local leaders and courts are pushing back. Some states have standard policies for all districts, while others allow schools to set their own rules. At least nine states have explicitly said schools cannot require vaccinations, including Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Indiana, Iowa, Montana, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas.

Vaccinations are one element of the "Swiss cheese model" of pandemic defense, a metaphor for multiple layers of protection to block the spread of germs. A cartoon-like drawing of the model, with 10 slices of cheese, has become a regular part of school safety presentations.

"They show this at like every board meeting and every school Zoom," said Sacramento mother of two Kristin Goree. "In group chats it's like, 'No! Not that again!'"

Goree agrees with the concept of combining layers of protection, like social distancing, masks, hand-washing, testing and ventilation. "But our school is not implementing every layer of cheese — like mandatory testing," said Goree, whose children are signed up for optional weekly testing while most of their classmates are not.

Quarantines get meted out differently, too. Sometimes an entire classroom is ordered to quarantine, sometimes no one is.

Laura Hawkins' healthy 6-year-old daughter missed a week of kindergarten at her San Francisco school after a classmate got COVID-19.

"On day three of school, we got a text message and a robocall saying your child is a close contact to someone who tested positive," said Hawkins. They had two options: stay home for a 10-day quarantine or stay home five days, followed by a negative COVID-19 test. They choose the latter, but soon after returning to school her daughter woke up with a stuffy nose. Hawkins diligently reported it to the school, which required proof of another negative PCR test before allowing her back.

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The laboratory PCR tests often take 24 hours or more to return results, but are more accurate and reliable than the rapid antigen tests that can be done at home.

"She missed a total of six days of school, having no more than a stuffy nose," said Hawkins.

Outside Los Angeles, Long Beach Unified, with about 70,000 students, scaled back its initial weekly testing for unvaccinated students when the positivity rate during the first three weeks dropped under 1%. It is now randomly testing 10% of each school's unvaccinated students.

The small Mammoth Unified School District abruptly stopped in-person classes for two weeks in September after "spiraling" COVID-19 cases triggered more than 300 student and staff quarantines in the district of 1,200 students.

In Sacramento, when officials announced an outbreak of two dozen cases Sept. 2 at a K-6 charter school, they kept the school open. Some parents were later outraged to learn that health officials had initially recommended shutting the school for two weeks.

The teachers union filed a formal workplace safety complaint accusing the district of mishandling the outbreak and ignoring pandemic protocols by allegedly encouraging staff with cold symptoms to work because of a teacher shortage and for failing to properly investigate, contact trace and communicate about COVID-19 exposure.

Sacramento City Unified "rejects these assertions," it said in an emailed request for comment that said the district works closely with public health officials and follows a detailed strategy for students and staff that allowed it, in this case and others, "to remain open while protecting the health of students and staff."

Sacramento City Unified is also suffering from a teacher shortage, like districts statewide, that has been "particularly acute" in its Independent Study program, said Superintendent Jorge Aguilar. More than 1,700 students have opted for online school and the district is still scrambling to hire 32 teachers.

Samantha Benton's fourth grade son was still without a teacher four weeks into the fall term. She is among some 200 parents who have sent multiple letters to the district saying it has failed to provide both a safe learning environment and an equitable education online.

Benton, an ICU nurse, said she is keeping her kids in online school because she doesn't trust the district's safety protocols.

"The only way I would feel safe is if there were mandatory testing weekly, if everything was outdoors and if everyone eligible for a vaccine was required to get one," she said.

Beyond the mask rules and vaccine mandates, many parents say discrepancies are simply illogical.

The city of Folsom in the Sierra Nevada foothills has two high schools. One school held a homecoming, the other will not.

Both schools allow students to remove masks at lunch and during passing periods, and they pack the stands unmasked at football games, said Ronda Sardo, whose son attends Folsom High, which is not allowed to have the outdoor dance.

"Sorry, kids. The school down the street gets homecoming and you don't," she said.

What Peace Prize says about freedom in Russia, Philippines

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV AND HRVOJE HRANJSKI Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — The Nobel Peace Prize sometimes recognizes groundbreaking efforts to resolve seemingly intractable conflicts, such as once-sworn enemies who sat down and brokered an end to war. In other years, the recipient is someone who promoted human rights at great personal cost.

The prestigious award also can serve as a not-so-subtle message to authoritarian governments and leaders that the world is watching.

What does the selection of two journalists, Maria Ressa, 58, of the Philippines and Dmitry Muratov, 59, of Russia, say about freedom of expression and the history of dissent in the countries of the 2021 peace prize winners?

"It is a battle for facts. When you're in a battle for facts, journalism is activism," Ressa said Friday.

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Dmitry Muratov is part of a historic cycle that links him to two other Russian winners of the Nobel Peace Prize.

When Andrei Sakharov, a prominent Soviet nuclear physicist turned political dissident, received the prize in 1975, the Cold War was at its height and the Soviet Union seemed invincible.

The country's Communist leaders tolerated no dissent. Five years after becoming a Nobel laureate, Sakharov's bold criticism of the Soviet regime got him sent into internal exile.

Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev allowed Sakharov to return from exile in 1986, and went on to win the 1990 Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to end the Cold War.

But while he was earning international accolades, Gorbachev was under attack from both members of the Communist old guard who opposed his reforms and democracy champions such as Sakharov who accused him of being indecisive.

The Soviet Union collapsed after a string of Soviet republics declared their independence and Gorbachev stepped down as president on Dec. 25, 1991.

The former leader would use some of his Nobel Prize money to help a group of Russian journalists, including Muratov, buy computers and office equipment for their new independent newspaper in 1993. Gorbachev eventually became Novaya Gazeta's co-owner; Muratov was its editor from 1995 to 2017, and returned to the post in 2019.

Under his leadership, the publication has become the country's top independent newspaper, broadly acclaimed internationally for its fearless reporting on the bloody separatist war in the Russian republic of Chechnya and on official corruption. The paper has taken a consistently critical look at the rollback of post-Soviet freedoms during Russian President Vladimir Putin's more than two decades in power.

Several Novaya reporters and contributors were killed. The paper's leading reporter, Anna Politkovskaya, who relentlessly covered human rights abuses in Chechnya, was shot dead in the elevator of her Moscow apartment building on Oct. 7, 2006.

A Moscow court convicted the gunman and three other Chechens in the killing, as well as a former Moscow police officer who was their accomplice. But on Thursday, the 15th anniversary of Politkovskaya's slaying, Muratov noted that the Russian authorities never tracked down the person who ordered it.

"Regrettably, there is no probe going on now," Muratov said in an interview with The Associated Press. "We don't even know when an investigator last touched that criminal case."

He vowed that the newspaper would continue working to track down the mastermind of Politkovskaya's killing on its own.

Muratov also pledged to use his Nobel Prize to help independent Russian journalists. Many people in Russia voiced hope that the prize, by emphasizing global support for media freedom, would help restrain the government's multi-pronged crackdown on independent media.

PHILIPPINES

The Philippines was one of the few places in Asia where freedom of the press seemed assured when Maria Ressa and other journalists founded the online magazine Rappler in 2012.

The government of long-time dictator Ferdinand Marcos had muzzled the media, imprisoned opponents and tortured activists. But after the 1986 "people power" revolution toppled Marcos, a myriad of newspapers, lively radio stations and closely watched TV channels sprang up to chronicle the new chapter in the Philippines.

Their mission: delivering timely information to a Filipino population hungry for news.

In the following years, the Philippines remained a dangerous place for journalists, a free-wheeling country where retaliatory violence often accompanied the freedom to speak up due to an abundance of firearms, legal impunity and political instability. It had one of the highest numbers of reporters killed each year.

Then came the election of President Rodrigo Duterte in 2016. After campaigning on a promise to deal with widespread crime, he launched a bloody crackdown on illegal drugs, enlisting police and unidentified gunmen who became the judge and jury for thousands of mostly poor suspects in Manila's sprawling urban slums.

Rappler CEO Ressa and other staff members took to reporting the nighttime raids that left hundreds and

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then thousands dead in overwhelmed morgues. Police said they were acting in self-defense when officers gunned down alleged drug dealers. Few suspects were questioned in what human rights activists soon described as extrajudicial executions.

As the death toll mounted, so did Rappler's stories, some of which suggested that weapons could have been planted on the people killed.

In a Nov. 9, 2020, story, Rappler reporter Rambo Talabong quoted the last words of Vicent Adia, a 27-year-old man who was labeled a drug pusher and initially survived "a vigilante execution" only to be slain by a gunman at a hospital near Manila. According to Rappler, Adia had told his close friend: "The police are about to kill me."

Duterte's fury at journalists increased as well. The tough-talking president declared that "corrupt" journalists were not "exempted from assassination."

"In 2016, it was really, really laughable. And I thought, 'Oh, doesn't matter.' I laughed," Ressa said in a 2020 interview, recalling her disbelief that the president would make good on his lethal threats in a country where democracy and human rights had been restored.

Any hint of humor evaporated when she became a target. She was arrested and held for a night, prosecuted in a series of criminal cases, including tax evasion, and convicted of libel. She remains free on bail while the libel case is on appeal, but faces up to six years in prison.

At about the same time, Ressa began wearing a bulletproof vest because of threats. In the 2020 documentary "A Thousand Cuts," by Filipino-American filmmaker Ramona S. Diaz, she is seen pleading with Facebook representatives to delete violent posts against her and to remove livestreams of Duterte supporters protesting outside Rappler's offices.

"The Philippine government filed 10 arrest warrants against me. In the last year, the government has prevented my travel four times, including when my mother was diagnosed with cancer and I needed to go to see my aging parents," Ressa said in a Zoom interview after she won the Nobel Peace Prize.

Duterte and other Philippine officials have said the criminal complaints against Ressa and Rappler were not a press freedom issue but a part of normal judicial procedures arising from their alleged violations of the law.

In June, a Manila court dismissed a cyber-libel case against Ressa arising from a complaint filed by a wealthy businessman. A 2012 Rappler article included allegations that the businessman was linked to illegal drugs and human trafficking, and that a car registered in his name had been used by the country's chief justice.

The law under which Ressa was charged by the government, the Cybercrime Prevention Act, did not go into effect until months after the article appeared, according to Rappler.

In August, another case against her was dismissed. Ressa has pleaded not guilty to charges of breaching a ban on foreign ownership and control of media outlets in the Philippines, as well as tax evasion charges.

"You don't know how powerful government is until you come under attack the way we have. When all the different parts of government work against you, it's kind of shocking," Ressa said.

Associated Press writer Hrvoje Hranjski reported from Bangkok and has previously reported from Manila. Anna Frants in Moscow contributed to this report.

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

This story has been corrected to show that Ressa was convicted of libel, not tax evasion.

US, Pakistani officials in strained talks over Afghanistan

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — U.S. and Pakistani officials held difficult talks on Friday in Pakistan's capital amid

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a worsening relationship between Washington and Islamabad as each searches for a way forward in a Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.

The meeting between Washington's deputy secretary of state and Pakistan's leaders came amid an array of unsettled issues. They include questions such as the level of future engagement with the Taliban in Afghanistan, and the ongoing evacuation of foreign nationals and Afghans who want to flee the country's new Taliban rulers.

Another question on the agenda is who will provide funds to stave off a full economic meltdown and looming humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Since the Taliban takeover, billions of dollars in aid have been frozen. Nearly 80% of the former Afghan government's budget was funded by international donors.

Even as it shies away from any unilateral formal recognition, Pakistan has been pressing for greater engagement with the all-male, all-Taliban Cabinet that the insurgents set up after they overran Afghanistan in mid-August, in the final weeks of the U.S. and NATO pullout from the country.

Pakistan has also urged Washington to release billions of dollars to the Taliban so that they can pay salaries of the many Afghan ministries and avoid an economic meltdown. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has warned that such a crash could unleash a mass migration.

Washington, which spent almost two full years negotiating peace with the Taliban, is still smarting from its dramatic exit from Afghanistan, after 20 years of war. Images of desperate Afghan men, running alongside a departing American C-17, some falling to their death from the wheel well, have come to represent the mayhem of the U.S. withdrawal.

Still, the United States is quietly talking to some Taliban leaders and current Taliban Cabinet ministers to secure the evacuation of American nationals remaining in Afghanistan and others. At home, Republican senators are pressing for legislation that would sanction Afghanistan's new rulers.

The legislation introduced late last month by 22 Republican senators also calls for sanctions on Pakistan for providing safe haven for the Taliban. That has raised hackles among Pakistan's leaders, who have slammed Washington for what they say is unjust blaming of Pakistan for America's losses in Afghanistan — especially after seeking and receiving Islamabad's help in the protracted peace talks with the Taliban.

Pakistan has also opened doors to tens of thousands of evacuees from Afghanistan, providing temporary shelter for both foreigners and Afghans fleeing Taliban rule.

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman on Friday held meetings with Pakistan's army chief, Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa, considered the leading architect of Pakistan's Afghan strategy. She also met with Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi.

Little information has emerged from the meetings. A statement from Pakistan's foreign ministry said "an inclusive and broad-based political structure reflecting the ethnic diversity of Afghan society was essential for Afghanistan's stability and progress."

That was a clear message to the Taliban: An acceptable Afghan government is one that includes representatives of all Afghan minorities.

The statement also had a message for the world, saying "the current situation required positive engagement of the international community, urgent provision of humanitarian assistance, release of Afghan financial resources, and measures to help build a sustainable economy to alleviate the sufferings of the Afghan people."

The international community has repeatedly expressed concern over Taliban restrictions on access to education for girls and women, both at the high school and university level. It has warned against a return to the the harsh Taliban rule from the 1990s, when they first controlled Afghanistan and banned women from school, the workplace and a public life.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan also featured prominently at a national security meeting Friday attended by Pakistan's military leaders and Prime Minister Imran Khan. A statement warned that instability in Afghanistan would have "severe implications for Pakistan." Khan ordered that a "special cell" be set up to coordinate humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and manage Pakistan's border with its neighbor.

Sherman, who arrived on Thursday for a two-day visit, also met with Pakistan's Security Adviser Moeed

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Yusuf late on Thursday, to discuss "developments in Afghanistan and ways to advance cooperation across the bilateral relationship."

Pakistan walks a fine line as it seeks to establish a relationship with the U.S. in a changing region, where both Russia and China have increasing influence.

A strident opponent of the U.S.-led so-called "war on terror," Khan has assured Pakistanis that Washington would have no access to Pakistan's territory for so-called "over-the-horizon" attacks on Afghanistan.

The Pentagon has warned that Afghanistan could be a threat in one to two years, mainly from the Islamic State group, which is a rival and enemy of the Taliban. The IS has ramped up attacks on the Taliban recently, including a bombing Sunday at a Kabul mosque where Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid attended a memorial service for his mother. Five civilians were killed in that attack.

On Friday, a massive explosion that targeted minority Shiite Muslims in the northern Afghan city of Kunduz left at least 100 dead or wounded, according to Taliban officials. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the bombing but IS, a Sunni militant group, has in the past brutally targeted minority Shiites across Afghanistan.

But Pakistan faces fierce opposition among its 220 million-strong population to any accommodation to Washington for attacks on Afghanistan.

A Gallup Pakistan Poll released late Thursday showed that 55% of Pakistanis surveyed favored an Islamic government like the one operated by the Taliban in Afghanistan. The survey was conducted between Aug. 13 and Sept. 5 and polled 2,170 men and women in cities and in rural areas of Pakistan. It gave a margin of error between 2% and 3%.

Nobel literary winner: UK govt lacks compassion for refugees

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Nobel literature laureate Abdulrazak Gurnah on Friday criticized the "lack of compassion" of governments, including Britain's, that treat migrants as a problem or a threat.

Gurnah grew up on the island of Zanzibar, now part of Tanzania, and arrived in England as an 18-year-old refugee in the 1960s. He has drawn on his experiences for 10 novels, including "Memory of Departure," "Pilgrims Way," "Afterlives" and the Booker Prize finalist "Paradise."

Announcing the Nobel Prize in Literature on Thursday, the Swedish Academy said the award recognized Gurnah's "uncompromising and compassionate penetration of the effects of colonialism and the fate of the refugee in the gulf between cultures and continents."

He is only the sixth person born in Africa to win the world's most prestigious literary accolade, first awarded in 1901. The prize carries a purse of 10 million Swedish kronor (over \$1.14 million) from a bequest by founder Alfred Nobel.

Gurnah said migration is "not just my story ... It's a phenomenon of our times."

The 72-year-old novelist said the tribulations faced by migrants hadn't lessened in the decades since he left his homeland.

"It might seem as if things have moved on, but once again you get new arrivals, same old medicine," Gurnah told reporters a day after winning the prize. "Same old ugliness in the newspapers, the mistreatment, the lack of compassion from the government."

Gurnah said Britain has become more aware of racism over the decades and had "accelerated" discussion of its imperial past. But "institutions, it seems to me, are just as mean, just as authoritarian as they were."

Gurnah said Britain's detention of asylum-seekers and the Windrush scandal, in which thousands of long-term residents of the U.K. from the Caribbean were caught up in crackdown on illegal immigration, "seem to me to be just continuations of the same ugliness."

Gurnah, who holds British citizenship and recently retired as a professor of literature at the University of Kent, urged governments to stop seeing migrants as a problem to be solved.

"These people are not coming with nothing," he said. "They are coming with youth, with energy, with potential."

Follow AP's Nobel Prizes coverage at <https://www.apnews.com/NobelPrizes> and global migration coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/migration>

100-year-old denies being accessory to murder at Nazi camp

BERLIN (AP) — A 100-year-old man on trial for his alleged role as a Nazi SS guard at a concentration camp during World War II told a German court Friday that he was innocent.

The defendant is charged with 3,518 counts of accessory to murder at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp near Berlin, where he allegedly worked between 1942 and 1945 as an enlisted member of the Nazi Party's paramilitary wing.

German news agency dpa reported that the defendant, who was identified only as Josef S. in keeping with German privacy rules, said on the second day of his trial before the Neuruppin state court that he didn't know the Sachsenhausen camp.

Two witnesses from France and the Netherlands earlier told the court how their fathers were killed at Sachsenhausen for having been part of the resistance against the Nazis.

Authorities deemed the defendant fit enough to stand trial despite his advanced age, though the number of hours per day the court is in session will be limited.

More than 200,000 people were held at Sachsenhausen between 1936 and 1945. Tens of thousands of inmates died of starvation, disease, exhaustion from forced labor and other causes, as well as through medical experiments and systematic SS extermination operations including shootings, hangings and gassing.

The exact numbers of those killed vary, with upper estimates of some 100,000, though scholars suggest figures of 40,000 to 50,000 are likely more accurate.

"The defendant knowingly and willingly aided and abetted this at least by conscientiously performing guard duty, which was seamlessly integrated into the killing system," prosecutor Cyrill Klement told the court.

Further hearings are scheduled through January.

Opal Lee's Juneteenth dream came true, but she isn't done

By JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — Opal Lee's dream of seeing Juneteenth become a federal holiday was finally realized over the summer, but the energetic woman who spent years rallying people to join her push for the day commemorating the end of slavery is hardly letting up on a lifetime of work teaching and helping others.

Lee, who celebrated her 95th birthday Thursday, has devoted decades to making a difference in her Texas hometown of Fort Worth. She then saw her legacy in recent years stretch far beyond the city as she worked to get national recognition for Juneteenth, and stood beside President Joe Biden as he signed into law the bill making June 19 a federal holiday that commemorates when Union soldiers brought the news of freedom to enslaved Black people in Galveston, Texas, after the Civil War.

"We don't want people to think that Juneteenth is a stopping point, because it isn't," Lee, who worked for over two decades as a teacher and counselor in the Fort Worth school district, told The Associated Press. "It's a beginning, and we're going to address some of the disparities that we know exist."

Her recent work in Fort Worth has included establishing a large community garden that produced 7,700 pounds of fruits and vegetables last year, delivering food to people who can't leave their homes and working alongside others to transform a former Ku Klux Klan auditorium into a museum and center for the arts.

As for Juneteenth, she'd like to see festivities span until the Fourth of July — and incorporate events to provide resources to help people with finances, health and other issues.

Lee was born in 1926 in Marshall, nestled in the Piney Woods of East Texas near the border with Louisiana. Her family later moved to Fort Worth when her father took a job there working on the railroad, but her Juneteenth memories stretch back to her celebrations in Marshall as a young girl.

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"They'd have music and food. They'd have games and food. They'd have all kinds of entertainment and food. It was just like another Christmas," Lee said.

Her memories of Juneteenth also include a harrowing attack on her family on that day in 1939, when a white mob of hundreds descended on their Fort Worth home days after the Black family moved into a white neighborhood. She, her parents and two brothers all managed to escape, but her parents never talked about that day again. The mob smashed windows and furniture, according to newspaper reports from the time.

"We would have been good neighbors, but they didn't give us the chance to let them know how good we could have been," Lee said.

Lee's childhood came in the shadow of widespread white-on-Black violence in the U.S. In 1921, a white mob went on a deadly rampage in Tulsa, Oklahoma, burning over 1,000 homes and destroying a thriving business district known as Black Wall Street. Two years prior, hundreds of Black people were beaten, hanged, shot and burned to death by white mobs around the U.S. in what's known as the "Red Summer."

Lee is among numerous people who have pushed for a national Juneteenth holiday over the years.

Her granddaughter, Dione Sims, said it was in 2016 that Lee decided the effort to was taking too long. "She said, 'It just needs some attention,'" Sims said.

Reasoning that "somebody would notice a little old lady in tennis shoes," Lee planned to walk from Fort Worth to Washington, D.C. That morphed into Lee doing walks in cities before traveling to the nation's capital. She went on to organize more walks, meet with politicians and gather signatures. Her efforts drew recognition from celebrities, including Sean "Diddy" Combs, Lupita Nyong'o and Usher.

"You have to have people who are dedicated to making things happen, and she was certainly dedicated to that and pulling things forward," said Annette Gordon-Reed, a Harvard University professor and Pulitzer Prize-winning historian whose book "On Juneteenth" was published this year.

Educating young people remains a focus for Lee, who earned a master's degree in education from what is now the University of North Texas in Denton. She wants to make sure that students' textbooks tell the full history of racial injustices in the U.S. so that "we can heal from it and not let it happen again."

Recently, what schools teach about race and racism has become a political lightning rod, with some Republican-led states, including Texas, banning or limiting the teaching of certain concepts.

"I'm adamant about schools actually having the truth told," said Lee, who has written a children's book titled "Juneteenth" that helps teach the history of slavery.

In one of her most recent projects, Lee is a founding member of a coalition called Transform 1012 N. Main Street, which is working to turn that Fort Worth building — a former KKK auditorium — into the Fred Rouse Center and Museum for Arts and Community Healing, carrying the name of a Black man lynched in 1921.

"Let's make it where people can come and see this reconciliation and all kinds of things that need to be done," Lee said.

Adam W. McKinney and Daniel Banks, co-founders of the arts and service organization DNAWORKS, brought together local activists for the project. McKinney said Lee has a way of leading that invites others to join.

"I learn so much from her in every one of our interactions," McKinney said.

Brenda Sanders-Wise, executive director of the Tarrant County Black Historical and Genealogical Society, a group that Lee was a charter member of, said Lee has a penchant for describing herself as "just a little old lady in tennis shoes getting in everybody's business." Sanders-Wise can think of a few other ways to describe her.

"She's an advocate, an activist, a leader, a strategist and a shrewd tactician, that's who Opal Lee is to me," Sanders-Wise said. "I call her an agent of change."

Google cracks down on climate change denial by targeting ads

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — Google is cracking down on digital ads promoting false climate change claims or being

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used to make money from such content, hoping to limit revenue for climate change deniers and stop the spread of misinformation on its platforms.

The company said Thursday in a blog post that the new policy will also apply to YouTube, which last week announced a sweeping crackdown of vaccine misinformation.

"We've heard directly from a growing number of our advertising and publisher partners who have expressed concerns about ads that run alongside or promote inaccurate claims about climate change," Google said. "Advertisers simply don't want their ads to appear next to this content.

Publishers and creators on YouTube "don't want ads promoting these claims to appear on their pages or videos," according to Google.

The restrictions "will prohibit ads for, and monetization of, content that contradicts well-established scientific consensus around the existence and causes of climate change," the blog post said.

Along with addressing publishers' frustrations, the changes are also apparently intended to counter online influencers who monetize, or make money from, YouTube videos promoting climate change denial theories by putting ads on them.

Limits will be placed on content calling climate change a hoax or denying that greenhouse gas emissions and human activity have contributed to the earth's long-term warming, the company said.

Experts questioned whether the changes would be effective.

"How will they determine what is misinformation (i.e. lies) or simply incomplete or misleading information?" Lisa Schipper, environmental social science research fellow at the University of Oxford's Environmental Change Institute.

She cited as an example images of clean energy by fossil fuel companies. "In some ways, these types of adverts that suggest a different kind of truth might be even more damaging because they look innocuous, while they simultaneously serve to greenwash the company," Schipper said.

Google will use both automated tools and human reviewers to enforce the policy when it takes effect in November for publishers and YouTube creators and in December for advertisers.

Advertisements will still be allowed on content that's about other related topics like public debates on climate policy.

However, such debates can be just as polarized, warned Steve Smith, executive director of Oxford's Net Zero climate neutrality research program and CO2RE research hub on greenhouse gas removal.

"Misinformation is at play in online discussions around low-carbon energy, travel and food, just as much as it is over climate science," Smith said.

Google is one of the two dominant players in the global digital ad industry, earning \$147 billion in ad revenue last year. Facebook, the other big player, prohibits ads used to spread misinformation though it doesn't list specific topics including climate change denial.

Earlier this week, Google rolled out new features aimed at helping users reduce their carbon footprints, including a search function that shows which flights have lower emissions.

Misinformation and the role that social media companies giants have in amplifying it has become a big concern for many people. Some 95% of Americans said misinformation is a problem when trying to access important information, according to a poll Friday from The Pearson Institute and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Facebook's problem with false information came into the spotlight this week when Frances Haugen, a former data scientist turned whistleblower, told members of Congress that the company knows its platform spreads misinformation but refuses to make changes that could hurt its profits.

SUPREME COURT NOTEBOOK: Don't stand so close to us

By MARK SHERMAN and JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Get tested. Wear a mask. Don't get too close. Not your typical court orders, but that was the word from the Supreme Court to lawyers and reporters who returned to the high court this week for the first in-person arguments in more than a year and a half.

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The justices are no longer hearing arguments by phone. But reminders that the coronavirus pandemic is ongoing were everywhere, from the absence of Justice Brett Kavanaugh after a positive coronavirus test to social distancing measures in the courtroom, although only Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who has diabetes, wore a mask among the fully vaccinated justices.

The lectern that lawyers have said is close enough to the justices to see the whites of their eyes has been pushed back a few feet. Lawyer David Frederick said the change made it easier to see the whole bench without having to turn his head, but detracted from "the intimacy of having a conversation with the justices."

Reporters, normally packed into three rows with a view of both the justices and the lawyers, were spread out in the courtroom in seats usually occupied by members of the public. The building remains closed to visitors. Between the reporters attending and the justices' clerks, the audience that can normally number several hundred was roughly 50 for each of the arguments.

Despite transcontinental travel and a three-hour time change, California-based lawyer Jeffrey Fisher was thrilled to be back at the court arguing in person Tuesday after doing it by telephone five times during the pandemic. The arguments were more free-flowing than they were over the phone, and there's no substitute for seeing how the justices react to an argument, Fisher said.

Fisher was arguing that New York violated his client's right to cross-examine a witness for the prosecution. One exchange in that case, involving Gina Mignola of the Bronx district attorney's office and Justice Stephen Breyer, exemplified the power of visual cues.

"I see that you doubt what I'm saying there, Justice Breyer," Mignola said, interrupting her answer after seeing Breyer visibly react to what she was saying.

Breyer said, "No, I'm not doubting it. I just want you to explain it," Breyer said.

"Yes, you're hoping that I'll explain it better," Mignola replied.

Breyer readily agreed: "Yeah."

TALKATIVE THOMAS

In the "before" times, Justice Clarence Thomas would go years between asking questions at Supreme Court arguments, and when he did chime in, it was generally after everyone else was done.

But for the opening week of the term, Thomas got the first crack at the lawyers in each of the court's five cases. It appeared the other justices, who generally are not shy about jumping in, have agreed to let the court's longest-serving member go first.

In a case about when federal sentencing law should consider multiple break-ins on the same day at a mini storage facility one crime or several, Thomas pressed the defendant's lawyer on how much time has to lapse between break-ins to treat them as separate crimes.

"What if they said, look...we've got lots of time; we can go to Starbucks, grab...a cup of coffee or something like that, actually, Dunkin' Donuts and get a cup of coffee or something? I mean -- and they stay for an hour or two. Is that enough of a break?" Thomas asked.

A day later, Thomas also asked Fisher a handful of questions.

"Tuesday was my 45th argument and the first time I've ever gotten a question from Justice Thomas in the courtroom," Fisher said.

ARE YOU THERE, JUSTICE KAVANAUGH?

It's not clear whether Kavanaugh will be back at the court when the justices next hear arguments on Tuesday and Wednesday.

For the first week, his high-backed black chair at the left end of the bench sat empty.

At first, Kavanaugh had trouble cutting in, seeming to trip over other justices in trying to ask a question as his disembodied voice floated into the courtroom.

Things were soon working more smoothly later, however, and Kavanaugh's absence from the courtroom wasn't a factor in the flow of arguments.

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NO LINES

Before the pandemic, the Supreme Court teemed with visitors on a typical day. They line up for coveted seats for arguments and courtroom tours when the justices aren't hearing cases. A line sometimes stretches outside the cafeteria, especially when a school group is in the building around lunchtime.

None of that happened last week, and there's no public date for reopening the building. So attendance in the courtroom was sparse, and the cafeteria, renovated during the pandemic, had plenty of "grab-and-go" meals as well as a brand-new espresso bar.

With the public absent, the court's halls are quieter. Another difference: no lines at the bathroom.

Americans agree misinformation is a problem, poll shows

By AMANDA SEITZ and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Nearly all Americans agree that the rampant spread of misinformation is a problem.

Most also think social media companies, and the people that use them, bear a good deal of blame for the situation. But few are very concerned that they themselves might be responsible, according to a new poll from The Pearson Institute and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Ninety-five percent of Americans identified misinformation as a problem when they're trying to access important information. About half put a great deal of blame on the U.S. government, and about three-quarters point to social media users and tech companies. Yet only 2 in 10 Americans say they're very concerned that they have personally spread misinformation.

More, about 6 in 10, are at least somewhat concerned that their friends or family members have been part of the problem.

For Carmen Speller, a 33-year-old graduate student in Lexington, Kentucky, the divisions are evident when she's discussing the coronavirus pandemic with close family members. Speller trusts COVID-19 vaccines; her family does not. She believes the misinformation her family has seen on TV or read on questionable news sites has swayed them in their decision to stay unvaccinated against COVID-19.

In fact, some of her family members think she's crazy for trusting the government for information about COVID-19.

"I do feel like they believe I'm misinformed. I'm the one that's blindly following what the government is saying, that's something I hear a lot," Speller said. "It's come to the point where it does create a lot of tension with my family and some of my friends as well."

Speller isn't the only one who may be having those disagreements with her family.

The survey found that 61% of Republicans say the U.S. government has a lot of responsibility for spreading misinformation, compared with just 38% of Democrats.

There's more bipartisan agreement, however, about the role that social media companies, including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, play in the spread of misinformation.

According to the poll, 79% of Republicans and 73% of Democrats said social media companies have a great deal or quite a bit of responsibility for misinformation.

And that type of rare partisan agreement among Americans could spell trouble for tech giants like Facebook, the largest and most profitable of the social media platforms, which is under fire from Republican and Democrat lawmakers alike.

"The AP-NORC poll is bad news for Facebook," said Konstantin Sonin, a professor of public policy at the University of Chicago who is affiliated with the Pearson Institute. "It makes clear that assaulting Facebook is popular by a large margin — even when Congress is split 50-50, and each side has its own reasons."

During a congressional hearing Tuesday, senators vowed to hit Facebook with new regulations after a whistleblower testified that the company's own research shows its algorithms amplify misinformation and content that harms children.

"It has profited off spreading misinformation and disinformation and sowing hate," Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., said during a meeting of the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Consumer Protection. Democrats and Republicans ended the hearing with acknowledgement that regulations must be introduced

to change the way Facebook amplifies its content and targets users.

The poll also revealed that Americans are willing to blame just about everybody but themselves for spreading misinformation, with 53% of them saying they're not concerned that they've spread misinformation.

"We see this a lot of times where people are very worried about misinformation but they think it's something that happens to other people — other people get fooled by it, other people spread it," said Lisa Fazio, a Vanderbilt University psychology professor who studies how false claims spread. "Most people don't recognize their own role in it."

Younger adults tend to be more concerned that they've shared falsehoods, with 25% of those ages 18 to 29 very or extremely worried that they have spread misinformation, compared to just 14% of adults ages 60 and older. Sixty-three percent of older adults are not concerned, compared with roughly half of other Americans.

Yet it's older adults who should be more worried about spreading misinformation, given that research shows they're more likely to share an article from a false news website, Fazio said.

Before she shares things with family or her friends on Facebook, Speller tries her best to make sure the information she's passing on about important topics like COVID-19 has been peer-reviewed or comes from a credible medical institution. Still, Speller acknowledges there has to have been a time or two that she "liked" or hit "share" on a post that didn't get all the facts quite right.

"I'm sure it has happened," Speller said. "I tend to not share things on social media that I didn't find on verified sites. I'm open to that if someone were to point out, 'Hey this isn't right,' I would think, OK, let me check this."

The AP-NORC poll of 1,071 adults was conducted Sept. 9-13 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3.9 percentage points.

Kentucky fraudster's disability clients remain in legal mess

By DYLAN LOVAN Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — As disbarred lawyer Eric Conn sits in a federal prison, hundreds of people in one of America's poorest regions remain mired in the legal mess he caused by running a \$600 million fraud, the largest Social Security scam in U.S. history.

Many of Conn's former clients in eastern Kentucky's Appalachian mountains, who counted on him for help getting their disability benefits, could again lose their monthly support.

About 1,700 people already went through hearings to prove their disabilities after his fraud was exposed about six years ago, and roughly half lost their benefits as a result. Some 230 of these recipients managed to get their benefits restored years later by court orders, only to learn they may have to prove it all over again.

That's the situation confronting Mary Sexton, who suffers from scoliosis and has had two brain surgeries, plus spinal surgery to fuse vertebrae in her neck. Her maladies have left her with a limp and other chronic symptoms including headaches, kidney problems and an inability to concentrate that forced her to quit college.

A court order restored her \$1,100-a-month disability benefit in November. But two months later, she received a letter from the Social Security Administration telling her she would have to appear before an administrative judge to prove she is legally entitled to them.

Under the federal Social Security Act, people who can't earn income because of a terminal illness or a "medically determinable physical or mental impairment" that lasts at least a year are entitled to lifetime monthly cash benefits. In early 2019, such payments averaged \$1,234 a month — just above the poverty level, but enough to cover a person's basic needs.

To qualify, a person needs to provide medical evidence — not just a statement about symptoms — that an anatomical, physiological or psychological abnormality has left them unable to engage in any "sub-

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stantial gainful activity.”

The government spends about \$200 billion annually on the payments, and since pain can be subjective, it uses administrative judges to root out fraudsters. It’s unclear if any or how many of Conn’s former clients might have been deceptive about a disability, but volunteer lawyers who work with former Conn clients say they have seen few of those cases.

Conn bribed doctors with \$400 payments to falsify medical records for his clients and then paid a judge to approve the lifetime benefits. His plea agreement in 2017 would have put him in prison for 12 years, but Conn fled the country, leading federal agents on a six-month chase that ended when he was caught in Honduras. The escape attempt added 15 years to his sentence.

Sexton, 35, said she hired Conn for her disability case more than 15 years ago, when the millionaire lawyer was using billboards and ads all around the poverty-stricken region, promising benefits for disabilities.

“That’s all you heard around here, he was ‘Mr. Social Security,’” Sexton said. “It’s horrible what this man has done to people.”

Sexton, who now lives with her mother in Hazard, said the “weight of the world” lifted off her shoulders when her payments resumed.

“And here I get this letter and they tell me I still got the possibility of losing them, like I did something wrong,” Sexton said, nearing tears.

She went without benefits for nearly five years after Conn’s scheme was exposed, losing her home and sleeping for weeks in her car until she swallowed her pride and asked for help.

“I actually was ashamed to tell my mom,” Sexton said. “My health problems surely didn’t get no better during all that.”

A judge eventually ruled that the agency unconstitutionally disregarded medical evidence in the 230 cases, saying that even a “member of Al Qaeda” would have been given a fairer shake. Despite that ruling, the government has signaled it will try again.

“We were hoping the Biden administration and the new regime (in Washington) would end this, but right now we’re concerned,” said Ned Pillersdorf, an eastern Kentucky attorney representing dozens of former Conn clients. “We thought there was a real opportunity to reverse course.”

In a statement to The Associated Press, the Social Security Administration said it is bound by law to “conduct redeterminations of entitlement when there is a reason to believe fraud or similar fault was involved in a person’s benefit application.” The statement said Conn’s fraud, exposed by two agency employees in a whistleblower suit, is “well-documented.”

Pillersdorf called the hearings “bizarre,” because these people don’t have to prove a current disability. Instead they must demonstrate they were disabled at the time Conn was their attorney, in some cases more than a decade ago. Conn destroyed thousands of pages of records kept at his office, frustrating such efforts.

Pillersdorf and dozens of other lawyers stepped in after the agency initially suspended the benefit payments, working for free in many cases to help hundreds of people navigate through the quagmire. Pillersdorf said his practice has been consumed by a “six-year-plus litigation war.”

A series of appellate losses hasn’t deterred the government, and Pillersdorf said he and other lawyers will go to court to attempt to stop the hearings if they begin.

The Social Security Administration argues that eligibility questions surrounding Conn’s former clients have never been fully addressed. “Several courts have found our redetermination process requires additional procedural protections, (but) no court has found that the agency should not conduct redeterminations,” its statement said.

In a letter to the acting commissioner of the Social Security Administration, Rep. Hal Rogers said the agency has spent millions to deny relatively small sums to unwitting victims of a con job.

“These individuals are the victims of fraud, not the perpetrators, and it’s time for their uncertainty and anxiety to end,” the Kentucky Republican wrote, arguing for a process that would keep them out of court.

Brazil's inflation hits double digits, punishing the poor

By DAVID BILLER and DIANE JEANTET Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — It's something Brazilians have rarely seen in a quarter century, and the last time they did, in 2016, it helped set up a president's downfall:

Double-digit inflation.

Soaring prices for gas, meat, electricity and more have left millions of poor Brazilians struggling to make ends meet. Inflation in the 12 months through September reached 10.25%, according to data the national statistics agency released Friday.

Francielle de Santana, 31, lives in Rio de Janeiro's Jardim Gramacho neighborhood beside a massive former landfill. With no running water or electricity, she salvages scrap to earn a living and can barely afford chicken.

"With ten reais (\$1.80), we used to get a lot, but now we only get three or four pieces. For three or four people, that's little," de Santana told The Associated Press outside her wooden shack. "Rice used to be three reais; now, it's expensive."

Nearby, 73-year-old retiree Leide Laurentino was cooking drumsticks on a makeshift wood stove. The price of cooking gas in September hit its highest in two decades, according to non-profit Petrobras Social Observatory, and Laurentino is rationing hers.

"If I only cook with gas, I won't have enough. Even for coffee, I use firewood," she said. "Sometimes at night I can heat up food, but if it rains, I eat it cold."

Costlier fuels reflect higher oil prices as nations with plentiful vaccines shuffle off the pandemic and resume life with mobility. Supply bottlenecks as global activity ramps up have boosted other prices. Before slowing slightly in August, U.S. inflation was running at 5.4% annually, its fastest since 2008. The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization's food price index recorded a 10-year high in September.

But there are local effects stoking Brazilian inflation, too, said Andre Perfeito, chief economist at brokerage Necton.

The worst drought in nine decades depleted hydroelectric reservoirs, forcing the grid operator to fire up more expensive thermoelectric plants and the government to implement a "water scarcity" power rate. One of the world's sharpest currency depreciations boosted the cost of imports. And price increases are stickier due to indexation, Perfeito said.

While headline inflation just entered double-digit territory, many specific items were already there. In the 12 months through September, electricity prices jumped 28.8% and cooking gas 34.7%, according to data released Friday. Chicken surged 28.8% and red meat 24.8%.

Brazil was appalled last week by a Rio de Janeiro newspaper's front page that showed people rooting through a truck's load of animal bones. The photograph came as a punch to the gut in a nation that loves barbecuing.

Inflation is one factor weighing on Bolsonaro's approval rating — at its lowest since he took office. In Brazil, psychic scars linger from the hyperinflation days that came to an end in the mid-1990s. The previously elected president, Dilma Rousseff, was impeached in 2016 just months after inflation cracked double digits and began featuring in street demonstrations.

At protests against Bolsonaro on Sunday, one year before his reelection bid, inflation was a common grievance.

In a live broadcast on Facebook Thursday night, the president dedicated substantial time to inflation, displaying pictures of foodstuffs and comparing Brazil's prices versus the U.S.

"This crisis is all over the world, not just Brazil. Some think I should do more to contain inflation. Do what else? Give an example," he said. "And in some countries it's not just inflation, but shortages. When will we return to normal? I don't know, it will take time."

On Oct. 4, the central bank's president Roberto Campos Neto said inflation probably peaked in September. Economists surveyed by the central bank expect it will finish 2021 at 8.51%, then slow to 4.14% by end-2022.

That doesn't mean poor Brazilians can rest easy, Perfeito said; the expected slowdown partially stems from forecasts for lower growth next year.

Unemployment remains high and the government's pandemic welfare program that had been a lifeline to about one-third the population was already reduced, and will expire this month. Experts have been warning of rising poverty, including organization Oxfam that in July included Brazil on a list of emerging hunger hotspots.

The pandemic shed light on people with precarious jobs and those working informally, said Lauro Gonzalez, a professor at the Getulio Vargas Foundation who specializes in financial inclusion of Brazil's poor. Many previously earned just enough to not qualify for social benefits.

That includes Jaqueline Silva, 19, who lost her job selling refrigeration equipment last year, couldn't make rent and moved to a squat in downtown Rio with her infant daughter. She told the AP that she begged for the first time in her life — "I was dying of shame, but I had to" — then began receiving some donations of diapers and basic foodstuffs. She's been hunting for any job, with no luck so far, and joined the people who scavenge scraps from the meat truck.

"I was pretty embarrassed at first, but now it's practically become routine," Silva said while awaiting its arrival.

But the truck didn't come, apparently due to shockwaves from the newspaper coverage. That meant Silva and others gathered would need to find another source for meat — or go without.

AP videojournalist Lucas Dumphreys contributed.

New FDA chief can't come soon enough for beleaguered agency

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Straining under a pandemic workload and battered by a string of public controversies, one of the leading agencies in the government's fight against COVID-19 is finally on the verge of getting a new commissioner.

After nearly nine months of searching, President Joe Biden says he's close to naming his choice to lead the Food and Drug Administration, which oversees vaccines, drugs and tests. Former FDA officials and other experts say the decision cannot come soon enough for the agency's beleaguered regulators.

Thousands of FDA staffers are exhausted after racing for more than a year and a half to review products to battle the coronavirus, and the agency's reputation for rigorous, science-based regulation has been threatened by contentious disputes over COVID-19 booster shots and an unproven new Alzheimer's drug.

"The FDA is under a cloud like we've never seen before," said Lawrence Gostin, a public health specialist at Georgetown University. "The choice of a commissioner is going to be absolutely essential for a vibrant future for the agency."

The pressure comes as the FDA faces more coronavirus-related decisions that are likely to affect tens of millions of Americans and determine how the nation fares against future waves of infection.

In the coming weeks, the agency will decide on the scope of booster shots for adults who received the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines. Regulators will also rule on whether Pfizer's vaccine is safe and effective for children as young as 5.

That comes atop other high-stakes decisions, including whether to ban e-cigarettes from vaping giant Juul and other manufacturers due to their risks to teens.

Nominating someone for the FDA role was expected to be a priority earlier this year, given the urgency of the pandemic. But the agency's longtime drug director, Dr. Janet Woodcock, has been serving as acting commissioner since January. The White House faces a legal deadline of mid-November to name a replacement.

Administration officials say Biden will make a decision before Nov. 15. The news this week that Dr. Francis Collins will be stepping down from his post leading the National Institutes of Health has added new

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urgency to resolve the question of FDA leadership.

Acting agency heads serve mainly as caretakers and generally cannot set new goals or priorities for their agencies. They also have less influence to resolve turmoil between agency staff and political decision makers at higher levels of government.

That issue came into sharp focus last month when two longtime FDA vaccine regulators publicly opposed the Biden administration's plan to give boosters to most healthy Americans. Both said they would retire from the agency.

There was a sense within the FDA that the White House's call for a massive booster campaign beginning Sept. 20 had effectively boxed the agency into a decision before its scientists had completed their own review of whether extra shots were needed. Ultimately, the agency authorized scaled-back use of Pfizer's shot to boost protection in older adults and other vulnerable groups.

Experts say the incoming FDA commissioner will need to ease burnout, boost morale and repair the agency's public credibility.

The nomination of a new commissioner "should have been settled by now," said Dr. Stephen Ostroff, a former FDA acting commissioner and chief scientist. "I just wish they would get someone in there to get things moving and to be the public face of the agency so people understand what is going on at FDA and why."

The monthslong search for an FDA nominee reflects the increasingly political nature of the job and the limited pool of candidates who are both qualified and interested in taking it on.

Headquartered in the Maryland suburbs outside Washington, the FDA is often cited as regulating products that make up 25% of U.S. consumer spending. At the center of this sprawling bureaucracy, the FDA commissioner is subject to pressure from the White House, members of Congress, corporate lobbyists, consumer advocates and medical groups. The most successful commissioners have tended to combine deep expertise in medicine and health policy with keen political and communication skills.

More than a half-dozen names have been floated for the position since Biden took office.

Former FDA Deputy Commissioner Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, the agency's No. 2 official in the early Obama administration, was an early favorite among medical experts and consumer advocates. But he is opposed by many of the powerful industries that the FDA regulates, including the pharmaceutical lobby.

Dr. Michelle McMurry-Heath, who also worked at the FDA under Obama, has also reportedly been vetted for the job. But her current role heading the biotech industry's top lobbying group puts her at odds with several key Biden priorities, including lower drug pricing.

For months, Woodcock was expected to be nominated, given her popularity among FDA staff and the drug industry. But several key Democratic senators have signaled they would oppose her confirmation due to the FDA's handling of addictive opioid painkillers like OxyContin under her watch.

The FDA commissioner must be confirmed by a Senate majority vote.

As the agency's authorities have expanded, so have the political and legal fault lines. For instance, a 2009 law giving the FDA oversight of tobacco products resulted in more than a decade of ongoing legal battles over menthol cigarettes, flavored e-cigarettes and other products the agency is trying to regulate.

That's on top of perennial controversies surrounding drug safety problems and food recalls.

"People who are being considered for the job have to ask themselves: 'Will I emerge with an enhanced reputation, or will I have a reputation that puts me in the middle of controversy?'" said Wayne Pines, a former FDA associate commissioner and communications specialist who has helped several commissioners through the confirmation process.

Most FDA commissioners over the last three decades have held the job for less than two years.

Dr. Stephen Hahn was commissioner for just 13 months under former President Donald Trump, who repeatedly threatened the agency to speed up reviews of COVID-19 vaccines and to clear unproven treatments, such as the discredited drug hydroxychloroquine.

The strain on the FDA was supposed to ease under Biden. But the White House's full-court press for booster shots set off alarms among some at the agency that this administration was also getting ahead of the science. Administration allies have defended the aggressive preparation for the boosters, stressing

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that the plan always depended on signoff from FDA scientists.

Other controversies facing the FDA stem from its own decisions.

The June approval of an expensive new Alzheimer's drug quickly sparked controversy since the agency's own expert advisers had nearly unanimously rejected the drug's purported benefits.

Two congressional committees and a federal inspector general are now investigating the decision after revelations that agency reviewers held undocumented meetings with executives from drugmaker Biogen in the run-up to the approval.

The contacts seemed to confirm longstanding worries that the agency is more a confidant to the drug industry than a regulator. Three FDA advisers resigned over the approval.

Given the controversies confronting the agency, the Biden nominee will need to have "a huge amount of scientific heft and credibility," Gostin said.

"That will be important for the morale of FDA career scientists, but it will be even more important for the integrity of the agency and the public's trust in FDA."

Associated Press Writer Zeke Miller contributed to this report.

Follow Matthew Perrone on Twitter at https://twitter.com/AP_FDWriter

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Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Oct. 9, the 282nd day of 2021. There are 83 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 9, 1967, Marxist revolutionary guerrilla leader Che Guevara, 39, was summarily executed by the Bolivian army a day after his capture.

On this date:

In 1888, the public was first admitted to the Washington Monument.

In 1910, a coal dust explosion at the Starkville Mine in Colorado left 56 miners dead.

In 1936, the first generator at Boulder (later Hoover) Dam began transmitting electricity to Los Angeles.

In 1940, rock-and-roll legend John Lennon was born in Liverpool, England. (On this date in 1975, his son, Sean, was born in New York.)

In 1975, Soviet scientist Andrei Sakharov (AHN'-dray SAHK'-ah-rawf) was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1985, the hijackers of the Achille Lauro (ah-KEE'-leh LOW'-roh) cruise liner surrendered two days after seizing the vessel in the Mediterranean. (Passenger Leon Klinghoffer was killed by the hijackers during the standoff.)

In 2001, in the first daylight raids since the start of U.S.-led attacks on Afghanistan, jets bombed the Taliban stronghold of Kandahar. Letters postmarked in Trenton, N.J., were sent to Sens. Tom Daschle and Patrick Leahy; the letters later tested positive for anthrax.

In 2004, a tour bus from the Chicago area flipped in Arkansas, killing 15 people headed to a Mississippi casino.

In 2006, Google Inc. announced it was snapping up YouTube Inc. for \$1.65 billion in a stock deal.

In 2009, President Barack Obama won the Nobel Peace Prize for what the Norwegian Nobel Committee called "his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples."

In 2012, former Penn State assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky was sentenced to 30 to 60 years in prison following his conviction on 45 counts of sexual abuse of boys.

In 2014, six U.S. military planes arrived in the Ebola hot zone with more Marines as West African leaders

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pleaded for the world's help in dealing with what Sierra Leone President Ernest Bai Koroma described as "a tragedy unforeseen in modern times."

Ten years ago: At least 27 people were killed and more than 200 injured during massive clashes in downtown Cairo in the worst sectarian outburst since the February revolution. The NHL returned to Winnipeg after 15 years; Carey Price stopped 30 shots as the Montreal Canadiens put a damper on a massive civic celebration with a 5-1 victory over the Jets. Paul McCartney married Nancy Shevell at Old Marylebone Town Hall in London.

Five years ago: During a bitter debate in St. Louis, Hillary Clinton declared that Donald Trump's vulgar comments about women revealed "exactly who he is" and proved his unsuitability to be president; firing back, Trump accused Clinton of attacking women involved in Bill Clinton's extramarital affairs and promised she would "be in jail" if he were president.

One year ago: A federal judge refused to block New York's plan to temporarily limit the size of religious gatherings in COVID-19 hot spots. President Donald Trump told Rush Limbaugh on his radio show that he could have become very ill and might not have recovered from COVID-19 without experimental drugs; it was a far worse outlook than what his doctors were telling the American people. The United Nations' World Food Program won the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize for its efforts to combat hunger and food insecurity around the globe. Hurricane Delta came ashore in southwest Louisiana as a Category 2 storm, drenching the same area that was battered by deadly Hurricane Laura six weeks earlier, but quickly weakened and became a tropical storm as it moved inland.

Today's Birthdays: Retired MLB All-Star Joe Pepitone is 81. Former Sen. Trent Lott, R-Miss., is 80. C-SPAN founder Brian Lamb is 80. R&B singer Nona Hendryx is 77. Singer Jackson Browne is 73. Nobel Peace laureate Jody Williams is 71. Actor Gary Frank is 71. Actor Richard Chaves is 70. Actor Robert Wuhl is 70. Actor-TV personality Sharon Osbourne is 69. Actor Tony Shalhoub is 68. Actor Scott Bakula is 67. Musician James Fearnley (The Pogues) is 67. Actor John O'Hurley is 67. Writer-producer-director-actor Linwood Boomer is 66. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Mike Singletary is 63. Actor Michael Paré is 63. Jazz musician Kenny Garrett is 61. Rock singer-musician Kurt Neumann (The BoDeans) is 60. Movie director Guillermo del Toro is 57. Former British Prime Minister David Cameron is 55. Singer P.J. Harvey is 52. Movie director Steve McQueen (Film: "12 Years a Slave") is 52. World Golf Hall of Famer Annika Sorenstam is 51. Actor Cocoa Brown is 49. Country singer Tommy Shane Steiner is 48. Actor Steve Burns is 48. Rock singer Sean Lennon is 46. Actor Randy Spelling is 43. Christian hip-hop artist Lecrae is 42. Actor Brandon Routh is 42. Actor Zachery Ty Bryan is 40. Actor Spencer Grammer is 38. Comedian Melissa Villasenor (TV: "Saturday Night Live") is 34. Actor Tyler James Williams is 29. Country singer Scotty McCreery (TV: "American Idol") is 28. Actor Jharrel Jerome is 24.