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Upcoming Events

Tuesday, Oct. 26

ASVAB Testing at GHS, 8:30 a.m. to Noon
Volleyball at Redfield (No C Match, JV at 6 p.m. followed by Varsity)

Thursday, Oct. 28

All State Chorus & Orchestra at Rapid City Civic Center

Friday, Oct. 29

All State Chorus & Orchestra at Rapid City Civic Center
Downtown Trick or Treat, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Methodist Church Trunk or Treat, 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 30

All State Chorus & Orchestra at Rapid City Civic Center
Pumpkinstakes Oral Interp at Watertown

Tuesday, Nov. 2

Brookings Novice Debate
Volleyball Region 1A Tourney
NCRC Test at GHS, 8:30 a.m. to noon

Thursday, Nov. 4

Aberdeen Novice Online Debate
Volleyball Region 1A Tourney
Bowdle LDE

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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#479 in a series Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

As of midday today, we were at 45,423,365 total cases in the US; the seven-day new-case average is 72,644, so it continues to decline. We're seeing about half as many now as we did early last month, but this is still five times the numbers we had in June. High numbers are persisting in Alaska, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and North Dakota. We're seeing increasing numbers in fewer states: Only Arizona is still in a double-digit percentage increase, and just a handful of other states are increasing at all. Even though cases continue to decline, as of Friday, more than 90 percent of counties in the country have high or substantial transmission; this covers more than 319 million people, the vast majority of the US population. High transmission is where there are at least 100 new cases per 100,000 people or more than 10 percent test positivity, and we're looking at two-thirds of us in the category, some 221 million. Substantial transmission is when there are at least 50 new cases per 100,000 people in the past week or a test positivity rate of eight percent or more, and this accounts for another 30 percent or 98 million. These are areas in which universal masking in indoor spaces is recommended along with other prevention strategies, not that this is happening in most of these counties. Hospitalizations are down to 54,359. The seven-day average number of daily deaths is holding steady at 1509; we have lost 736,112 so far in this pandemic.

If you've been talking to—or are—one of those folks who are resisting vaccination because of "natural immunity" from infection, I've read a study that may be of interest. It was published last month in the Journal of Emerging Infectious Diseases and describes the findings of a team from the University of Pennsylvania who studied 72 people, all of whom had positive RT-PCR tests for Covid-19. Blood specimens were drawn when the individual had been symptom free for at least three weeks. Specimens were drawn from each participant, one upon enrollment in the study and others as needed at follow-up visits, and tested for antibodies to SARS-CoV-2 spike (S), receptor-binding domain (RBD), and nucleocapsid (N) proteins using a validated ELISA (enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay) technique. Everyone but one with S protein antibodies also had detectable RBD or N antibodies as well; that one person who did not had very low titers of S antibodies. Twenty-six participants (36 percent—more than one third) remained seronegative (demonstrating no detectable antibodies at all), even after up to three specimens drawn. This means we cannot count on a person with a confirmed infection developing detectable levels of antibodies to the virus.

They also found that seronegative status was correlated with younger age and low viral loads. It appears that low viral numbers in the nasopharynx (from which specimens for RT-PCR are taken) are insufficient to elicit a systemic antibody response. There was not a correlation between symptom severity or particular symptoms and seroconversion. Times of RT-PCR and antibody testing did not correlate with seroconversion. Their conclusions based on statistical analysis were that age is a minor player and viral load is a major one. They also conclude that "clinical illness [having symptoms] does not guarantee seroconversion."

This is quite a small study, but it is also not the first time we've seen evidence that natural infection may not confer protective immunity. Other work done has yielded findings that some percentage of infected persons will not develop immunologic memory for this virus, including a study from a team in Israel just about a year ago and published in EClinicalMedicine by The Lancet, one from a New York City team published in the Journal of Infectious Diseases, and one from Germany also published in the Journal of Infectious Diseases. This study simply adds to the evidence which grows stronger with each subsequent study.

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Further bolstering a conclusion that serologic nonresponders are not protected against future infection is the finding that these nonresponders may not be exhibiting a heightened anamnestic (memory) response upon a dose of vaccine—an indication there's no immunologic memory to jog with that vaccine—or, likely, a future exposure. [For word nerds, anamnestic is an interesting construction. It is related to amnesia, a word most of us know as a loss of memory or forgetting. The Greek prefix, an- (or a-), means "not." So anamnestic means "not forgetting." That would indicate there is memory, and the lack of an anamnestic response means there is no memory.] The authors lay this out pretty clearly when they say, "RT-PCR positive persons who experienced COVID-19 symptoms might be less inclined to seek vaccination, believing they are protected, but our results caution against this assumption." So there it is: If you've had Covid-19, you need to protect yourself by being vaccinated; having the infection is not a guarantee you're protected.

Ahead of tomorrow's FDA Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee (VRBPAC) meeting on the emergency use authorization (EUA) extension of eligibility for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine to children ages 5 to 11, we have information on the FDA's assessment of the clinical trial data submitted for review. The trial included 4500 children, two-thirds of whom received the vaccine and one-third of whom received placebo. A lower dose was used in this trial. The reason for the lower dose is that it appears to elicit as strong a response as the higher dose in this age group and lower doses are typically associated with fewer side effects; various doses were tested, so you can be sure this one is the right one. The antibody response was pretty much the same as the one seen with the higher dose in people 16 to 25 years old, so this lower dose is definitely as effective in the 5-11 age group.

The news from the clinical trial is good: The only scenario in which the risk may outweigh the benefit is at the lowest level of transmission, and even then, the analysis is not certain in reaching this conclusion. The vaccine is reported to have 91 percent effectiveness in the age group, which numbers around 28 million in the US. No case seen in the vaccine group in this trial was severe. There were also no safety signals of concern. If this one follows the pattern established by earlier regulatory decisions, I would expect the FDA commissioner to act on this Committee's recommendations within a day or two. After that, the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) is scheduled to meet on November 2 and 3 to consider the issue, and I'd expect the CDC director to act on their recommendations within a day or two as well. Unless there are surprises along the way (no reason to expect those), then I think we'll see children in this age group receiving vaccine by the 4th or 5th .

The administration has 15 million of the tested pediatric doses (one-third the adult dose) ready to ship, so supply should not be an issue. It will be necessary to administer to children doses only from specified vials for the purpose; these will come in smaller containers than the shipments of adult doses and may be stored for up to 10 weeks at refrigeration temperatures, which is an improvement over the storage conditions required for this vaccine when it was first authorized. We do expect more vaccine hesitance from parents of children in this age group than have been seen in adults and parents of older children. Educational efforts are in the planning process and are also already underway. Widespread vaccination of children will prevent infection and its consequent harms in the children as well as a reduction in community transmission, which will also benefit the children as their caregivers and loved ones are safer once sufficient numbers of children are vaccinated. Data on clinical trials in even younger children—down to six months of age—are expected before year's end.

I understand there has been some confusion about boosters: who is eligible and which vaccine one should receive. Although I honestly didn't think this issue was all that confusing, I'm going to summarize the CDC's guidance on vaccination here. So here we go.

First of all, if you have not yet been fully vaccinated, then here's what you need to be fully vaccinated (called your primary series):

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(1) For those 12 and over, 2 doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, at least 21 days apart, both doses from the same manufacturer, plus 2 weeks after the second dose for the immune response to develop, OR

(2) For those 18 and over, 2 doses of the Moderna vaccine, at least 28 days apart, both doses from the same manufacturer, plus 2 weeks after the second dose for the immune response to develop, OR

(3) For those 18 and over, 1 dose of the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccine plus 2 weeks after that dose for the immune response to develop.

If you are moderately to severely immunocompromised, then the primary series (for full vaccination) should be 3 doses of Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna vaccine, first two doses on the schedule listed above for the particular manufacturer with the third dose at least 28 days after the second for either vaccine. These doses should all be from the same manufacturer.

Booster doses should be given as follows:

(1) If the primary series was with the Pfizer/BioNTech or the Moderna vaccine, the booster dose should be given at least six months after the second dose and should be given to long-term care residents, people 65 or older, people 50 to 64 with underlying medical conditions or at risk of exposure due to occupation or institutional setting. People from 18 to 49 with underlying medical conditions or occupational/institutional exposure may choose to receive a booster. There is some evidence an mRNA (Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna) booster may elicit greater antibody responses than a booster with the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

(2) If the primary vaccination was with the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccine, the booster should be given at least 2 months after the primary to all recipients.

(3) Booster doses may be from a different manufacturer than the primary series. The timeline should comport with the primary series given, that is, at least six months after primary for the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna primary vaccination and at least two months after the primary for the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccination.

There is still plenty to worry about on the vaccination front. We have just over 150,000 people initiating vaccination per day; more than twice that many receive boosters each day. That means people who already have some degree of protection are receiving additional protection at about twice the rate unprotected people are getting any at all. We have a huge proportion—about one-third—of our population unprotected. This leaves a lot of room for trouble if we get another surge—and I wouldn't bet against such a surge.

That's it for today. I expect I'll be back after we get some action on the pediatric vaccine EUA extension. Meeting's tomorrow, and I would guess we'll have the FDA commissioner's decision by Wednesday. I'll update when I have something on that. Until then, be well. We'll talk soon.

Photo Scrapbook Pages

Tiospa Zina Volleyball Match



Anna Fjeldheim
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Aspen Johnson
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Elizabeth Flihs
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

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Allyssa Locke
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Trista Keith
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

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Sydney Leicht
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Madeline Flieths
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Alyssa Thaler
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

Lady Tigers take down Deuel

Groton Area's volleyball teams posted a clean sweep over Deuel on Monday in Groton. It was the last regular season home match of the year and the Tigers improved to 10-15 on the season.

Groton won the varsity match, 25-18, 25-20 and 25-17. Madeline Fliehs had eight kills, two blocks and an ace serve, Sydney Liecht had 10 kills and two ace serves, Aspen Johnson four kills and two blocks, Elizabeth Fliehs three ace serves and two kills, Anna Fjeldheim two kills and an ace serve, Allyssa Locke two ace serves and Maddie Bjerke and Alyssa Thaler each had a kill.

Haley Winter led the Cardinals with 11 kills and an ace serve, Josie Anderson had 10 kills, Emma Hamann had two kills, Alyson Hagberg and Emma Sattler each had a kill and Gracie Fieber had an ace serve.

The junior varsity team posted a 2-0 win over Deuel, 25-23 and 25-7. In the first set, Deuel had scored nine unanswered points to take an 11-3 lead before Groton started to chip away at the lead and would tie it at 20 and took the lead for good at 22-21. Deuel did tie the set at 23 but the Tigers went on for the win. In the second set, Groton Area would score 15 unanswered points with Lydia Meier doing the serving with five ace serves during the set.

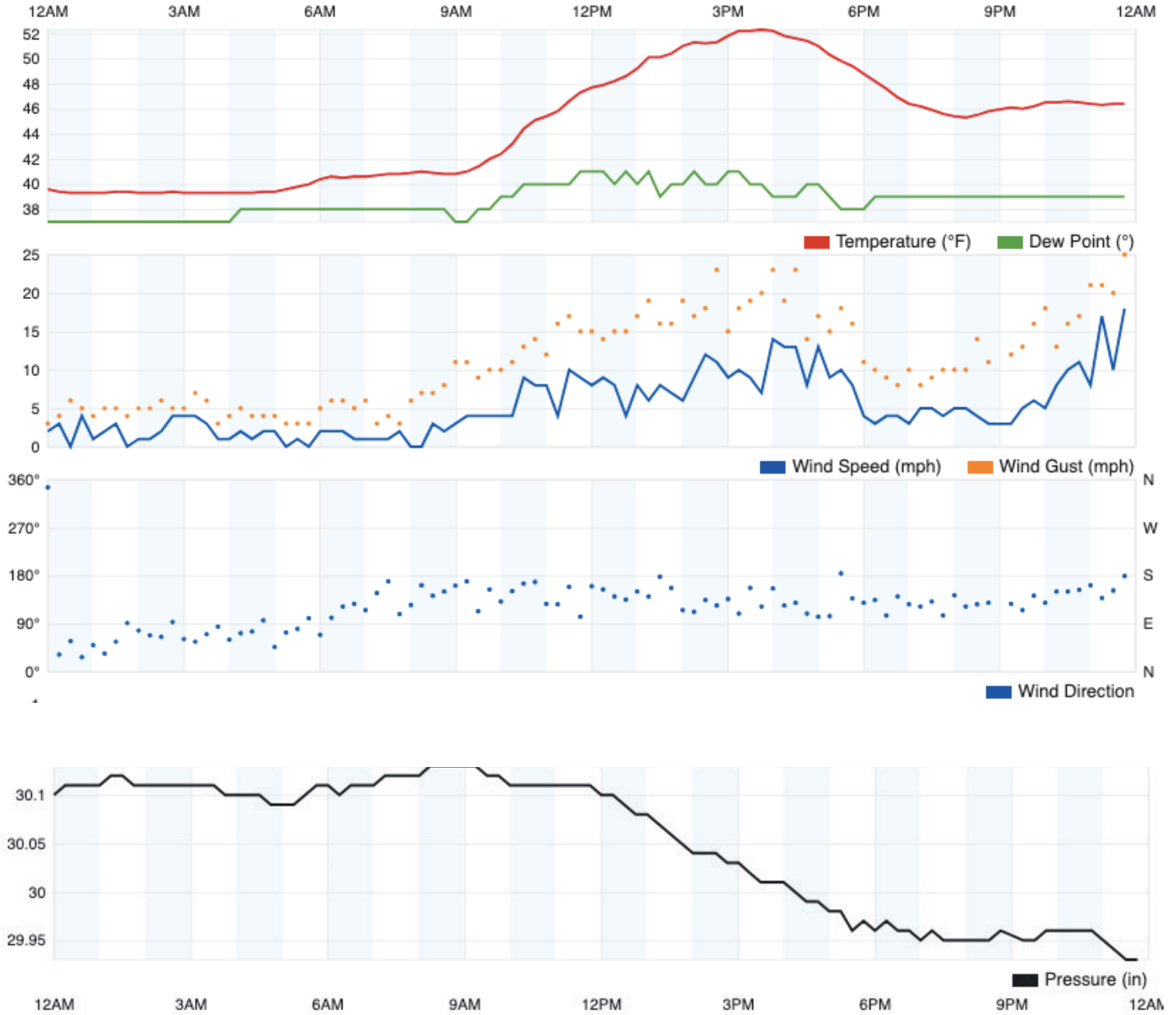
Meier finished the match with six ace serves and four kills, Faith Traphagen had seven kills, Laila Roberts six ace serves and a kill, Emma Schinkel had four kills and a block, Marlee Tollifson had five kills, Shallyn Foertsch had three ace serves, Hollie Frost had a kill and Carly Guthmiller had an ace serve.

Both matches were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM. The junior varsity by a private sponsor. The varsity by Allied Climate Professionals with Kevin Nehls, Bary Keith at Harr Motors and Milbrandt Enterprises Inc.

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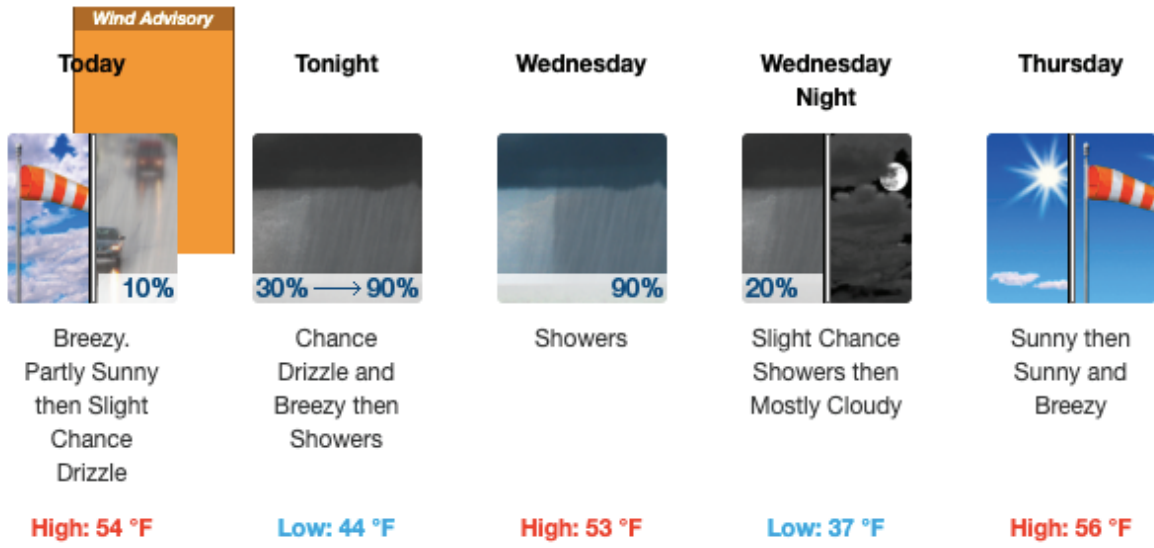
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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WINDY TUESDAY

- Breezy to Strong winds out of the southwest
- Winds 25-30 mph, with gusts 40-45 mph
- Winds diminishing over central SD in the afternoon
- Cloudy with highs in the mid 50s to low 60s



Isolated afternoon Rain
Showers over n central SD



NWS Aberdeen, SD

Expect breezy to strong winds out of the southwest during the day Tuesday. Winds will be 25 to 30 mph, with gusts around 40 to 45 mph. These winds will diminish slightly over central South Dakota in the afternoon. Otherwise, a cloudy sky will dominate, as temperatures rise into the mid 50s to low 60s. Isolated showers will move into north central South Dakota Tuesday afternoon, before increasing in intensity and coverage across northeastern South Dakota and western Minnesota Tuesday night. Rain showers will continue over eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota during the day Wednesday.

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Timing Moisture Progression This Afternoon Through Wednesday

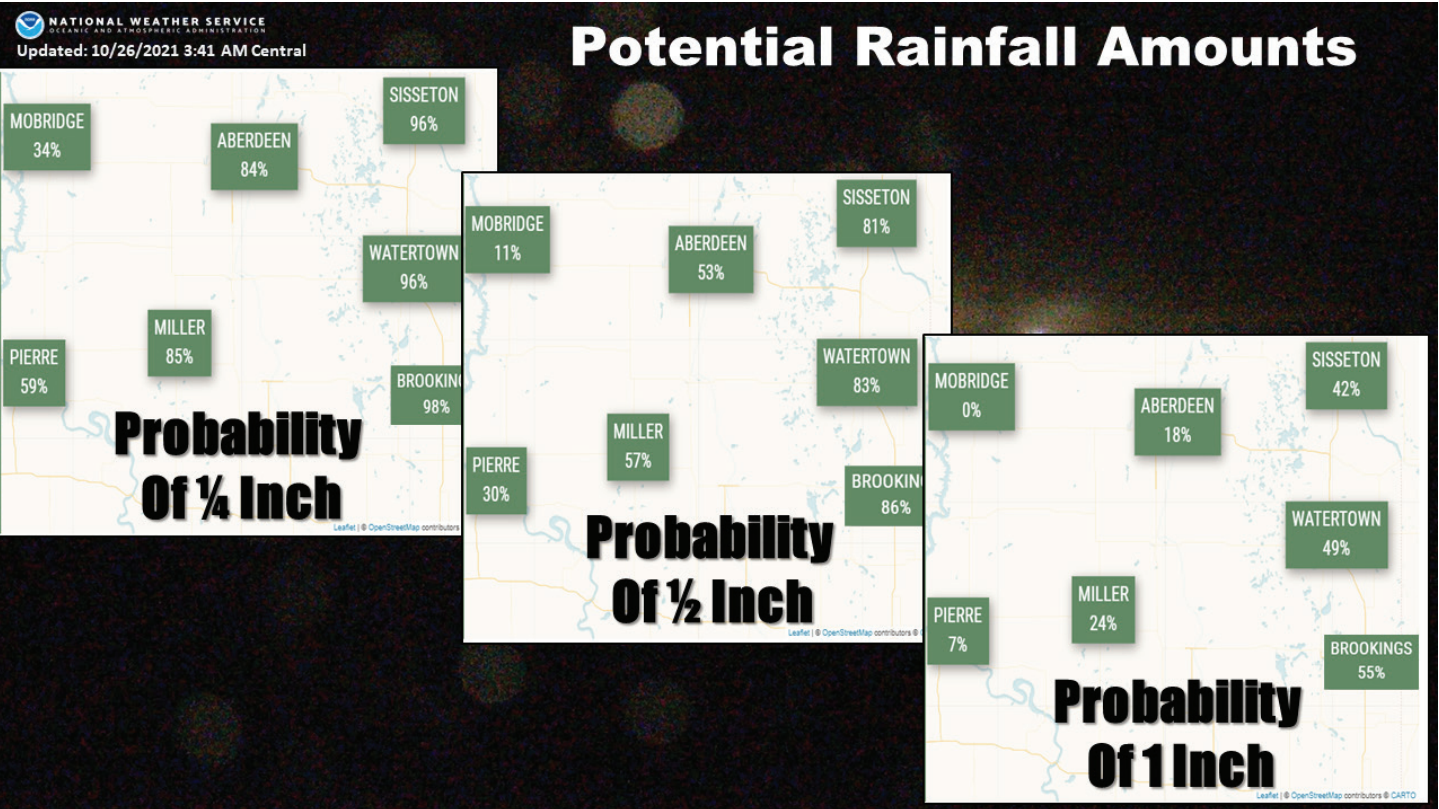
Probability of Precipitation Forecast

	10/26 Tue											10/27 Wed											10/28 Thu																
	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm	12am	1am	2am	3am	4am	5am	6am	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm	12am	1am	2am	
Aberdeen	1	3	9	15	16	15	25	35	36	30	29	34	72	70	87	79	79	77	77	90	74	56	61	66	29	23	25	22	16	17	3	3	3	3	3	3	0	0	
Britton	2	3	4	5	7	9	10	11	11	12	14	21	37	67	83	84	83	90	89	87	89	88	93	88	52	55	55	56	57	52	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	2	2
Eagle Butte	3	4	10	15	24	28	42	57	57	59	61	64	47	44	36	18	13	10	2	2	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Eureka	1	2	7	12	16	17	34	52	49	49	51	57	83	80	83	53	53	49	35	24	22	20	18	21	4	3	3	3	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Gettysburg	4	4	10	16	17	16	27	38	36	34	41	70	63	84	60	50	33	27	16	12	15	8	7	14	2	3	3	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Kennebec	2	3	5	7	14	16	15	14	32	57	73	73	54	48	49	32	29	21	19	19	16	10	15	16	4	3	6	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
McIntosh	1	8	17	26	28	42	52	62	61	57	56	55	17	17	17	16	16	16	2	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Milbank	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	9	10	11	25	40	62	71	75	84	88	93	98	93	95	88	77	83	81	79	81	66	67	67	39	39	39	39	39	39	10	10	
Miller	5	7	12	16	16	17	22	28	32	31	52	73	63	76	81	83	72	57	57	65	52	36	41	32	16	16	15	6	7	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Mobridge	1	3	9	15	16	19	30	40	38	38	49	61	79	73	70	52	44	36	7	9	7	8	8	8	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Murdo	1	3	4	5	9	13	20	27	48	72	77	79	64	56	53	33	25	18	4	5	4	3	4	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
Pierre	3	3	10	16	16	16	19	23	36	55	72	80	76	70	60	42	28	17	7	9	8	4	8	7	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Redfield	4	6	11	15	15	15	21	27	30	25	35	61	65	74	80	81	83	86	77	76	67	57	54	58	31	23	23	9	8	11	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	0	
Sisseton	2	4	4	4	4	4	6	8	9	12	15	27	48	67	76	76	77	89	99	94	95	92	94	97	86	78	72	70	66	72	26	26	26	26	26	26	6	6	
Watertown	1	2	4	5	6	7	9	11	13	14	30	58	68	85	79	90	94	94	96	100	96	84	90	94	84	83	73	53	59	56	25	25	25	25	25	25	6	6	
Wheaton	0	2	2	2	2	3	3	4	5	5	8	22	36	58	73	75	76	85	95	91	92	90	90	91	87	87	88	85	84	85	41	41	41	41	41	41	12	12	

* Table values in %
**Created: 3 am CDT Tue 10/26/2021
***Values are maximums over the period beginning at the time shown.

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE Updated: 10/26/2021 3:19 AM CDT

A system will bring moisture to the region this afternoon and through Wednesday. Moisture looks to be mostly concentrated across eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota.



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Today in Weather History

October 26, 1919: Record cold occurred across the area on this day in 1919. Temperatures fell below zero at many locations across central and northeast South Dakota and into west-central Minnesota. The record lows were 3 degrees below zero at Aberdeen, 4 degrees below zero at Wheaton, 5 degrees below zero at Kennebec, 8 degrees below zero at McIntosh, and a much below average low of 10 degrees below zero at Miller.

October 26, 1996: A rare and significant late-season tornado outbreak took place as a low-pressure system trekked across the North-Central US. A series of low-topped supercells during the morning and afternoon hours produced a total of 26 tornadoes; 3 in Nebraska, 9 in northeastern South Dakota, and 14 across west-central and central Minnesota. Five of these were rated F2, and while no fatalities resulted, 15 people were injured, and there was a good deal of property damage. To help put the extraordinary timing of this event in perspective, in the 66 years of record-keeping from 1950-2015, Minnesota has only recorded 15 other October tornadoes, and South Dakota 9.

October 26, 2010: A record-breaking surface low-pressure area moved across the Northern Plains and brought high winds to all of central and northeast South Dakota from the early morning of the 26th into the early evening of the 27th. Big Fork, Minnesota, measured a surface low pressure of 955.2 millibars. Sustained northwest winds of 40 to 50 mph with gusts to 60 to 75 mph caused scattered property damage across the region along with blowing several vehicles off the road. Along with the high winds came snowfall of 1 to 5 inches, which resulted in treacherous driving conditions. Several schools started late on the 27th due to the slippery roads and strong winds. The high winds, combined with slick roads at times, blew several semis and other vehicles off the road on Interstate-29 and other locations across the region. Only minor injuries occurred with these incidents. The high winds damaged many traffic signs and signals, downed many power lines and poles, along with downing branches and several trees. As a result, several hundred customers were without power for a time across the area. The high winds caused roof and siding damage to many buildings along with damaging some fences. A shed was also destroyed near Sisseton.

1865: A hurricane sank the steamship USS Mobile off the Georgia coast. The wreck, laden with 20,000 gold coins, was found in 2003.

1952: There have been thousands of weather reconnaissance and research flights into hurricanes in the Atlantic and Pacific since the mid-1940s. There have been several close calls, but only four flights have been lost. A B-29 Super-fortress flight into Super Typhoon Wilma 350 miles east of Leyte in the Philippines disappeared on this date. No trace was ever found of the plane or crew. In the last report, the flight was in the Super typhoon's strongest winds, which were around 160 mph.

1997: An autumn snowstorm pummeled central and south-central Nebraska with record early season snows. Wind-driven snowfall amounts totaled as much as two feet by storms' end. Several highways were closed, including Interstate 80, as near-blizzard conditions developed. Once the snow subsided, the record early season snow totals were tallied. Guide Rock measured twenty-four inches of snow, Clay Center twenty-three inches, and Hastings seventeen inches. A fifty-mile wide swath of snow more than fifteen inches fell from near Alma to York. Amounts further north averaged from four to eight inches. The heavy, wet snow was responsible for many power outages in the area as tree limbs broke and fell on power lines. At one point, the town of Hardy had no power and could not be accessed by vehicles due to the snow. Numerous schools and businesses remained closed several days following the storm. Many highways, including Interstate 80, closed at the height of the storm. On Highway 136 east of Alma, road crews worked for ten hours carving through a ten-foot drift that covered the road. Record cold accompanied the snow as temperatures dropped to the single digits on the morning of the 26th.

1998: Hurricane Mitch, the second deadliest hurricane in the Atlantic Ocean, reached Category 5 strength on this day.

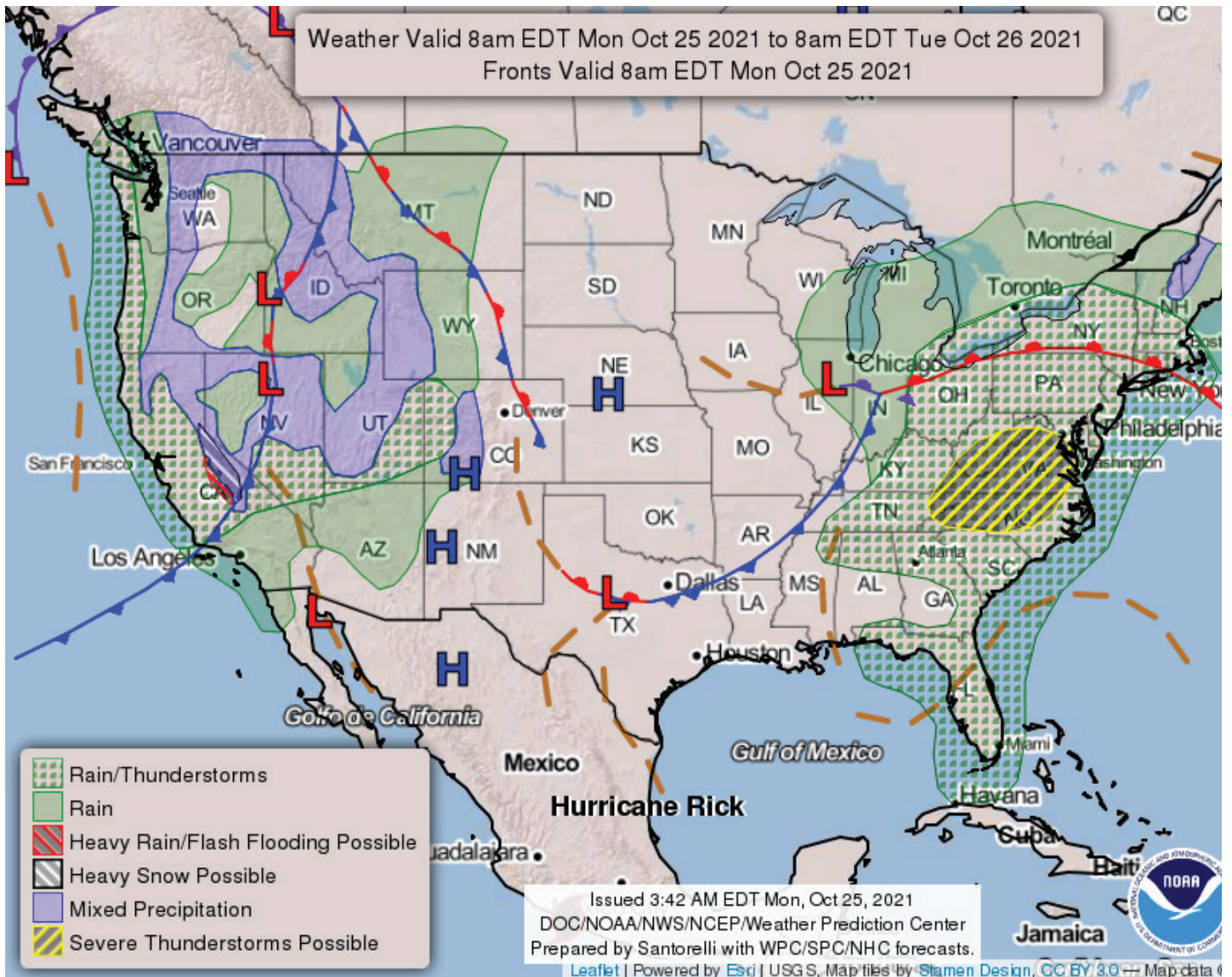
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 52.3 °F at 3:45 PM
Low Temp: 39.3 °F at 12:30 AM
Wind: 25 mph at 11:45 PM
Precip: 0.00

Record High: 83° in 1922
Record Low: -3° in 2020
Average High: 54°F
Average Low: 29°F
Average Precip in Oct.: 1.89
Precip to date in Oct.: 3.35
Average Precip to date: 20.22
Precip Year to Date: 18.77
Sunset Tonight: 6:29:57 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:04:02 AM



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WANT TO BECOME AN ANGEL?

Marie asked her mother what she could do to become an angel. After a moment's thought, she looked caringly at her and said, "Be good, Marie - very good, and if you are, someday, when you go to heaven, you will become an angel."

But no one goes to heaven because of the life they have lived or their good deeds. Entrance to heaven - eternal life with our Heavenly Father - is through Jesus Christ, His Son, our Savior.

Angels, or heavenly hosts as David calls them, have an interesting status. They are older than man, but they are not eternal. They are mighty, supernatural beings who surround the throne of God and follow His commands and do whatever He asks them as His "special messengers." They are part of God's angelic army and His celestial court. While there has never been an increase in the number of angels, the Bible says that their company - or number - is "countless."

David says something very interesting about them, "Praise the Lord, all His heavenly hosts, you His servants who do His will." As His servants they have special roles and relationships with Him. But more importantly, they have special responsibilities. They are His messengers, bring comfort in times of need and distress, give military assistance, provide protection, guard and give guidance to those who are His own.

Finally, an angel will come from heaven, seize Satan, bind him in chains and cast him into "the pit." What a wonderful day that will be!

Prayer: Help us, Father, to live in complete obedience to You as do Your angels. May we always follow Your will. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Praise the Lord, all His heavenly hosts, you His servants who do His will. Psalm 103:21

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2021 Community Events

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

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$20 million

Powerball

10-27-29-44-58, Powerball: 24, Power Play: 2

(ten, twenty-seven, twenty-nine, forty-four, fifty-eight; Powerball: twenty-four; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$93 million

Monday's Scores

The Associated Press undefined

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Chester def. Arlington, 25-16, 25-23, 23-25, 25-8

Colman-Egan def. Dell Rapids St. Mary, 25-12, 25-17, 25-9

Dakota Valley def. Tea Area, 25-13, 25-16, 25-21

Edgemont def. Pine Ridge, 25-19, 25-14, 25-15

Ethan def. Tripp-Delmont/Armour, 25-12, 25-17, 23-25, 25-21

Faith def. Newell, 25-19, 25-23, 25-15

Garretson def. Sioux Valley, 25-14, 25-14, 25-14

Gayville-Volin def. Avon, 25-20, 18-25, 25-16, 25-12

Gregory def. Andes Central/Dakota Christian, 25-16, 25-13, 25-13

Groton Area def. Deuel, 25-18, 25-20, 25-17

Harding County def. Bison, 20-25, 25-18, 23-25, 26-24, 15-11

Harrisburg def. Brandon Valley, 25-20, 25-19, 23-25, 18-25, 15-5

Hot Springs def. Oelrichs, 25-9, 25-7, 25-10

Ipswich def. Herreid/Selby Area, 25-20, 21-25, 25-11, 25-21

Kimball/White Lake def. Colome, 25-8, 25-12, 25-12

Lemmon def. Dupree, 22-25, 25-14, 18-25, 30-28, 15-9

Madison def. Brookings, 25-16, 25-18, 25-13

McCook Central/Montrose def. Hanson, 25-11, 25-9, 25-14

Milbank def. Tiospa Zina Tribal, 25-22, 25-14, 25-22

Northwestern def. North Central Co-Op, 25-15, 25-11, 25-6

Oldham-Ramona/Rutland def. Lake Preston, 25-8, 25-18, 26-24

Parker def. Vermillion, 25-16, 25-20, 25-21

Philip def. New Underwood, 25-18, 25-17, 25-11

Platte-Geddes def. Winner, 25-20, 22-25, 25-20, 25-17

Sioux Falls Christian def. Lennox, 25-18, 25-17, 25-9

Stanley County def. Jones County, 25-23, 27-25, 26-28, 25-21

Tri-Valley def. West Central, 25-20, 25-19, 19-25, 25-21

Wagner def. Burke, 25-17, 21-25, 25-11, 25-21

White River def. St. Francis Indian, 25-9, 25-12, 25-14

Wolsey-Wessington def. Redfield, 15-25, 25-23, 25-20, 21-25, 15-9

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

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

South Dakota House, Senate at odds over redistricting maps

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Committees in the South Dakota House and Senate approved different legislative district maps on Monday, showing a schism among Republicans who lead each chamber over how to draw the political boundaries the state will use for the next decade.

Republicans, who dominate both committees, started the redistricting process by meeting as a single body. But a split emerged between establishment Republicans who dominate the Senate and a band of more socially conservative GOP House members. As the two committees finalized their respective proposals Monday, they split into two rooms and approved separate proposals to take to a special session on Nov. 8.

The House approved a map that would keep the current legislative districts mostly intact, while the Senate's proposal would likely pit some current lawmakers against one another in newly drawn districts. Proponents of the House map say it received positive feedback at public input sessions, but senators argue that their proposal would account for the state's population shifts over the last decade.

"Unfortunately, South Dakota's population has changed in that time, so we do have to accept the fact that our districts are going to have to change," said Republican Sen. Mary Duvall, who chaired the Senate committee.

Negotiations on the map proposals will continue over the coming weeks and into the legislative session, as lawmakers try to iron out several key sticking points. One of the most significant is ensuring representation for Native American voters. Federal law requires that racial minorities receive adequate representation in legislative boundaries.

In the past, South Dakota has run into trouble for diluting the representation of Native American voters — a federal judge found that the Legislature broke the federal law during redistricting in 2001.

This year, tribal leaders and advocates for Native American voters have told lawmakers they believe the U.S. Census Bureau undercounted the population on several American Indian reservations. Lawmakers have previously insisted that they are bound to use the census numbers, but on Thursday, they acknowledged the tribes' concerns.

The Senate committee allowed two districts that cover American Indian reservations to contain a smaller census population than was previously allowed.

Republican Sen. Helene Duhamel called the change "a good faith effort to be a little bit more fair," given the concerns about a census undercount during the pandemic.

The House on Friday will consider incorporating a similar proposal from Republican Rep. Mike Derby. He has also proposed map changes to an area in northern Rapid City where many Native American people live. His map would ensure that the area falls into a single legislative district.

Advocates for Native American communities have consistently pointed to that area as an example of how Native American voters in some areas are not able to gain representation in the Legislature.

"The current boundaries do not set our community up for adequate and equitable representation," Sunny Red Bear, the director of racial equity at Rapid City-based NDN Collective, told senators.

Meanwhile, lawmakers expect a long day of negotiations on Nov. 8.

Duvall, who will present the Senate proposal to her colleagues, suggested that the session could run into the next day. If lawmakers can't reach an agreement by Dec. 1, the state Supreme Court would be tasked with drawing the final map.

Homicide investigation ongoing in Jerauld County

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A homicide investigation is underway in a small community in eastern South Dakota, according to authorities.

The Jerauld County State's Attorney on Sunday confirmed the homicide investigation in Wessington Springs involves one victim and that a suspect is in custody, KSFY-TV reported.

Officials said a home in Wessington Springs is an active crime scene. The community is about 125 miles (201 kilometers) northwest of Sioux Falls. No other details were available.

Japan's Princess Mako marries commoner, loses royal status

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese Princess Mako quietly married a commoner without traditional wedding celebrations Tuesday and said their marriage — delayed three years and opposed by some — “was a necessary choice to live while cherishing our hearts.”

The marriage to Kei Komuro cost Mako her royal status. She received her husband's surname — the first time she has had a family name. Most Japanese women must abandon their own family names upon marriage due to a law requiring only one surname per married couple.

The couple's marriage document was submitted by a palace official on Tuesday morning and made official, the Imperial Household Agency said. There was no wedding banquet or other marriage rituals for the couple. The agency has acknowledged that many people have not welcomed their marriage.

“For me, Kei-san is a priceless person. For us, our marriage was a necessary choice to live while cherishing our hearts,” Mako said in a televised news conference, using an honorific in speaking of her husband.

Komuro responded: “I love Mako. I live only once and I want to spend it with someone I love.” He said he hopes to be with Mako to share feelings and encourage each other in happy times and difficult times.

“I hope to have a warm family with Mako-san, and I will continue to do everything to support her,” he said.

Mako earlier declined a 140 million yen (\$1.23 million) payment to which she was entitled for leaving the imperial family, palace officials said. She is the first imperial family member since World War II to not receive the payment and chose to do so because of criticism of the marriage.

Mako, who turned 30 three days before the marriage, is a niece of Emperor Naruhito. She and Komuro, who were classmates at Tokyo's International Christian University, announced in September 2017 that they intended to marry the following year, but a financial dispute involving his mother surfaced two months later and the wedding was suspended.

On Tuesday morning, Mako left the palace wearing a pale blue dress and holding a bouquet. She bowed outside the residence to her parents, Crown Prince Akishino and Crown Princess Kiko, and her sister Kako, and then the sisters hugged each other.

The couple did not answer questions at the news conference as Mako had expressed unease about responding in person. Instead, they provided written answers to questions submitted by the media beforehand, including those about his mother's financial issues.

Mako is recovering from what palace doctors described earlier this month as a form of traumatic stress disorder that she developed after seeing negative media coverage about their marriage, especially attacks on Komuro.

“We have been horrified, scared and saddened ... as false information has been taken as fact and that unfounded stories have spread,” Mako said in a written answer to one of the questions.

The dispute involves whether money his mother received from her former fiancé was a loan or a gift. Mako's father asked Komuro to clarify, and he wrote a statement defending himself, but it is still unclear if the dispute has been fully resolved.

Komuro, 30, left for New York in 2018 to study law and only returned to Japan last month. His hair was tied in a ponytail at the time and the look drew attention as a bold statement for someone marrying a princess in the tradition-bound imperial family and only added to the criticism.

The couple will move together to New York to start a new life.

“There will be different kinds of difficulties as we start our new life, but we'll walk together as we have done so in the past,” Mako said, thanking everyone who supported the couple.

Mako, apparently referring to mental health issues, noted “many people have difficulty and hurt feelings while trying to protect their hearts.” She said, “I sincerely hope that our society will be a place where more people can live and protect their hearts with the help of warm help and support from others.”

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Mako is not the only female royal whose mental health was strained by attacks from inside and outside the palace.

Her grandmother, Empress Emerita Michiko, wife of former Emperor Akihito and the first commoner married to a monarch in modern history, collapsed and temporarily lost her voice in 1993 following persistent negative coverage.

Empress Masako, a Harvard-educated former diplomat, has had a stress-induced mental condition for nearly 20 years, in part because of criticism over not producing a male heir.

Some critics say Mako's marriage highlights the difficulties faced by women in the Japanese imperial household.

Mako's loss of royal status comes from the Imperial House Law, which allows only male succession.

Only male royals have household names, while female imperial family members have only titles and must leave if they marry commoners.

The male-only succession practice leaves only Akishino and his son, Prince Hisahito, in line to succeed Emperor Naruhito. A panel of government-appointed experts is discussing a more stable succession system, but conservatives still reject female succession and allowing women to head the imperial family.

Majority in US concerned about climate: AP-NORC/EPIC poll

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, EMILY SWANSON and NATHAN ELLGREN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden heads to a vital U.N. climate summit at a time when a majority of Americans regard the deteriorating climate as a problem of high importance to them, an increase from just a few years ago.

About 6 out of 10 Americans also believe that the pace of global warming is speeding up, according to a new survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago.

As Biden struggles to pass significant climate legislation at home ahead of next week's U.N. climate summit, the new AP-NORC/EPIC poll also shows that 55% of Americans want Congress to pass a bill to ensure that more of the nation's electricity comes from clean energy and less from climate-damaging coal and natural gas.

Only 16% of Americans oppose such a measure for electricity from cleaner energy. A similar measure initially was one of the most important parts of climate legislation that Biden has before Congress. But Biden's proposal to reward utilities with clean energy sources and penalize those without ran into objections from a coal-state senator, Democrat Joe Manchin of West Virginia, leaving fellow Democrats scrambling to come up with other ways to slash pollution from burning fossil fuels.

For some of the Americans watching, it's an exasperating delay in dealing with an urgent problem.

"If you follow science, the signs are here," said Nancy Reilly, a Democrat in Missouri who's retired after 40 years as a retail manager, and worries for her children as the climate deteriorates. "It's already here. And what was the first thing they start watering down to get this bill through? Climate change."

"It's just maddening," Reilly said. "I understand why, I do — I get the politics of it. I'm sick of the politics of it."

After President Donald Trump pulled the United States out of the Paris climate accord, the Biden administration hoped to help negotiate major emissions cuts globally to slow the rise of temperatures. But it's unclear whether Biden will be able to get any significant climate legislation through Congress before the U.N. summit starts Sunday.

In all, 59% of Americans said the Earth's warming is very or extremely important to them as an issue, up from 49% in 2018. Fifty-four percent of Americans cited scientists' voices as having a large amount of influence on their views about climate change, and nearly as many, 51%, said their views were influenced by recent extreme weather events like hurricanes, deadly heat spells, wildfires and other natural disasters around the world.

Over the last 60 years, the pollution pumped out by gasoline and diesel engines, power plants and other

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sources has changed the climate and warmed the Earth by 1.7 degrees Fahrenheit, making the extremes of weather more extreme.

In east Tennessee's Smoky Mountains, leaf-peeper websites this year are advising fall foliage tourists that leaves are taking days longer than normal to turn from green to fiery orange and red. It's not evidence of climate change as a one-off instance, but typical of the changes Americans are seeing as the Earth heats up.

"Normally you get the four seasons, fall, spring, and winter, and it goes in that way. But lately, it's not been that," said Jeremy Wilson, a 42-year-old who votes independent and works the grounds at a scenic chairlift park that runs people up to the top of the Smoky Mountains. "It's been either way hotter, or way colder."

Seventy-five percent of Americans believe that climate change is happening, while 10% believe that it is not, the poll found. Another 15% are unsure.

Among those who say it is happening, 54% say that it's caused mostly or entirely by human activities compared to just 14% who think — incorrectly, scientists say — that it's caused mainly by natural changes in the environment. Another 32% of Americans believe it's a mix of human and natural factors.

And while Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say climate change is happening, majorities of both parties agree that it is. That breaks down to 89% of Democrats and 57% of Republicans.

The poll also gauged Americans' willingness to pay for the cost of cutting climate-wrecking pollution as well as mitigating its consequences.

Fifty-two percent said they would support a \$1 a month carbon fee on their energy bill to fight climate change, but support dwindles as the fee increases.

"I would say, like 5, 10 dollars, as long as it's really being used for what it should be," said Krystal Chivington, a 46-year-old Republican in Delaware who credits her 17-year-old daughter for reviving her own passion for fighting climate change and pollution.

It's not ordinary consumers who should bear the brunt of paying to stave off the worst scenarios of climate change, said Mark Sembach, a 59-year-old Montana Democrat who works in environmental remediation.

"I think it needs to fall a great deal on responsible corporations that's — and unfortunately ... most corporations aren't responsible," Sembach said. "And I think there needs to be a lot of pushback as to who ultimately pays for that."

The AP-NORC poll of 5,468 adults was conducted Sept. 8-24 using a combined sample of interviews from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population, and interviews from opt-in online panels. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 1.7 percentage points. The AmeriSpeak panel is recruited randomly using address-based sampling methods, and respondents later were interviewed online or by phone.

Ex-South Korean President Roh Tae-woo dies at 88

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Former South Korean President Roh Tae-woo, a major player in a 1979 coup who later became president in a landmark democratic election before ending his tumultuous political career in prison, died on Tuesday. He was 88.

The Seoul National University Hospital said Roh died while being treated for an illness. It gave no further details or his cause of death. Roh, who ruled South Korea as president from 1988-1993, was known to have suffered many health problems including cerebellar atrophy for years.

Roh was a key participant in the December 1979 military coup that made his army friend and coup leader Chun Doo-hwan president after their mentor, dictator Park Chung-hee, was assassinated following 18 years of rule.

Roh led his army division into Seoul and joined other military leaders for operations to seize the capital. The coup — and a subsequent crackdown by the Chun-controlled military on pro-democracy protesters

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in the southern city of Gwangju in 1980 — are two of the darkest chapters in South Korea's turbulent modern history. About 200 people were killed in the military-led crackdown in Gwangju, according to government records.

Roh was Chun's hand-picked successor, which would have assured him the presidency in an easy indirect election. But a massive pro-democracy uprising in 1987 forced Roh and Chun to accept a direct presidential election that was regarded as the start of South Korea's transition to democracy.

Despite his military background, Roh built a moderate and genial image during the campaign, calling himself an "average person." He eventually won the hotly contested election in December 1987, largely thanks to a split in liberal votes between opposition candidates Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung, who both later became presidents.

During his five-year term, Roh aggressively pursued ties with communist nations under his "Northward Diplomacy" as communism fell in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union dissolved.

South Korea was then deeply anti-communist because of its rivalry with North Korea, but under Roh it opened diplomatic relations with a communist nation for the first time — Hungary in 1989, the year when the Berlin Wall fell and communism crumbled across Eastern Europe.

Roh's government established relations with the Soviet Union in 1990 and with China in 1992. Relations with North Korea improved under Roh, with the two sides holding their first-ever prime ministers' talks, adopting a landmark joint statement on denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and joining the United Nations at the same time.

Earlier, Roh oversaw the hosting of the 1988 Summer Games in Seoul, the final Olympics of the Cold War era that showed how South Korea had rebuilt itself from the ashes of the 1950-53 Korean War. North Korea boycotted the 1988 games.

Ties between the two Koreas have since suffered ups and downs. Despite numerous denuclearization pledges — including one made during Roh's presidency — North Korea still maintains its nuclear weapons program which it views as a means of survival.

On domestic politics, Roh was seen by many as lacking charismatic and aggressive leadership. His nickname, "Mul (Water) Tae-woo," implied his administration had no color and no taste. He still brought more openness by allowing more political criticism, in contrast with his authoritarian predecessors, Park and Chun. The governments led by Park and Chun often used security laws to suppress political opponents and restrict speech under the pretext of guarding against civil disorder and North Korean threats.

After his successor, Kim Young-sam, investigated the coup and military-led crackdown, Roh was arrested, convicted of mutiny, treason and corruption and received a 22-year and six-month prison term. Chun was sentenced to death.

The Supreme Court reduced those sentences to life imprisonment for Chun and 17 years for Roh. After spending about two years in prison, both Roh and Chun were released in late 1997 under a special pardon requested by then President-elect Kim Dae-jung, who sought national reconciliation amid an Asian financial crisis.

Roh had stayed mostly out of the public eye following his release from prison, refraining from political activities and speeches. In recent years, he suffered prostate cancer, asthma, cerebellar atrophy and other health problems.

Last April, his daughter, Roh So-young, wrote on Facebook that her father had been bed-bound over the past 10 years without being able to speak or move his body. She said her father sometimes made eye gestures for communications but looked to "have a tearful face" when he failed to express his feelings and thoughts properly.

Roh's son, Roh Jae-heon, repeatedly offered an apology over the 1980 crackdowns and visited a Gwangju cemetery to pay respects to the victims buried there on behalf of his bed-ridden father.

But unlike Roh's family, Chun, who reportedly suffers Alzheimer's disease and a blood cancer, has yet to apologize over the crackdowns.

Last August, Chun appeared at a Gwangju court to defend himself against charges that he defamed a now-deceased Catholic priest who had testified to seeing Chun's troops shooting at protesters from

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helicopters in Gwangju. Chun left the court after 20 minutes, complaining of breathing problems. In his memoir, Chun called the priest "a shameless liar."

Both Roh and Chun were earlier ordered by a court to pay back hundreds of millions of dollars they collected illegally. Roh has paid back his shares but Chun hasn't done so, according to South Korean media reports.

Roh is survived by his wife and their two children.

Associated Press writer Kim Tong-hyung and former AP writer Sam Kim contributed to this report.

In Louisiana, a father, a son and a culture of police abuse

By JIM MUSTIAN and JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

MONROE, La. (AP) — Growing up in the piney backwoods of northern Louisiana, where yards were dotted with crosses and the occasional Confederate flag, Jacob Brown was raised on hunting, fishing and dreams of becoming a state trooper.

But within weeks of arriving at the Louisiana State Police training academy in Baton Rouge, instructors pegged Brown as trouble. One wrote that he was an arrogant, chronic rule breaker with "toxic" character traits that should disqualify him from ever joining the state's elite law enforcement agency.

Fortunately for Brown, the state police was known as a place where who you knew often trumped what you did, and where most introductory chats eventually got around to a simple question: Who's your daddy?

Jacob Brown is the son of Bob Brown, then part of the state police's top brass who would rise to second in command despite being reprimanded years earlier for calling Black colleagues the n-word and hanging a Confederate flag in his office. And the son would not only become a "legacy hire" but prove his instructors prophetic by becoming one of the most violent troopers in the state, reserving most of his punches, flashlight strikes and kicks for the Black drivers he pulled over along the soybean and cotton fields near where he grew up.

When friends and colleagues would ask Bob Brown how his first-born was getting along as a trooper, he'd respond with a seemingly innocuous boast:

"He's knocking heads."

The Browns' story is woven throughout the recent history of the Louisiana State Police and represents what dozens of current and former troopers have described to The Associated Press as a culture of impunity, nepotism and in some cases outright racism.

It illustrates the dynamics that have made the agency the focus of a sprawling federal investigation that initially examined the deadly 2019 arrest of Black motorist Ronald Greene and has since expanded to include a string of other cases -- several involving Jacob Brown -- in which troopers are accused of beatings and cover-ups, even when they are caught on video.

"If you're a part of the good ol' boy system, there's no wrong you can do," said Carl Cavalier, a Black state trooper who was once decorated for valor but recently fired in part for criticizing the agency's handling of brutality cases.

It's an us-versus-them culture, they say, in which many troopers and higher-ups are more interested in covering for each other than living up to the agency's image of honor, duty, courage and "doing the right thing."

It's a culture in which troopers who gather for backyard barbecues and church on Sundays feel so insulated from scrutiny that they can banter about their brutality on official channels, including texting each other photos of a battered and bloodied suspect with the quip "he shouldn't have resisted."

It's a culture in which 67% of troopers' uses of force in recent years targeted Black people — double the percentage of the state's Black population — and in which troopers kept their badges after sending overtly racist emails with such headings as "Proud to be White."

And it's a culture in which state police academy instructors faced with a widespread cheating scandal sought to dismiss an entire recent class of cadets -- including the "legacies" of several high-ranking police

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officials -- yet nearly all were allowed to graduate to jobs on the force.

"There's a corruption that allows the reprobates in state police to just sort of do as they damn well please," said W. Lloyd Grafton, a use-of-force expert who is consulting on the Greene family's civil case and served on the Louisiana State Police Commission. "Nobody holds them accountable."

'WE'VE GOT TO FACE THIS HEAD ON'

A potential reckoning in the Louisiana State Police came in the wake of Greene's death on a rural road-side near Monroe on May 10, 2019 -- a fatality troopers initially blamed on a car crash at the end of a high-speed chase.

State police later acknowledged Greene was involved in a "struggle" with troopers but officials from Gov. John Bel Edwards on down refused for more than two years to publicly release the body camera video. When it was eventually published by the AP this spring, the footage showed white troopers swarming Greene's car, stunning, punching and dragging him by his ankle shackles, even as he appeared to surrender, wailing, "I'm your brother! I'm scared, I'm scared!"

Fallout brought federal scrutiny not just to the troopers but to whether top brass obstructed justice to protect them, according to documents and people familiar with the case. Investigators have focused on a meeting that the elder Brown attended in which state police commanders pressured their own detectives to hold off on arresting a trooper seen on body-camera video striking Greene in the head and later boasting, "I beat the ever-living f--- out of him."

Greene's death was among at least a dozen cases in the last decade identified by the AP in which state troopers or their bosses ignored or concealed evidence of beatings, deflected blame and impeded efforts to root out misconduct.

Many of those cases involve the state police's Monroe-based Troop F, which has become notorious for its treatment of Black motorists and counted Jacob Brown among its troopers. In one long-suppressed video, he can be seen pummeling a Black motorist with a flashlight, in another he slams a Black motorist into a police cruiser, and in yet another Brown and other troopers beat a Black man and hoist him to his feet by his dreadlocks. That was followed by troopers exchanging "lol"-peppered text messages bragging that the "whoopin" would give the man "nightmares for a long time."

"They're not the people you think they are," said John Winzer, Greene's nephew, who shudders every time he sees a state trooper on the highway. "It's no different than organized crime. They hang together. They eat together and ride at night together. And s--- like this happens."

Even the agency's superintendent acknowledged that the state police have lost the public's trust, due in part to an "old-fashioned culture" in Louisiana's northern parishes in which some troopers are conditioned to punish anyone who runs from them or disrespects the badge.

"It's uncomfortable to hear, 'You guys are bullies.' It's uncomfortable to hear, 'We thought y'all were better than this,'" Col. Lamar Davis, a veteran Black trooper brought in a year ago as a reformer, told AP in an interview.

"We've got to face this head on," he said. "We have to change quite a few things in our agency."

Davis has reorganized his staff, overhauled use-of-force policies and mandated all troopers attend training on intrinsic bias. But he acknowledged it may not be enough to stave off growing calls for a U.S. Justice Department "pattern and practice" probe of potential racial profiling by a nearly 1,000-trooper force that's more than three-quarters white men.

One of Davis' most uncomfortable reform duties came just weeks into his tenure when he called Bob Brown, a man he once worked for, to tell him "out of respect" that he had ordered the arrest of his son Jacob and three other troopers on state charges in the separate beatings of three Black men.

"It wasn't pleasant," Davis said, declining to detail the conversation.

'A SOUVENIR'

Bob Brown grew up in Lake Providence, a farming town on the Louisiana side of the Mississippi River.

By the 1990s, he was raising his children in a farmhouse about 20 miles outside Monroe. He began working for the Monroe police before joining the state police as a trooper, investigating car crashes on the same rural roads his son would later patrol.

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Former colleagues described him as a loyal friend and skilled investigator who brought country canny to his policing. When a young trooper got his cruiser stuck in the mud, Brown towed him out with his tractor. He was well connected and understood the politics of state police, serving as a sergeant over narcotics before being promoted to a major overseeing statewide criminal investigations.

The elder Brown's file with the State Police Commission, which acts as a civil service board, makes no mention of any accusations of excessive force. State police so far have not released his full personnel file.

"He was good at what he did but he wasn't a glory hound," said Lee Harrell, the former sheriff of Richland Parish who worked alongside the elder Brown at state police. "He wouldn't talk to the media about his biggest drug bust."

But in 2000, just months before the state police would name their first Black superintendent, Brown's choice of words drew a formal complaint from a coalition of Black troopers.

Brown was overheard in the office commiserating with colleagues over the results of a state police promotional exam. Some troopers were mad about how they'd scored and felt the test was flawed.

"I don't understand how those 'n-----s' could pass this test," Brown was quoted as saying, according to state police disciplinary records. "They're not smarter than us."

When questioned by internal affairs investigators, Brown said that while he didn't recall making the remark, it was possible because the slur remained a part of his vocabulary.

The same complaint noted Brown hung a Confederate flag behind his office door, though it was not clear how long it had been there before it drew scrutiny. State police in northern Louisiana were sometimes called upon to remove Confederate flags that people would drape over highway overpasses, and Harrell said Brown held on to one of them "as a souvenir."

The former sheriff, who is white, insisted that no one working in the state police's Monroe office, including himself, objected to the flag's placement.

"It's history," Harrell said, gesturing as he spoke to a Confederate battle flag flapping in his neighbor's yard.

Brown escaped with a reprimand, and many of his white colleagues said they were unaware of the incident, even after then-Col. Kevin Reeves, a close family friend, promoted him to second in command of the state police in 2020, citing his "phenomenal leadership at every level through the ranks."

But the story was well known among Black troopers, who passed it on to new Black recruits as part of state police lore.

"Everyone was of the same accord that he was racist and open and out about it," Cavalier said.

Brown, who has since retired, refused repeated interview requests, telling an AP reporter on one occasion that "a lot has been reported that is wrong."

"I gave 30 years to this state," the now 60-year-old Brown said before hanging up.

'TOXIC EMPLOYEE'

A decade after the Confederate flag in Brown's office came down, his son followed him into law enforcement.

Jacob Brown grew up with three siblings in Monroe, playing baseball and basketball at a Catholic school. He had perfect attendance for 12 years and volunteered at vacation Bible school. He showed an early interest in enforcing rules, working as an umpire, and loved hunting so much he got a tattoo of 10 flying ducks on his right shoulder.

"My father taught me at a very young age how to be a successful hunter," he once wrote to a prospective employer. "He has taught me lessons that I wish to pass on one day."

After high school, he spent two years at community colleges but didn't graduate and worked for a time as a roofer. In 2010, he was hired by the Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office, where he spent two years in corrections before becoming a patrol deputy.

Brown applied to the state police in 2014, writing that he aspired to be a trooper because the agency was the most highly respected in the state and "I like helping others and doing the right thing."

At the training academy in Baton Rouge, however, Brown quickly demonstrated the type of trooper he

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would become.

Sergeants scouring the military-style barracks for banned items, such as cellphones, asked Brown if he had any contraband and he said no, according to an instructor's memo recounting the incident. Then, after a sergeant pulled two bags of chewing tobacco from the ceiling tiles near his bunk, Brown lied again, claiming he had not shared any of it with his classmates.

Sgt. Len Marie, who oversaw the cadet class, said the issue wasn't about banned tobacco so much as it was about integrity. And Marie was certain Brown had none.

"He is willing to cut corners and express himself in a disrespectful and deceptive manner," Marie wrote in seeking to have Brown kicked out. "These are traits of a toxic employee that should not be allowed to continue with his training."

"These character flaws are a strong indication of the type of trooper Cadet Brown will ultimately become," he added.

Marie, who declined to comment, was chastised by higher ups in state police for writing the memo, according to several people who worked with him. Nothing ever came of his request to kick Brown out.

"No one from up above ever said, 'We're not terminating him because he's related to someone,' but that's certainly what you were led to believe," said David Ryerson, a retired lieutenant who worked closely with Marie at the academy. "It's all about who you know."

Other cadets caught breaking the rules were treated far more harshly, said Cavalier, who went through the same class with Brown and described him as "untouchable."

"A select few cadets in the academy carried themselves with a certain swagger, a vibe that said they were sure they'd make it through," Cavalier said. "They didn't have any doubts."

Before resigning last year, Brown racked up 23 uses of force dating to 2015 -- 19 on Black people -- tying him for the most recorded by a state trooper in that period.

With a shaved head and often clad in a leather jacket, Brown cut an imposing figure for his 5-foot-10 stature, and his disciplinary file shows he was repeatedly counseled for unprofessional conduct and profanity as he enforced what he once described as the state police's "code of righteousness."

"Why the f--- are you going so god--- fast," he asked one motorist traveling 92 mph in a 55-mph zone.

In May 2019, Brown responded to a traffic stop in Monroe and struck Black motorist Aaron Larry Bowman 18 times with a flashlight, leaving him with a broken jaw, three broken ribs, a broken wrist and a gash to the head. Brown then mislabeled his body camera footage in what investigators concluded was "an intentional attempt to hide the video."

When that video eventually was obtained and published by AP earlier this year, it showed Bowman on the ground pleading for mercy and repeatedly shouting between blows, "I'm not resisting!"

Brown, 31, pleaded not guilty this month to a federal civil rights charge in Bowman's beating and has not responded to repeated requests for comment. Said his attorney Scott Wolleson, "We will reserve our comments for the courtroom."

'THEY'RE OUT THERE WORKING'

Favoritism toward the family members of top brass is so entrenched in the Louisiana State Police ethos that it is a part of state law. In 2017, the Legislature carved out an exception to Louisiana's nepotism ban to allow a trooper to remain on the force after his father becomes superintendent.

It was passed specifically for then-Superintendent Kevin Reeves and his son, Kaleb, who would go on to be suspended for 4 ½ months without pay this year for causing a rear-end crash that killed two sisters, ages 18 and 11. Investigators determined Reeves had been driving recklessly, including going 22 mph over the speed limit, yet he was not prosecuted.

Some at the state police training academy say another glaring example came with the class of 2019, when instructors sought to dismiss more than 50 cadets -- including at least five with high-ranking relatives in the agency -- after a search of laptops turned up signs of possible cheating that included widely shared answer keys and copies of exams on law, use of force and ethics.

Documents obtained by AP and interviews with officials showed some of the material dated to 2014, suggesting to instructors that cadets may have been cheating for years.

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But in a meeting with the instructors, Kevin Reeves refused to kick out the whole class. "That's not going to happen," he told them, according to several people who were there. "I'd rather take a sniper rifle approach than use the shotgun method."

State police internal affairs issued a report three months later, just before graduation, that rejected the idea that the cheating was widespread.

Even though records show two cadets were fired for cheating and another who was under scrutiny quit, investigators concluded that the tests and answers cadets obtained from classmates, troopers and even a state judge were merely "study materials."

Mark Richards, a retired captain who oversaw the training academy in 2019, said the cheating "was covered up" and the agency never adequately examined whether years of troopers skated through the academy with pilfered test questions.

"There's a laundry list probably of cadets in the last six classes that got by, got through by cheating," Richards said. "And they're out there working."

State police spokesman Capt. Nick Manale disputed that characterization, saying there was no indication the cheating was widespread and that the investigations were conducted "in accordance with policy and procedures."

'FAIL POINTS'

Davis, the current head of the state police, says the actions of a few bad troopers shouldn't overshadow the good work done by the majority of his agency every day. But he acknowledged to the AP that he still doesn't have a full grasp of how pervasive excessive force may be among his officers.

That's in part because supervisors have for years failed to review thousands of hours of body camera footage, including that of Brown and other troopers with troubling records. It's one of the "fail points" Davis listed among the "overwhelming" array of problems he confronted when he took over last year.

Asked whether he is confident there isn't another Ronald Greene case out there that state police brass -- and the public -- don't yet know about, Davis didn't hesitate.

"No, I'm not," he said. "We've not looked at every video."

Video Journalist Allen G. Breed contributed to this report.

The judge leading Beirut blast probe: Discreet and defiant

By SARAH EL DEEB and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — For eight months, he has quietly investigated one of the world's worst non-nuclear explosions with only four assistants — and a lot of powerful detractors trying to block him.

In that time, Judge Tarek Bitar has become a household name in Lebanon and a staple on every news bulletin.

For many Lebanese, Bitar's investigation of last year's massive Beirut port explosion is their only hope for truth and accountability in a country that craves both. Billboards in Beirut showing a fist holding a gavel read: "Only Tarek can take our revenge," a play on Arabic words using the judge's last name.

But to the country's entrenched political class, the enigmatic 47-year-old has turned into a nightmare. Politicians have united as they rarely do to remove him from his post, apparently deeming him a threat much greater than the country's collapsing economy, the state's empty coffers and burgeoning unemployment, poverty and public anger.

Bitar has not shied away from summoning a dozen senior former and current government officials, some of them on charges of criminal negligence and homicide with probable intent. He issued arrest warrants for two former ministers when they refused to appear before him.

More than 215 people died in the Aug. 4, 2020 port explosion, caused by the detonation of hundreds of tons of ammonium nitrate stored in a warehouse for years, apparently with the knowledge of senior politicians and security officials who did nothing about it. The explosion also injured 6,000 people and destroyed parts of the city.

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More than a year after the government launched a judicial investigation, nearly everything else remains unknown - from who ordered the shipment to why officials ignored repeated warnings of the danger.

But the low-profile Bitar — there are only a few public pictures of him — has earned the trust of many Lebanese, including relatives of the victims.

“We have big faith, up to 90%, that Judge Bitar will lead us to justice,” said George Bezdjian, whose daughter Jessica, a nurse, was killed in the explosion.

Bezdjian and others who have met Bitar describe a soft-spoken, calm and courageous man who has stayed clear of political affiliations or nepotism and displayed professionalism and doggedness.

On a recent day there was no electricity in the judge’s office. In the humid room, Bitar and two assistants shared one computer monitor, a legal expert familiar with the case said.

“It is quite shocking when you walk into his office and there is one computer screen and two people helping him ... as he is trying to solve the biggest crime in Lebanon’s modern history,” the legal expert said, speaking on condition of anonymity to divulge details from the private meeting.

The second judge to lead the case, Bitar was appointed in February. His work has been challenged every step of the way.

At first, suspected officials took cover behind parliamentary or professional immunity, declining to appear before him. They accused him of singling out some officials and not others, in an apparent attempt to stoke sectarian grudges in a country divided along sectarian lines. Then they sued him and tried to discredit him, saying he showed bias and was allied with foreign powers.

Earlier this month, the call to remove him finally came — from Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, arguably the country’s most powerful man.

An anti-Bitar protest by supporters of Hezbollah and the allied Shiite group Amal, led by Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, escalated into the worst violence the capital has seen in years. Seven people were killed and accusations followed that Bitar was a threat to social peace.

“The investigative judge Bitar has become a real problem in Lebanon,” Hezbollah deputy leader Naim Kassim said Saturday. “Because of him we nearly had a major strife,” he said, in the clearest attempt yet to tie Bitar to civil unrest.

Hatem Madi, a veteran judge and prosecutor, said he never before witnessed such a standoff between the political class and the judiciary.

The new government of Prime Minister Najib Mikati is already in a deadlock over how to respond to calls for removal of Bitar.

Meanwhile, Bitar has not backed down, reissuing his summonses to senior officials. He now moves around with guards.

The judge has been open to visitors and questions about the legal process, but he is careful not to divulge his next moves, the legal expert said.

Born in 1974 to a secular Catholic family from northern Lebanon, Bitar studied law at the Lebanese University in Beirut and later trained at a judicial academy to graduate as a judge. He was appointed a public attorney in northern Lebanon in 2012, a post he retained until 2017, when he was appointed head of the Beirut Criminal Court.

There, he issued several sentences in cases that shook Lebanon, such as the shooting at close range of a young man following a traffic accident. He also fined private hospital doctors a hefty sum for a case of malpractice that cost a young girl her four limbs.

Bitar was first approached by the former justice minister to take the post soon after the port explosion. Realizing the size of the challenge, Bitar told people he met that he asked for a bigger team of assistants for the probe. He also requested that the immunity of lawmakers be lifted so he could question them.

No one replied to his requests, which would have required legal amendments, the legal expert said.

The same minister approached Bitar again in February after his predecessor was removed by a court order following legal challenges from politicians. He agreed after realizing he was the only candidate.

Relatives of victims of the port blast described Bitar as deeply sympathetic to their quest for justice. One

man said the judge told him he approached the case as if his own daughter had been killed.

Bezdjian said Bitar told the families that he feels a responsibility because of those killed, wounded and displaced and because "half of my capital was destroyed."

Stars stunned by 'mismanaged set' in fatal prop-gun shooting

By RYAN PEARSON and GILLIAN FLACCUS Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — As questions linger about safety protocols on the movie set where Alec Baldwin killed a cinematographer with a prop gun he'd been told was safe, Hollywood professionals say they're baffled by the circumstances and production crews have quickly stepped up safety measures.

Jeffrey Wright, who has worked on projects including the James Bond franchise and the upcoming movie "The Batman," was acting with a weapon on the set of "Westworld" when news broke of the shooting Thursday at a New Mexico ranch. "We were all pretty shocked. And it informed what we did from that moment on," he said in an interview Sunday at the Newport Beach Film Festival.

"I don't recall ever being handed a weapon that was not cleared in front of me — meaning chamber open, barrel shown to me, light flashed inside the barrel to make sure that it's cleared," Wright said. "Clearly, that was a mismanaged set."

The shooting on the set of the film "Rust" killed 42-year-old Halyna Hutchins and wounded director Joel Souza, who was standing behind her.

The gun Baldwin used was one of three that a firearms specialist, or "armorer," had set on a cart outside the building where a scene was being rehearsed, according to court records. Assistant director Dave Halls grabbed a gun off a cart and handed it to Baldwin, indicating that the weapon was safe by yelling "cold gun," court papers say. But it was loaded with live rounds, according to the records.

Baldwin, 63, who is known for his roles in "30 Rock" and "The Hunt for Red October" and his impression of former President Donald Trump on "Saturday Night Live," has described the killing as a "tragic accident."

"The Umbrella Academy" actor Justin Min, also at the Newport festival, said "it's been a very somber time" in recent days on set as he's been filming the indie thriller "Detained."

"After that — I mean we have obviously already been careful, but it's just another level of precaution," Min said.

A prop maker and licensed pyrotechnician who worked with Halls, the assistant director, on another production said she had raised safety concerns about him in the past.

Maggie Goll said in a statement that she filed an internal complaint with the executive producers of Hulu's "Into the Dark" series in 2019 over concerns about Halls' behavior on set. Goll said in a phone interview Sunday that Halls disregarded safety protocols for weapons and pyrotechnics and tried to continue filming after the supervising pyrotechnician lost consciousness on set.

Halls has not returned phone calls and email messages seeking comment. Rust Movie Productions has not answered repeated emails seeking comment.

The fatal shooting and previous experiences point to larger safety issues that need to be addressed, Goll said, adding that crew member safety and wellbeing are top issues in ongoing contract negotiations between a union that represents film and TV workers and a major producers' group.

"This situation is not about Dave Halls. ... It's in no way one person's fault," she said. "It's a bigger conversation about safety on set and what we are trying to achieve with that culture."

A vigil for Hutchins was held Sunday in Southern California, where attendees exchanged tearful hugs and speakers echoed calls for heightened safety standards.

Actor Rosanna Arquette joined many in Hollywood in calling for a move away from using real weapons, whether armed with blanks or bullets.

"I hope this wakes people up. Because there should be no live round anything ever on a movie. We have enough CGI, we have enough — it's absurd," she said. "All of us are shaken to the core in the industry about this."

Actor Ray Liotta agreed with Wright that the checks on firearms are usually extensive.

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"They always — that I know of — they check it so you can see," Liotta said. "They give it to the person you're pointing the gun at, they do it to the producer, they show whoever is there that it doesn't work."

Baldwin, who is a producer on "Rust," met with Hutchins' husband and 9-year-old son Saturday at a hotel in Santa Fe where the actor had been staying during filming. Baldwin and Hutchins' husband can be seen embracing in a photo published by the New York Post.

Flaccus reported from Portland, Oregon. Michelle Eaton in Newport Beach, California, contributed to this report.

Saints capitalize on Seahawks' mistakes for 13-10 win

By TIM BOOTH AP Sports Writer

SEATTLE (AP) — Alvin Kamara and Jameis Winston were the happy beneficiaries of the Seattle Seahawks' many mistakes.

Then it was rookie Brian Johnson's turn to make sure the New Orleans Saints got the win they needed to keep pace in the NFC South.

"In a game like this where things are close, things get a little a little ugly towards the end, it builds confidence to be able to come into a game like this and close it out the way we did," Saints defensive end Cameron Jordan said.

Johnson kicked a 33-yard field goal with 1:56 remaining in his NFL debut, and New Orleans outlasted Seattle 13-10 on Monday night.

Kamara carried the load for New Orleans and Winston made a handful of plays when needed, but the Saints (4-2) escaped Seattle thanks largely to a series of blunders by the home team, which is sorely missing injured quarterback Russell Wilson.

Two of the Seahawks' biggest mistakes came on New Orleans' deciding drive when Seattle was flagged for roughing the passer and jumping offside on a long field-goal attempt. Both penalties gave New Orleans first downs, and Johnson's field goal coming out of the 2-minute warning put the Saints ahead.

Johnson, a rookie from Virginia Tech, made an extra point and both field-goal tries, connecting from 21 yards in the first half.

"It was tough trying to see what the wind was doing because it was changing constantly throughout pregame and the game itself," Johnson said. "So just stick with my plan that I had coming into it and really focusing on just hitting my ball and hitting good contact that will cut through the wind."

Geno Smith made his second start at QB for Seattle (2-5) since Wilson suffered a serious finger injury in a loss to the Rams. The backup hit DK Metcalf for an 84-yard touchdown in the first quarter but went nowhere when the Seahawks had a final chance to tie or win.

Smith was sacked on consecutive plays by Malcolm Jenkins and Demario Davis. On fourth-and-28, Smith was pressured again and his throw to Metcalf fell incomplete.

Smith went 12 of 22 for 167 yards — half coming on the TD toss to Metcalf — and was sacked five times as Davis, Cameron Jordan and others made his night uncomfortable.

Seattle has lost three straight for the first time since 2011 and fell to 0-3 at home for the first time since 1992. Although both defeats with Smith under center have been by three points, the Seahawks aren't the same without Wilson, who's out until at least mid-November.

"I've been here a long time and if we didn't have Russell, I probably wouldn't have been here a long time because of all the magic he has created over the years," coach Pete Carroll said.

Kamara finished with 10 catches for 128 yards and a 13-yard TD reception late in the first half. It was his fifth career regular-season game with double-digit receptions. He rushed for 51 yards.

Winston was 19 of 35 for 222 yards and added 43 yards rushing. He also made enough plays — thanks to Seattle penalties — to get the Saints in range for the winning field goal.

Seattle appeared to get a stop, but Marquise Blair was called for roughing the passer on a third-down sack after hitting Winston with the crown of his helmet. Kamara then sprinted past a blitz for 12 yards on

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third-and-10 and the Saints were in field-goal range.

Al Woods jumped offside as Johnson lined up for a 43-yard attempt, allowing New Orleans to burn another 90 seconds off the clock before Johnson made the shorter try.

"We got to get right," Seattle linebacker Bobby Wagner said. "We've got to really fix our mistakes, play smarter, make less penalties."

Seattle's Jason Myers missed a pair of field goal attempts from 44 and 53 yards — the second into the open end of the stadium after Smith took another costly sack. Myers made a 50-yarder.

Kamara had 21 touches on New Orleans' 39 offensive plays in the first half. He was mostly ineffective on the ground, but Seattle couldn't slow him down in the pass game. He already had 108 yards receiving by halftime.

Four of his receptions came on the final drive of the half when his 31-yard catch-and-run out of the backfield set up his 13-yard TD catch and a 10-7 halftime lead.

"Every game has a life of its own, so that was just the flavor of this week, ended up getting a lot of touches," Kamara said.

RING OF HONOR

Former Seahawks QB Matt Hasselbeck was inducted into the team's Ring of Honor at halftime. Hasselbeck, who played for Seattle from 2001-10, held most of the team's passing records until Wilson's arrival and led the Seahawks to their first Super Bowl appearance.

INJURIES

New Orleans starting left guard Andrus Peat injured his shoulder in the first half. He briefly returned but left again late in the second quarter. ... Blair suffered a serious patellar tendon injury to his right knee late in the fourth quarter. He had major surgery on the knee early in the 2020 season.

UP NEXT

Saints: Host Tampa Bay on Sunday.

Seahawks: Host Jacksonville on Sunday.

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

Billionaire tax hits critics as Biden pushes for budget deal

By LISA MASCARO, DARLENE SUPERVILLE and ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Democrats' idea for a new billionaires' tax to help pay for President Joe Biden's social services and climate change plan quickly ran into criticism as too cumbersome with some lawmakers preferring the original plan of simply raising the top tax rates on corporations and the wealthy.

Biden said Monday he's hopeful the talks with Congress can wrap up overall agreement on the package this week. It's tallying at least \$1.75 trillion, and could still be more. Biden said it would be "very, very positive to get it done" before he departs for two overseas global summits.

"That's my hope," the president said before leaving his home state of Delaware for a trip to New Jersey to highlight the child care proposals in the package and a related infrastructure measure. "With the grace of God and the goodwill of the neighbors."

Resolving the revenue side is key as the Democrats scale back what had been a \$3.5 trillion plan, insisting all the new spending will be fully paid for and not pile onto the debt. Biden vows any new taxes would hit only the wealthy, those earning more than \$400,000 a year, or \$450,000 for couples.

The White House had to rethink its tax strategy after one key Democrat, Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., objected to her party's initial proposal to raise tax rates on wealthy Americans by undoing the Trump-era tax cuts on those earning beyond \$400,000. Sinema also opposed lifting the 21% corporate tax rate. With a 50-50 Senate, Biden has no votes to spare in his party.

Instead, to win over Sinema and others, the White House has been floating a new idea of taxing the assets of billionaires and another that would require corporations to pay a 15% minimum tax, regardless of if they show any profits. Those both appear to be gaining traction with another pivotal Democrat, Sen.

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Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., who told reporters he supported new ways to ensure the wealthy to pay their "fair share."

Democrats on the Senate Finance Committee, led by Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon, are prepared to roll out the tax revenue plan in a matter of days. It is likely to include other revenue-raising tax measures, including a plan to beef up the IRS to go after tax scofflaws.

"Here's the heart of it: Americans read over the last few months that billionaires were paying little or no taxes for years on end," Wyden said at the Capitol.

The billionaires' tax is being modeled on a 2019 bill from Wyden to treat assets as income. Another idea, up to a 3% ultra-rich surtax, has been proposed by Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass.

Under Wyden's emerging plan, the billionaires' tax would hit the wealthiest of Americans, fewer than 1,000 people. It would require those with assets of more than \$1 billion, or three-years consecutive income of \$100 million, to pay taxes on the gains of stocks and other tradeable assets, rather than waiting until holdings are sold.

A similar billionaire's tax would be applied to non-tradeable assets, including real estate, but it would be deferred with the tax not assessed until the asset was sold.

Overall, the billionaires' tax rate has not been set, but it is expected to be at least the 20% capital gains rate. Democrats have said it could raise \$200 billion in revenue that could help fund Biden's package over 10 years.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell called it a "hare-brained scheme" and warned of revenue drying up during downturns. Some Republicans indicated such a tax plan could be challenged in court.

But key fellow Democrats are also raising concerns, saying the idea of simply undoing the 2017 tax cuts by hiking top rates was more straightforward and transparent.

Under the House's bill from the Ways and Means Committee, the top individual income tax rate would rise from 37% to 39.6%, on those earning more than \$400,000, or \$450,000 for couples. The corporate rate would increase from 21% to 26.5%. The bill also proposed a 3% surtax on wealthier Americans with adjusted income beyond \$5 million a year.

The panel's chairman, Rep. Richard Neal, D-Mass., said he told Wyden in a discussion Monday that the implementation of the senator's proposed billionaire's plan is "a bit more challenging."

Neal suggested that the House's proposal was off the table despite Sinema's objections. In fact, he said, "our plan looks better every day."

Once Democrats agree to the tax proposals, they can assess how much is funding available for Biden's overall package to expand health care, child care and other climate change programs.

Democrats were hoping Biden could cite major accomplishments to world leaders later this week. They are also facing an Oct. 31 deadline to pass a related \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure package of roads, broadband and other public works before routine federal transportation funds expire.

"We need to get this done," Biden said in remarks at a New Jersey transit center.

After months of start-and-stop negotiations, Biden's overall package is now being eyed as at least \$1.75 trillion. But it could still climb considerably higher, according to a second person who insisted on anonymity to discuss the private talks.

Biden huddled with the conservative West Virginia Democrat Manchin and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer at the president's Delaware home on Sunday as they work on resolving the disputes between centrists and progressives that have stalled the bill.

Disputes remain over far-reaching investments, including plans to expand Medicare coverage with dental, vision and hearing aid benefits for seniors; child care assistance; free pre-kindergarten; and a new program of four-weeks paid family leave.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said expected an agreement by week's end, paving the way for a House vote on the \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill. The Senate had approved that over the summer, but the measure stalled during deliberations on the broader Biden bill.

But Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus whose support

will be crucial for both bills, said lawmakers want more than just a framework for Biden's plan before they give their votes for the smaller infrastructure package.

"We want the whole bill," Jayapal told The Associated Press. "We want to vote on both bills at the same time."

Associated Press writers Farnoush Amiri, Hope Yen and Colleen Long contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show Rep. Richard Neal is from Massachusetts, not New Jersey.

Hong Kong to tighten COVID-19 rules, seeks to open to China

By ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong will tighten COVID-19 restrictions despite a lack of local outbreaks to better align with China's policies and increase chances of quarantine-free travel between the territory and mainland, leader Carrie Lam said Tuesday.

It will step up contact tracing, such as requiring the use of its LeaveHomeSafe app in government premises to record the coming and going of visitors. It will also tighten quarantine rules to exempt only emergency workers or those in essential industries such as logistics. Currently, those exempt from quarantine include airline crew, banking and insurance executives, directors of public companies, as well as crew members on cargo and passenger ships, among others.

Hong Kong has not had a major local outbreak since the beginning of the year, with virtually no local transmission in recent months. But it is largely closed to international travel, and travelers from countries deemed high-risk such as the U.S. must serve a 21-day quarantine.

Authorities say resuming quarantine-free travel with the mainland is the top priority, compared to re-opening travel internationally.

Lam said tightening restrictions to be "more in line with mainland practices" is necessary to give Chinese authorities confidence to resume quarantine-free cross-boundary travel.

"If Hong Kong were to loosen the border controls for people arriving from overseas or adopt what other countries have done ... to live with the COVID-19 virus, then the chances of resuming travel with the mainland will be reduced," she said at a weekly news conference where she wore a brace after recently breaking her arm.

She dismissed concerns that Hong Kong's restrictions will make it less attractive as an international business hub. "Hong Kong's primary advantage lies in being the gateway to the mainland of China," she said.

The mainland government has maintained a zero-tolerance policy toward the pandemic, using lockdowns, quarantines and compulsory testing to stamp out COVID-19 outbreaks quickly.

EXPLAINER: What's a 'wealth tax' and how would it work?

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

To help pay for his big economic and social agenda, President Joe Biden is looking to go where the big money is: billionaires.

Biden never endorsed an outright "wealth tax" when campaigning last year. But his more conventional proposed rate hikes on the income of large corporations and the wealthiest Americans have hit a roadblock.

That leaves a special tax on the assets, not the income, of billionaires being proposed by a Senate Democrat as a possible vehicle to help pay for child care, universal pre-kindergarten, child tax credits, family leave and environmental initiatives.

Biden has vowed that his programs will not add a penny to the deficit, which means selling to Congress and voters a tax on the wealthiest .0005% of Americans. Some details on the proposed billionaires tax:

HOW WOULD IT WORK?

Essentially, billionaires earn the bulk of their money off their wealth. This might be from the stock market. It could include, once sold, beachfront mansions or the ownership of rare art and antiquities. A triceratops

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skeleton.

This new tax would apply solely to people with at least \$1 billion in assets or \$100 million in income for three straight years. These standards mean that just 700 taxpayers would face the additional tax on increases to their wealth, according to a description obtained by The Associated Press of the proposal of Senate Finance Committee Chairman Ron Wyden of Oregon.

On tradeable items such as stocks, billionaires would still pay a tax even if they held on to the asset. They would be taxed on any increases in value and take deductions on losses. Under current law, those assets get taxed only when they're sold.

Billionaires would also face an additional tax on non-tradeable assets such as real estate and business interests once those assets are sold. During the first year of the proposed tax, the billionaires would also owe taxes on any built-in gains that predate the tax.

HOW MUCH MONEY WOULD IT RAISE?

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi estimated Sunday on CNN that the tax would raise \$200 billion to \$250 billion. This is a meaningful sum, but it's well shy of the nearly \$2 trillion in proposed additional spending over 10 years being negotiated right now. This means that additional levies such as the global minimum tax and increased enforcement dollars for the IRS would still be needed to help close the gap.

And the forecasts for revenue from the wealth tax are highly debatable.

"It's just impossible to implement," said Allison Schrager, a senior fellow at the conservative Manhattan Institute. "There's a lot of evidence that these things don't work, and I've never heard an explanation of how this could be workable."

WHY WOULD BIDEN GO THIS ROUTE?

The president would rather raise corporate tax rates and rates on wealthy individuals. That was his initial proposal, but he's got to appease West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin and Arizona Sen. Kyrsten Sinema. Those are the two make-or-break Democratic votes in the evenly split Senate.

Sinema objected to higher rates, which brought the wealth tax into play as an alternative.

The idea gained steam after the publication of French economist Thomas Piketty's book "Capital in the Twenty-First Century." Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren made a 2% wealth tax a trademark policy in the 2020 Democratic presidential primaries, and fellow candidate Bernie Sanders, the senator from Vermont, proposed his own wealth tax.

Biden never jumped on that bandwagon. But he did make higher taxes on the wealthy a key promise, saying no one earning less than \$400,000 would pay more.

ARE BILLIONAIRES REALLY THAT RICH?

Seems that way.

There is a legitimate debate about the optimal forms of taxation. Is it better for the economy for the wealthy to keep their assets invested in new businesses? Or, is it better for some of their money to go to the government to help fund programs like child care, universal pre-K and shifts to renewable energy?

What is clear is that the wealthy do have money to tax, should the government wish to do it.

America's billionaires have seen their collected wealth surge 70% since the start of the pandemic to over \$5 trillion, according to an analysis by the pro-wealth-tax Americans for Tax Fairness and the Institute for Policy Studies Program on Inequality. That gain from March 18, 2020, to this past month is equal in size to Biden's spending plans over 10 years.

"Right now, billionaires are not paying a dime in taxes on their fabulous income gains from their stock holdings during the pandemic," said Frank Clemente, executive director of Americans for Tax Fairness. "The billionaires income tax would tax the increase in the value of those assets each year just like workers' wages are taxed."

There were 614 U.S. billionaires at the start of the pandemic, a total that has now grown to 745.

Part of what makes the coronavirus unique is that many poorer Americans also became wealthier, but they did so at a much slower pace than billionaires.

Federal Reserve data indicate that the net worth of the bottom 90% of Americans — a group that includes the middle class — rose by roughly 22%. For many Americans, the wealth increase reflected a

rising stock market, higher home values and unprecedented government aid in the form of direct checks and forgivable payroll loans to small businesses.

CAN BILLIONAIRES ESCAPE TAXATION?

They've found ways before.

They can hire armadas of lawyers, accountants and others to minimize their tax burdens. The news outlet ProPublica revealed various tax shelters with IRS data earlier this year, and the recent Pandora Papers showed there is a global industry to shelter the assets of the politically powerful and extremely wealthy.

The ProPublica investigation showed that Warren Buffett paid an average rate of 19%. Amazon founder Jeff Bezos paid 23%, while Tesla's Elon Musk was at roughly 30%. The top tax rate on income earned from labor is 37%, but the tax on capital gains is a lower 20% and that favors those with extreme wealth. The lower capital gains rate can also encourage more investment in new companies that help the economy grow.

A White House analysis in September indicated the country's 400 wealthiest families paid an average federal income tax rate of 8.2% between 2010 and 2018. The administration's fundamental message is that a rate this low is unfair because middle class families often pay a greater share of their income in taxes.

The bottom-line question for Democratic lawmakers is how to close or at least narrow the escape hatches for those with extreme wealth. It could require calculations such as the "deferral recapture amount" and other technicalities that are likely to baffle most of America. But the writing of the tax law and its enforcement will determine just how successful a wealth tax would be — and perhaps the fate of Biden's big agenda as well.

AP writer Will Weissert contributed to this report.

In fatal shooting, some political foes take aim at Baldwin

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Details are still emerging about how Alec Baldwin accidentally shot and killed a cinematographer on a New Mexico film set, but some political onlookers swiftly assigned guilt to one of Hollywood's most prominent liberals.

Right-wing pundits and politicians have long chafed at Baldwin's criticism of former President Donald Trump and his Trump parody on "Saturday Night Live." They wasted little time zeroing in on the actor who pulled the trigger. The hashtag #AlecForPrison ricocheted around Twitter.

Within hours of the shooting, Ohio Republican Senate candidate J.D. Vance asked Twitter to let Trump back on the social media platform that banned him after the Capitol insurrection. "We need Alec Baldwin tweets," Vance wrote.

By Monday, Trump's oldest son was selling \$28 T-shirts on his official website with the slogan "Guns don't kill people, Alec Baldwin kills people." The post was later removed.

Gun violence has long divided the country, but the fact that some observers seemed to revel in Baldwin's role in the shooting added a political dimension to the tragedy. CNN host Jake Tapper on Sunday called Hutchins' death "heartbreaking for normal people."

"But there's something about our politics right now that is driving people away from our shared humanity," Tapper said.

Court records provided some details about the death of Halyna Hutchins on the set of "Rust" near Santa Fe, New Mexico. Authorities have said that the assistant director, Dave Halls, handed the weapon to Baldwin and announced "cold gun," indicating that the weapon was safe to use.

In an affidavit released Sunday night, the film's director, Joel Souza, said Baldwin was rehearsing a scene in which he drew a revolver from his holster and pointed it toward the camera, which Hutchins and Souza were behind. Souza, who was wounded by the shot, said the scene did not call for the use of live rounds.

It's not clear yet where the gun-handling protocol failed. Souza said the movie's guns were usually checked by armorer Hannah Gutierrez-Reed and then again by Halls.

At least two people have aired doubts about Halls' safety record.

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In an email statement to The Associated Press, a producer for the movie "Freedom's Path" confirmed Monday that Halls was fired from the 2019 production after a crew member suffered a minor injury "when a gun was unexpectedly discharged." The producer, who asked not to be identified by name, wrote that Halls "was removed from the set immediately." Production did not resume until Halls was gone.

Prop maker Maggie Goll on Sunday said she filed an internal complaint in 2019 over concerns about Halls' behavior on the set of Hulu's "Into the Dark" series. Goll said Halls disregarded safety protocols for weapons and pyrotechnics and tried to continue filming after the supervising pyrotechnician, who was diabetic, lost consciousness on set.

Neither Gutierrez-Reed nor Halls have responded to requests for comment on the shooting.

In the affidavit, cameraman Reid Russell said Baldwin had been careful with weapons. Russell was unsure whether the weapon was checked before it was handed to Baldwin.

In the aftermath of Hutchins' death, many in the film industry have argued that real guns should be replaced entirely by computer-generated effects.

"There should not have been a loaded gun on set," actor Riley Keough wrote on Instagram. "We don't need real guns, we can make replicas, and we have CGI. In my opinion, that is the issue here. Not Alec Baldwin."

And yet, as director Gigi Saul Guerrero observed, Baldwin has been the "face to this tragic story." The 63-year-old actor, a vocal advocate of gun-law reforms, has been widely mocked by the far-right on social media.

"Literally not one single thing that Alec Baldwin has said about Donald Trump and his supporters is going to age well," tweeted conservative commentator Candace Owens.

U.S. Rep. Lauren Boebert, a Colorado Republican, cited a tweet of Baldwin's last year supporting Black Lives Matter protesters in which Baldwin said he was going to make T-shirts that read: "My hands are up. Please don't shoot me!" Wrote Boebert: "Alec Baldwin, are these still available? Asking for a movie producer."

Boebert received widespread criticism. Actor George Takei said Boebert had "no soul." Actress Rosanna Arquette wrote: "This was a tragic and horrible accident. Ms. Boebert and you should be ashamed of yourself politicizing it." But Boebert stood by her tweet.

"You crazy Blue Checks want to take away our right to defend ourselves with a firearm, and know NOTHING about basic gun safety!" Boebert wrote. "If this was a conservative celebrity you'd be calling for his head."

The film's chief electrician, Serge Svetnoy, blamed producers for Hutchins' death in an emotional Facebook post Sunday. Svetnoy faulted "negligence and unprofessionalism" among those handling weapons on the set, and claimed producers hired an inexperienced armorer.

"I'm sure that we had the professionals in every department, but one — the department that was responsible for the weapons," Svetnoy wrote. "The person who should have checked this weapon before bringing it to the set did not do it. And the DEATH OF THE HUMAN IS THE RESULT!"

A spokesman for the film's production company, Rust Movie Productions LLC, has said it is cooperating with authorities and conducting an internal review. The company said it was halting production on the film but signaled it may resume in the future.

Baldwin has said he is cooperating with the law enforcement investigation and described the shooting as a "tragic accident."

Associated Press writers Hillel Italie in New York and Lindsey Bahr in Pittsburgh contributed to this report.

'We've got to run' -- Idaho mall shooting leaves 2 dead

By REBECCA BOONE and KEITH RIDLER Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Police say they exchanged gunfire with a suspect during a shooting at a shopping mall in Boise, Idaho, that killed two people and injured four -- including an officer.

Boise Police Chief Ryan Lee said at a news conference the shooting was reported about 1:50 p.m. on

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Monday — as well as a report that one person was “shot and down” at that time.

When the officers arrived, they spotted someone who matched the description of the suspect.

“There was an exchange of gunfire that ensued shortly thereafter, resulting in the officer’s injury, as well as the suspect being taken into custody,” Lee said. Investigators believe there was only one shooter, and there is no ongoing danger to the public, he said.

Police on Monday evening said in a news release that the suspect was in critical condition at a hospital and that the officer who was hurt had been treated and released. Authorities didn’t release any other information about the victims or the suspect, saying the investigation was ongoing.

“We really cannot at this time speak to any motivation behind it,” Lee said.

The Boise Towne Square shopping mall is the city’s largest mall.

“I cannot stress enough how traumatic this event is for the community at large, as well as for those that were witnesses, or are the families of those involved or involved themselves,” Lee said.

After the shooting, several witnesses stood in the rain outside the entrance to Macy’s — one of five large department stores at the mall — waiting to be interviewed by police or told they could leave. Patrol cars from several agencies, ambulances and fire trucks filled a section of the mall parking lot. Officers from the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives were assisting in the investigation.

About a quarter of a mile away, officers closed part of a road near a busy intersection so they could investigate a second crime scene related to the shooting incident. Officers at the second crime scene declined to answer questions.

Cheri Gypin, of Boise, was in the mall with a friend where they walk for an hour three or four times a week. She said she heard several large bangs, but thought something had fallen from the ceiling.

Then about 60 people, including families pushing strollers, came running at them, some of them shouting that there was an active shooter.

“My friend was trying to process it,” said Gypin, 60. “I just looked at her and said, ‘We’ve got to run.’ So we just ran and kept running until we got to the outer perimeter of the parking lot.”

They made their way back to their car, where police told the crowd of people who had fled the mall to leave the parking area.

Investigators were working with hospital officials to notify the family members of those injured and killed in the shooting, Lee said.

Boise Mayor Lauren McLean asked members of the public and the news media to give the victims and their families privacy as they deal with the trauma of the shooting. She thanked the law enforcement officers, first responders and others she said worked to keep the community safe.

“Countless people found themselves in a situation they never would have or should have expected,” McLean said, lauding the shopkeepers and others for reacting “so quickly to take care of folks that were there. You showed in a tough and chaotic moment how much you care and what you’re willing to do to support and care for strangers.”

EXPLAINER: How months of tensions led to Sudan’s coup

By SAMY MAGDY and LEE KEATH Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Monday’s military coup in Sudan threatens to wreck the country’s fragile transition to democracy, more than two years after a popular uprising forced the removal of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir.

The move comes after months of mounting tensions between the military and civilian authorities. Protesters are in the streets denouncing the takeover, and troops have opened fire, killing some of the marchers, opening the door for greater turmoil in the country of 40 million.

Here is how Sudan reached this point:

WHAT HAPPENED MONDAY?

The military dissolved the transitional government of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok as well as the Sovereign Council, a power-sharing body of military officers and civilians that had been ruling Sudan since

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late 2019.

Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan announced that the military would hold power until elections can be held in July 2023. Declaring a state of emergency, the top military official said a government of technocrats would be formed to administer until elections are held.

His announcement came hours after the military arrested Hamdok along with several other senior officials and political leaders.

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

The United States, European Union and United Nations have denounced the coup, but much depends on how much leverage they put on Sudan's military. The country is in need of international aid to get through its economic crisis.

On the other side, Sudan's generals have strong ties with Egypt and Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which so far have stopped short of criticizing the takeover, instead calling for calm.

Burhan said he is serious about holding elections on schedule. But a year and half is a long time, and it is not clear whether the powerful military is willing to release the grip it has had on power for decades.

Protesters fear the military will steer the process to ensure its control and are vowing to keep up their pressure in the streets, raising the likelihood of new confrontations.

WASN'T THERE A DEMOCRATIC 'REVOLUTION' ALREADY IN SUDAN?

The pro-democracy movement, which was a mix of groups including professional unions, political parties and youth groups, won the removal of al-Bashir in April 2019. But it was only a partial victory, with protesters unable to push the military out of politics completely.

Al-Bashir, who came to power in a 1989 coup, had ruled for 30 years with an iron grip, backed by the military and Islamists. Months of massive protests finally forced the military to remove and imprison him.

Right after his ouster, the military seized power for itself. But protesters stayed in the streets, demanding the generals hand over power to civilians. Crackdowns turned bloody, and in June 2019, armed forces stormed the main protest camp outside the military headquarters, killing more than 100 people and raping dozens of women.

Eventually, the military agreed to a compromise. It formed the Sovereign Council, a body made up of both military officers and civilians that was to rule the country until elections could be held. The council appointed Hamdok as prime minister of a transitional government.

Under the compromise, the council was to be headed first by military figures before civilians were to lead it.

Since then, Burhan has led the council, and the deputy chief has been Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, the chief of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, a group notorious for atrocities during the Darfur war in the 1990s and blamed for the 2019 Khartoum massacre.

A civilian was supposed to step in as council leader in November to run it until the 2023 elections.

The compromise won an end to Sudan's pariah status in the world. The U.S. took Sudan off its list of countries supporting terrorism, after the military-led council reached a normalization deal with Israel.

The transitional government also reached a peace deal with many of the rebel groups around Sudan that have been waging insurgencies against the Khartoum government for years. That deal allowed the armed rebels to return to Khartoum, waiting to be absorbed into the military.

Meanwhile, Hamdok's government rolled back many of the strict Islamist rules from the al-Bashir era, winning praise from Western governments and rights groups. However, it has struggled to deal with a crippled economy.

WHAT SPARKED THE COUP?

Tensions have been growing for months between supporters of the military and of civilian rule.

The Forces for the Declaration of Freedom and Change, or FDFC, the main protest umbrella group, has been stepping up calls for the military to hand leadership over to civilians in the government. The FDFC is made up of various anti-al-Bashir political parties, professional movements and rebel groups.

It has also called for restructuring the military and security agencies to dismiss al-Bashir loyalists, absorb

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various armed factions into their ranks and be put under civilian supervision.

Supporters of the military also have stepped up action. Since September, tribal protesters have blocked the main road to Sudan's Red Sea port as well as fuel pipelines, demanding Hamdok's government be dissolved.

Also, a pro-military splinter faction of the FDFC began an anti-government protest sit-in this month outside the Sovereign Council headquarters, accusing officials of mismanagement and monopolizing power. The faction includes rebel groups that struck peace deals with the military and some political parties.

Many of the protesters on both sides are motivated by economic hardship. Already a problem under al-Bashir, it was one of the reasons people rose up against him. But since then, the country has faced even greater shocks in trying to rejoin the global economy. Economic reforms implemented by the interim government have meant rising inflation and shortages of basic goods for the average citizen.

Emboldened by the protests, Burhan repeatedly called for dissolving Hamdok's transitional government. He went further by saying recently that the military would only hand over power to an elected government.

Record rainfall as storm douses drought-stricken California

By OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A powerful storm that swept through California set rainfall records and helped douse wildfires. But it remained to be seen how much of a dent it made in the state's drought.

The system weakened as it moved south but still dropped enough rain Monday evening to cause mudslides that closed roads in the San Bernardino Mountains northeast of Los Angeles.

In the northern part of the state, drenching rains caused widespread flooding and rock slides over the weekend. Strong winds knocked down trees and even toppled two big rigs on the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge near San Francisco. Pacific Gas & Electric reported that 380,000 homes and businesses lost power, though most had it back Monday.

Despite the problems, the rain and mountain snow were welcome in Northern California, which is so dry that nearly all of it is classified as either experiencing extreme or exceptional drought. The wet weather also greatly reduces the chances of additional wildfires in a region that has borne the brunt of another devastating year of blazes in the state.

The National Weather Service called preliminary rainfall totals "staggering," including 11 inches (28 centimeters) at the base of Marin County's Mount Tamalpais and 4 inches (10 centimeters) in downtown San Francisco, the fourth-wettest day ever for the city.

"It's been a memorable past 24 hours for the Bay Area as the long talked-about atmospheric river rolled through the region," the local weather office said Monday. "We literally have gone from fire/drought conditions to flooding in one storm cycle."

Northeast of San Francisco, 5.44 inches (13.82 centimeters) fell on downtown Sacramento, shattering the one-day record for rainfall that had stood since 1880.

Along the central coast, nearly 5.4 inches (13.72 centimeters) of rain was recorded at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo County. In Southern California, 1.1 inches (2.79 centimeters) fell in Beverly Hills.

Interstate 80, the major highway through the Sierra Nevada Mountains to Reno, Nevada, was shut down by heavy snow early Monday. In California's Colusa and Yolo counties, state highways 16 and 20 were shut for several miles because of mudslides, the state Department of Transportation said.

The same storm system also slammed Oregon and Washington state, causing power outages that affected tens of thousands of people. Two people were killed when a tree fell on a vehicle in the greater Seattle area.

Lake Oroville, a major Northern California reservoir, saw its water levels rise 20 feet (6.10 meters) over the past week, according to the state's Department of Water Resource. Most of the increase came between Saturday and Monday, during the height of the storm, KHSL-TV reported.

Justin Mankin, a geography professor at Dartmouth College and co-lead of the Drought Task Force at

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the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, said the cycle of going from years-long drought to record-breaking downpours is something expected to continue because of climate change.

"While this rain is welcome, it comes with these hazards, and it won't necessarily end the drought," Mankin said. "California still needs more precipitation, and it really needs it in high elevations and spread out over a longer time so it's not hazardous."

Christy Brigham, chief of resource management and science at Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, said the rain was a huge relief after the Caldor Fire torched an unknown number of the giant trees in the park, along with thousands of pines and cedars.

"This amount of rainfall is what we call a season-ending event," Brigham said. "It should end fire season, and it should end our need -- to a large degree -- to fight this fire."

The Caldor Fire has burned for more than two months. In early September, it prompted the unprecedented evacuation of the entire city of South Lake Tahoe. Firefighters now consider it fully contained, a status that — thanks to the rain — also now applies to the Dixie Fire, the second-largest in state history at just under 1 million acres.

During the weekend, the California Highway Patrol closed a stretch of State Route 70 in Butte and Plumas counties because of multiple landslides within the massive Dixie Fire burn scar.

Cal Fire, the state firefighting agency, wasn't ready to declare the wildfire season over or to cut staffing to winter levels. "We'd like to see some more rain coming our way before we look at reducing staffing," spokesman Isaac Sanchez said.

The long-term forecast for California shows drier-than-normal conditions, Mankin said.

"To end different aspects of the drought, you are going to need a situation where parts of California get precipitation over the next three months that's about 200% of normal," he said, adding that "despite this really, really insane rainfall, the winter is probably going to be drier than average."

Associated Press writers Janie Har in San Francisco, Christopher Weber and John Antczak in Los Angeles and Brian Melley in Three Rivers contributed to this report.

Apple once threatened Facebook ban over Mideast maid abuse

By JON GAMBRELL and JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Two years ago, Apple threatened to pull Facebook and Instagram from its app store over concerns about the platform being used as a tool to trade and sell maids in the Mideast.

After publicly promising to crack down, Facebook acknowledged in internal documents obtained by The Associated Press that it was "under-enforcing on confirmed abusive activity" that saw Filipina maids complaining on the social media site of being abused. Apple relented and Facebook and Instagram remained in the app store.

But Facebook's crackdown seems to have had a limited effect. Even today, a quick search for "khadima," or "maids" in Arabic, will bring up accounts featuring posed photographs of Africans and South Asians with ages and prices listed next to their images. That's even as the Philippines government has a team of workers that do nothing but scour Facebook posts each day to try and protect desperate job seekers from criminal gangs and unscrupulous recruiters using the site.

While the Mideast remains a crucial source of work for women in Asia and Africa hoping to provide for their families back home, Facebook acknowledged some countries across the region have "especially egregious" human rights issues when it comes to laborers' protection.

"In our investigation, domestic workers frequently complained to their recruitment agencies of being locked in their homes, starved, forced to extend their contracts indefinitely, unpaid, and repeatedly sold to other employers without their consent," one Facebook document read. "In response, agencies commonly told them to be more agreeable."

The report added: "We also found recruitment agencies dismissing more serious crimes, such as physical or sexual assault, rather than helping domestic workers."

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In a statement to the AP, Facebook said it took the problem seriously, despite the continued spread of ads exploiting foreign workers in the Mideast.

"We prohibit human exploitation in no uncertain terms," Facebook said. "We've been combating human trafficking on our platform for many years and our goal remains to prevent anyone who seeks to exploit others from having a home on our platform."

This story, along with others published Monday, is based on disclosures made to the Securities and Exchange Commission and provided to Congress in redacted form by former Facebook employee-turned-whistleblower Frances Haugen's legal counsel. The redacted versions were obtained by a consortium of news organizations, including the AP. The Wall Street Journal previously wrote about Apple's threat to remove Facebook and Instagram.

Taken as a whole, the trove of documents show that Facebook's daunting size and user base around the world — a key factor in its rapid ascent and near trillion-dollar valuation — also proves to be its greatest weakness in trying to police illicit activity, such as the sale of drugs, and suspected human rights and labor abuses on its site.

Activists say Facebook, based in Menlo Park, California, has both an obligation and likely the means to fully crack down on the abuses their services facilitate as it earns tens of billions of dollars each year in revenue.

"While Facebook is a private company, when you have billions of users, you are effectively like a state and therefore you have social responsibilities de facto, whether you like it or not," said Mustafa Qadri, the executive director of Equidem Research, which studies migrant labor.

"These workers are being recruited and going to places to work like the Gulf, the Middle East, where there is practically no proper regulation of how they're recruited and how they're treated when they end up in the places where they work. So when you put those two things together, really, it's a recipe for disaster."

Mary Ann Abunda, who works with a nongovernmental Filipino workers' welfare group called Sandigan in Kuwait, similarly warned of the danger the site can pose.

"Facebook really has two faces," Abunda said. "Yes, as it advertises, it's connecting people, but it has also become a haven of sinister people and syndicates who wait for your weak moment to pounce on you."

Facebook, like human rights activists and others worried about labor across the Mideast, pointed to the so-called "kafala" system prevalent across much of the region's countries. Under this system, which allowed nations to import cheap foreign labor from Africa and South Asia as oil money swelled their economies beginning in the 1950s, workers find their residency bound directly to their employer, their sponsor or "kafeel."

While workers can find employment in these arrangements that allow them to send money back home, unscrupulous sponsors can exploit their laborers who often have no other legal recourse. Stories of workers having their passports seized, working nonstop without breaks, and not being properly paid long have shadowed major construction projects, whether Dubai's Expo 2020 or Qatar's upcoming FIFA 2022 World Cup.

While Gulf Arab states like the UAE and Qatar insist they've improved working conditions, others like Saudi Arabia still require employers to approve their workers leaving the country. Meanwhile, maids and domestic workers can find themselves even more at risk by living alone with families in private homes.

In the documents seen by the AP, Facebook acknowledges being aware of both the exploitive conditions of foreign workers and the use of Instagram to buy and trade maids online even before a 2019 report by the BBC's Arabic service on the practice in the Mideast. That BBC report sparked the threat by Cupertino, California-based Apple to remove the apps, citing examples of pictures of maids and their biographic details showing up online, according to the documents.

Facebook engineers found nearly three-fourths of all problematic posts, including showing maids in videos and screenshots of their conversations, occurred on Instagram. Links to maid-selling sites predominantly affected Facebook.

Over 60% of the material came from Saudi Arabia, with about a quarter coming from Egypt, according to the 2019 Facebook analysis.

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In a statement to the AP, Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development said the kingdom "stands firmly against all types of illegal practices in the labor market" and that all labor contracts must be approved by authorities. While keeping in contact with the Philippines and other nations on labor issues, the ministry said Facebook had never been in touch with it about the problem.

"Obviously illegal ads posted on social media platforms make it harder to track and investigate," the ministry said.

Saudi Arabia plans "a major public awareness campaign" soon as well on illegal recruitment practices, the ministry added.

Egypt did not respond to requests for comment.

While Facebook disabled over 1,000 accounts on its websites, its analysis papers acknowledged that as early as 2018 the company knew it had a problem with what it referred to as "domestic servitude." It defined the problem as a "form of trafficking of people for the purpose of working inside private homes through the use of force, fraud, coercion or deception."

The issue appeared a wide-enough problem that Facebook even used an acronym to describe it — HEx, or "human exploitation." Users at the time reported only 2% of problematic content, likely due to the desire to travel abroad for work. Facebook acknowledged it only scratched the surface of the problem and that "domestic servitude content remained on the platform."

After a week, Facebook shared what it had done and Apple apparently dropped the threat. Apple did not respond to requests for comment, but Facebook acknowledged how seriously it took the threat at the time.

"Removing our applications from Apple platforms would have had potentially severe consequences to the business, including depriving millions of users of access," the analysis said.

The problem, however, continues across both Facebook and Instagram. Facebook appears to acknowledge that in more recent documents seen by the AP. It described engineers accessing problematic messages in maid-recruiting agencies' inboxes, including one in which a Filipina specifically is mentioned as being "sold" by her Kuwaiti employers.

"Sometimes my head and ears hurt from being hit," another batch of messages from a Filipina in Kuwait read. "When I escape from here, how will I get my passport? And how can we get out of here? The door is always locked."

Another Filipina housemaid in Kuwait, who described being "sold" to another family through an Instagram post in December 2012, told the AP that she knew of other cases of Filipinas being "traded online like merchandise."

"I was like an animal that was being traded by one owner to another," said the woman, who spoke from Kuwait on condition of anonymity out of fear of reprisals. "If Facebook and Instagram won't take stronger steps against this anomaly, there will be more victims like me. I was lucky because I did not end up dead or a sexual slave."

Authorities in Kuwait, where the Philippines temporarily banned domestic workers from going after an abused Filipina was found dead in a refrigerator in 2018 over a year after disappearing, did not respond to requests for comment.

In the Philippines, the billions of dollars annually sent home from overseas workers represent nearly 10% of the country's gross domestic product. Those wanting to go abroad trust Facebook more than the private recruiting agencies monitored by the government in part over past scandals, said Bernard Olalia, who heads the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, which has the team monitoring Facebook postings.

Job seekers mistakenly believe the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration endorses some of the Facebook and Instagram accounts, in part as they misused the office's logos, he said.

With the coronavirus pandemic locking down the Philippines for months, those wanting to work abroad are even more desperate than before for any opportunity. Some see "application fees" stolen by criminal gangs, he said. Others have been trafficked or sexually exploited.

"Words are not enough to describe their predicament but the situation is devastating for them," Olalia

said. "They expected to recover again, they invested just to ensure they'll have a destination only to end up as victims of illegal recruitment. That's devastating on their part."

Facebook suggested a pilot program to begin in 2021 that targeted Filipinas with pop-up messages and banner ads warning them about the dangers working overseas can pose.

It remains unclear whether it ever began, though Facebook said in its statement to the AP that it delivers "targeted prevention and support ad campaigns in countries such as the Philippines where data suggests people may be at high risk of exploitation." Facebook did not answer specific questions posed by the AP about its practices.

Olalia said his office for the last two years had a direct line to Facebook to be able to flag suspicious accounts. But even that isn't enough as more and more pop up to replace them.

"It will affect their income so they don't want to address this," he said.

That leaves some of the most-desperate job seekers in the world vulnerable to promises and possible trafficking on Facebook.

"We've seen since the pandemic that these low-wage workers who literally raise our children, they build our buildings, they cook our food, they deliver our meals. They're not just low-wage workers, they're essential workers," said Qadri, the migrant rights expert. "So we really have a duty to address these problems because our entire civilization is dependent on these people."

Gomez reported from Manila, Philippines.

See full coverage of "The Facebook Papers" here: <https://apnews.com/hub/the-facebook-papers>

Police: 2 die, 4 injured in Idaho mall shooting

By REBECCA BOONE and KEITH RIDLER Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — A suspect is in custody after two people were killed and four injured — including a police officer — in a shooting at a shopping mall Monday in Boise, Idaho, police said.

At a news conference, authorities said officers exchanged gunfire with the suspect.

Police on Monday evening said in a news release that the suspect was in critical condition at a hospital and that the officer who was hurt had been treated and released. Police haven't released any other information about the victims, officer or the suspect.

The mall had been secured by Monday evening, and police said it would remain closed as the investigation continues.

Boise Police Chief Ryan Lee said the shooting was reported to law enforcement about 1:50 p.m. on Monday — including a report that one person was "shot and down" at that time.

When the officers arrived, they spotted someone who matched the description of the suspect.

"There was an exchange of gunfire that ensued shortly thereafter, resulting in the officer's injury, as well as the suspect being taken into custody," Lee said. He said investigators believe there was only one shooter, and there is no ongoing danger to the public.

"We really cannot at this time speak to any motivation behind it," Lee said, calling any speculation premature.

"I cannot stress enough how traumatic this event is for the community at large, as well as for those that were witnesses, or are the families of those involved or involved themselves," Lee said.

After the shooting, several witnesses stood in the rain outside the entrance to Macy's — one of five large department stores at the mall — waiting to be interviewed by police or told they could leave. Patrol cars from several agencies, ambulances and fire trucks filled a section of the mall parking lot. Officers from the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives were assisting in the investigation.

About a quarter of a mile away, officers closed part of a road near a busy intersection so they could investigate a second crime scene related to the shooting incident. Officers at the second crime scene declined to answer questions about the investigation other than to confirm it was related to the shooting

investigation.

Cheri Gypin, of Boise, was in the mall with a friend where they walk for an hour three or four times a week. She said she heard several large bangs, but thought something had fallen from the ceiling. Then about 60 people, including families pushing strollers, came running at them, some of them shouting that there was an active shooter.

"My friend was trying to process it," said Gypin, 60. "I just looked at her and said, 'We've got to run.' So we just ran and kept running until we got to the outer perimeter of the parking lot."

They made their way back to their car, where police told the crowd of people who had fled the mall to leave the parking area.

Investigators were working with hospital officials to notify family members of those injured and killed in the shooting, Lee said.

The shooting between the suspect and officer will be investigated separately by the Critical Incident Task Force led by the Meridian Police Department, police said Monday evening.

Boise Mayor Lauren McLean asked members of the public and the news media to give the victims and their families privacy as they deal with the trauma of the shooting. She thanked the law enforcement officers, first responders and others she said worked to keep the community safe.

"Countless people found themselves in a situation they never would have or should have expected," McLean said, lauding the shopkeepers and others in the mall for reacting "so quickly to take care of folks that were there. You showed in a tough and chaotic moment how much you care and what you're willing to do to support and care for strangers."

This story has been updated to correct that four people were injured, not six, as previously reported by police.

Lawmakers defer some Jan. 6 document requests, seek others

By ZEKE MILLER and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol "deferred" its requests for several dozen pages of records from former President Donald Trump's administration at the White House's urging, but President Joe Biden again rejected the former president's invocation of executive privilege on hundreds of additional pages.

In a letter to the National Archives and Records Administration, Biden counsel Dana Remus repeated that the president has "determined that an assertion of executive privilege is not in the best interests of the United States, and therefore is not justified" for two tranches of documents sent to the White House for review last month.

The panel is investigating the violent Capitol siege by Trump's supporters that day and has sought documents connected to the former president, who has falsely said he won the presidential election and that morning urged his crowd of followers to "fight like hell."

Obtained Monday by The Associated Press, the letter from Remus reveals that the committee "deferred" its request for nearly 50 pages of documents as a result of an "accommodation" process with the Biden White House. That process allows the White House to protect some records that may be privileged without formally blocking their release.

The letter from Remus came two weeks after the White House said it would not block an earlier, more sweeping tranche of documents after Trump sought to shield them. Biden has made clear that he does not want to block the committee's work, and Remus wrote in both letters that the documents could "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."

Still, the White House's desire to shield some documents shows that the process of approving releases to the Jan. 6 committee won't always be simple, as presidents have long relied on their ability to assert

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executive privilege to protect their internal communications and deliberations. Biden's decisions to release certain documents could set precedents for future administrations and could eventually apply to his own records when he is out of office.

In a statement, a spokesman for the Jan. 6 panel said that lawmakers welcomed Biden's decision to allow the production of the two additional sets of records and that the committee had agreed to "defer action" on certain records.

"The Select Committee has not withdrawn its request for those records and will continue to engage with the executive branch to ensure we get access to all the information relevant to our probe," said spokesman Tim Mulvey.

Even though Biden has approved the release of most of the documents, their ultimate fate will now be decided by the courts. Trump filed suit earlier this month to try to block the archives from releasing his records.

In the lawsuit, Trump called the document requests a "vexatious, illegal fishing expedition" that was "untethered from any legitimate legislative purpose," according to the papers filed in federal court in the District of Columbia.

The former president's lawyer has also sought to block testimony from some of his former aides, including longtime ally Steve Bannon. The House voted to hold Bannon in contempt last week after he defied the panel's subpoena and his lawyer said that Trump would assert privilege over his testimony.

Billionaire tax hits critics as Biden pushes for budget deal

By LISA MASCARO, DARLENE SUPERVILLE and ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Democrats' idea for a new billionaires' tax to help pay for President Joe Biden's social services and climate change plan quickly ran into criticism as too cumbersome with some lawmakers preferring the original plan of simply raising the top tax rates on corporations and the wealthy.

Biden said Monday he's hopeful the talks with Congress can wrap up overall agreement on the package this week. It's tallying at least \$1.75 trillion, and could still be more. Biden said it would be "very, very positive to get it done" before he departs for two overseas global summits.

"That's my hope," the president said before leaving his home state of Delaware for a trip to New Jersey to highlight the child care proposals in the package and a related infrastructure measure. "With the grace of God and the goodwill of the neighbors."

Resolving the revenue side is key as the Democrats scale back what had been a \$3.5 trillion plan, insisting all the new spending will be fully paid for and not pile onto the debt. Biden vows any new taxes would hit only the wealthy, those earning more than \$400,000 a year, or \$450,000 for couples.

The White House had to rethink its tax strategy after one key Democrat, Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., objected to her party's initial proposal to raise tax rates on wealthy Americans by undoing the Trump-era tax cuts on those earning beyond \$400,000. Sinema also opposed lifting the 21% corporate tax rate. With a 50-50 Senate, Biden has no votes to spare in his party.

Instead, to win over Sinema and others, the White House has been floating a new idea of taxing the assets of billionaires and another that would require corporations to pay a 15% minimum tax, regardless of if they show any profits. Those both appear to be gaining traction with another pivotal Democrat, Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., who told reporters he supported new ways to ensure the wealthy to pay their "fair share."

Democrats on the Senate Finance Committee, led by Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon, are prepared to roll out the tax revenue plan in a matter of days. It is likely to include other revenue-raising tax measures, including a plan to beef up the IRS to go after tax scofflaws.

"Here's the heart of it: Americans read over the last few months that billionaires were paying little or no taxes for years on end," Wyden said at the Capitol.

The billionaires' tax is being modeled on a 2019 bill from Wyden to treat assets as income. Another idea, up to a 3% ultra-rich surtax, has been proposed by Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass.

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Under Wyden's emerging plan, the billionaires' tax would hit the wealthiest of Americans, fewer than 1,000 people. It would require those with assets of more than \$1 billion, or three-years consecutive income of \$100 million, to pay taxes on the gains of stocks and other tradeable assets, rather than waiting until holdings are sold.

A similar billionaire's tax would be applied to non-tradeable assets, including real estate, but it would be deferred with the tax not assessed until the asset was sold.

Overall, the billionaires' tax rate has not been set, but it is expected to be at least the 20% capital gains rate. Democrats have said it could raise \$200 billion in revenue that could help fund Biden's package over 10 years.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell called it a "hare-brained scheme" and warned of revenue drying up during downturns. Some Republicans indicated such a tax plan could be challenged in court.

But key fellow Democrats are also raising concerns, saying the idea of simply undoing the 2017 tax cuts by hiking top rates was more straightforward and transparent.

Under the House's bill from the Ways and Means Committee, the top individual income tax rate would rise from 37% to 39.6%, on those earning more than \$400,000, or \$450,000 for couples. The corporate rate would increase from 21% to 26.5%. The bill also proposed a 3% surtax on wealthier Americans with adjusted income beyond \$5 million a year.

The panel's chairman, Rep. Richard Neal, D-N.J., said he told Wyden in a discussion Monday that the implementation of the senator's proposed billionaire's plan is "a bit more challenging."

Neal suggested that the House's proposal was off the table despite Sinema's objections. In fact, he said, "our plan looks better every day."

Once Democrats agree to the tax proposals, they can assess how much is funding available for Biden's overall package to expand health care, child care and other climate change programs.

Democrats were hoping Biden could cite major accomplishments to world leaders later this week. They are also facing an Oct. 31 deadline to pass a related \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure package of roads, broadband and other public works before routine federal transportation funds expire.

"We need to get this done," Biden said in remarks at a New Jersey transit center.

After months of start-and-stop negotiations, Biden's overall package is now being eyed as at least \$1.75 trillion. But it could still climb considerably higher, according to a second person who insisted on anonymity to discuss the private talks.

Biden huddled with the conservative West Virginia Democrat Manchin and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer at the president's Delaware home on Sunday as they work on resolving the disputes between centrists and progressives that have stalled the bill.

Disputes remain over far-reaching investments, including plans to expand Medicare coverage with dental, vision and hearing aid benefits for seniors; child care assistance; free pre-kindergarten; and a new program of four-weeks paid family leave.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said expected an agreement by week's end, paving the way for a House vote on the \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill. The Senate had approved that over the summer, but the measure stalled during deliberations on the broader Biden bill.

But Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus whose support will be crucial for both bills, said lawmakers want more than just a framework for Biden's plan before they give their votes for the smaller infrastructure package.

"We want the whole bill," Jayapal told The Associated Press. "We want to vote on both bills at the same time."

Associated Press writers Farnoush Amiri, Hope Yen and Colleen Long contributed to this report.

Vilified in sports world, Astros begin another World Series

By BEN WALKER AP Baseball Writer

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HOUSTON (AP) — Carlos Correa, Jose Altuve and Alex Bregman whipped the ball around during a crisp infield drill, then came together for a group hug near second base after finishing up Monday.

High above the diamond at Minute Maid Park, the sun gleamed off an oversized banner attached to a light tower.

“World Series Champions,” it said, along with “17” and the Astros logo. And it was solid gold.

Nope, no tarnish on that tribute. Not here in Houston, anyway.

Because if the stain of their sign-stealing scandal on the way to the 2017 crown is hanging over them, the Astros aren’t showing it. Let the rest of the sports world condemn them forever as baseball’s biggest cheaters — they’re focused, they say, on putting another shiny flag on that tower.

“I’m not worried about narratives. I’m not worried about any of that,” Bregman said.

Back in the World Series for the third time in five years, they get that chance starting Tuesday night in Game 1 against the Atlanta Braves.

The Astros are favorites in Las Vegas and cheered at home, but nowhere else.

Heckled, cursed and taunted with fake trash cans at ballparks across the majors all season, the Astros know there’s nothing they can do to change any fan’s mind. The hate directed at them on social media, that’s not going away anytime soon.

Neither are the whispers. During the AL playoffs, there was loosely lobbed innuendo and speculation about misdeeds.

Note this: During workouts Monday, the only camera in center field was for the Fox telecast. The official Major League Baseball report that issued penalties in January 2020 said the Astros used a team camera in center to illegally help steal signals flashed by opposing catchers.

“We just want to really show the world that we’re the best team out there. In order for us to do that, we’ve got to get four more wins. I don’t think the outside noise motivates us at all,” Correa said.

Hard to block out, though.

“I wasn’t here with the team in 2017, but I’ve gotten booed just as equal as anybody else,” AL Championship Series MVP Yordan Alvarez recently said.

Outfielder Michael Brantley played against Houston that season while with Cleveland. He now wears an Astros jersey, fully aware many fans think it should say “Villains” across the front.

The team’s cheating past, he knows, is as much a part of the uniform as the Astros star-featured logo. And it follows them to this day.

“Sure does. We get it everywhere we go,” Brantley said.

The ones who get razzed the most are the four holdovers from that 2017 squad still on the roster, starting infielders Altuve, Correa, Bregman and Yuli Gurriel.

Bregman gets the most prickly about the subject. Altuve often breezes by it while Correa is quick to own what happened.

Charlie Morton, who starts the opener for the Braves against Framber Valdez, was the winning pitcher for Houston in the clinching Game 7 for that lone Astros championship.

“I never questioned how good those guys were and how good they are. So that’s my focus,” he said.

To Houston manager Dusty Baker, it’s in the past. Hired after manager A.J. Hinch and general manager Jeff Luhnow were fired by the team and suspended by MLB, the 72-year-old skipper said his players aren’t spurred by the haters.

“That’s what I think people are trying to make it, as their main source of motivation, but that doesn’t motivate you nearly as much as just driving to win and driving for excellence,” he said. “You can only be driven by, ‘I’ll show you,’ or you can only be driven by negative motivation so far.”

“I think this team is way past that because they know they can play. So this is what you have to dwell on, me versus the world?” he said. “After a while, like, how long can you have that mantra? So I think that’s been gone a while.”

Altuve, the All-Star second baseman and driving force, has been with the Astros since 2011, from 100-loss seasons to 100-win years. He helped Houston beat the Los Angeles Dodgers in the seven-game 2017

World Series and lost a seven-game matchup to Washington in 2019.

Could this postseason run somehow alter the perception of the past?

"I haven't thought about that," Altuve said. "But I think we have the same mindset we always have, just going out there and try to win."

"There's not a single guy that's thinking about something else but winning," he said.

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

Ex-Liberty spokesman says he was fired for raising concerns

By SARAH RANKIN Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — A former spokesperson for Liberty University is suing the evangelical Virginia school after being fired, alleging in a lawsuit filed Monday that his termination came in retaliation for voicing concerns that sexual misconduct accusations were mishandled.

Scott Lamb, a vice president-level executive at the school where he was hired in 2018, said in an interview with The Associated Press that he pushed for answers about what was being done to investigate claims raised in a lawsuit filed over the summer by 12 women, and was continually dissatisfied.

The women's lawsuit, which is still ongoing, alleged the school had a pattern of mishandling cases of sexual assault and harassment and had fostered an unsafe campus environment. A student-led movement has since been established to advocate for systemic reforms, and the nonprofit investigative journalism outlet ProPublica published a deeply reported investigation Sunday with findings similar to the allegations raised in the lawsuit.

Lamb said in the interview that the university, which has a gleaming campus in Lynchburg, has plenty of resources and should have used them to open a third-party investigation of the women's claims.

"We put \$300 million in the bank last year, and some change. We have two-point-something-billion in the endowment, and we can't afford to just deal righteously with these people. Why?" Lamb said.

Liberty University General Counsel David Corry said in a statement that the university "categorically denies Mr. Lamb's claims that his termination was in any way the result of advice he had given on how the university should respond" to the women's lawsuit. He said Lamb was terminated with cause as a result of a meeting about "a recent review of the area under his management."

"Lamb's lawsuit is a transparent effort to rebuild his own reputation by shamefully playing on the goodwill of supporters of sexual assault victims. We look forward to addressing his claims in court," Corry said.

Lamb's lawsuit alleges that he was terminated for engaging in activity protected under Title IX, the federal law that protects against sex discrimination in education, after challenging the university's handling of the complaints.

His complaint says things came to a head in a meeting early this month when he told top school officials that "he would not be silenced or participate in a cover up of activities" at the university.

The following day, he was approached about negotiating a separation agreement and on Oct. 6, he was fired, according to the lawsuit.

Lamb also alleges that he was retaliated against for his participation in an outside investigation conducted into the tenure of Jerry Falwell Jr., the former president whose personal controversies and acrimonious departure from Liberty last year garnered national headlines.

His lawsuit says he sat for 20-25 hours of interviews as part of that probe, the findings of which the school has not discussed publicly.

Lamb's lawsuit broadens the list of litigation the school has faced recently. In April, the school sued Falwell, seeking millions in damages. And in July, a former NFL player hired last year to help lead diversity initiatives sued, alleging racial discrimination in his demotion and subsequent firing.

Lamb said he was offered a severance package if he signed a nondisclosure agreement, which he declined. His firing has meant not only the loss of his income and benefits but scholarship funding for his four children who attend the school, he said. His lawsuit seeks to recoup past and future wage losses and

unspecified compensatory and punitive damages.

"I'll forsake the scholarship and the salary and the benefits ... to keep my tongue free to speak of which I've seen," he said.

A Liberty spokesperson did not respond to questions from AP about what the school has done to investigate the female litigants' claims, aside from resending a statement issued in July, when the lawsuit was filed. Nor did the spokesperson respond to a request for comment about ProPublica's investigation.

Kendall Covington, a senior at Liberty and a student representative for Save71, an alumni-led organization advocating for reform at Liberty, said the group welcomes Lamb's apparent willingness to push for change.

She said the student body had not received any kind of acknowledgment Monday about the ProPublica story, something she called "par for the course."

"Liberty University needs to actually address what's occurring," she said.

Assistant director of Baldwin film fired after 2019 mishap

By MORGAN LEE, CEDAR ATTANASIO and HILLEL ITALIE Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — The assistant director who handed Alec Baldwin the gun that killed a cinematographer last week had been fired from a previous job after a gun went off on a set and wounded a member of the film crew, a producer said Monday.

The disclosure emerged as producers of Baldwin's movie officially halted filming, and court records showed that investigators seized more than two dozen items from the set on the day after the shooting.

In an email statement to The Associated Press, a producer for the movie "Freedom's Path" confirmed that Dave Halls was fired from the 2019 production after a crew member suffered a minor injury "when a gun was unexpectedly discharged." The producer, who asked not to be identified by name, wrote that Halls "was removed from the set immediately." Production did not resume until Halls was gone.

His firing from "Freedom's Path" was first reported by CNN. Halls has not returned phone calls and email messages seeking comment.

The producer is the second person to air doubts about Halls' safety record. On Sunday, another crew member who worked with Halls said she raised concerns about him in 2019.

Maggie Goll, a prop maker and licensed pyrotechnician, said in a statement that she filed an internal complaint with the executive producers of Hulu's "Into the Dark" series over Halls' behavior. Goll said in a phone interview that Halls disregarded safety protocols for weapons and pyrotechnics and tried to continue filming after the supervising pyrotechnician, who was diabetic, lost consciousness on set.

The fatal shooting and previous experiences point to larger safety issues, Goll said, adding that crew safety was a top issue in recent contract negotiations between a union that represents film and TV workers and a major producers' group.

"This situation is not about Dave Halls. ... It's in no way one person's fault," she said. "It's a bigger conversation about safety on set and what we are trying to achieve with that culture."

In an email sent to "Rust" crew members over the weekend, the movie's production team confirmed that work on the Western has been suspended at least until the investigation is complete. The team said it is working with law enforcement and conducting its own internal safety review. The production company is also offering grief counseling.

The email suggested that work on the film could resume at some point.

"Although our hearts are broken, and it is hard to see beyond the horizon, this is, at the moment, a pause rather than an end," the email read.

The sheriff's investigation continued Monday, and new court documents showed that authorities seized three black revolvers, ammunition boxes, a fanny pack with ammunition, several spent casings, two leather gun belts with holsters, articles of clothing and swabs of what were believed to be blood.

No charges have been filed. Prosecutors and law enforcement officers were expected to provide an update on the investigation Wednesday.

Moments before the shooting, Baldwin was explaining how he was going to draw the revolver from his

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holster and where his arm would be positioned, court records show.

The actor had been told that the gun was safe to use for the rehearsal of a scene in which he was supposed to pull out the weapon while sitting in a church pew and point it at the camera, the records said.

Cameraman Reid Russell told a detective that he was unsure whether the weapon was checked before it was handed to Baldwin, and he did not know why the gun was fired.

The camera was not rolling when the gun went off and killed cinematographer Halyna Hutchins, Russell told authorities, according a search warrant affidavit released Sunday.

Authorities have said that Halls had handed the weapon to Baldwin and announced "cold gun," indicating it was safe.

When asked about how Baldwin treated firearms on the set, Russell said the actor was safe, citing a previous instance when Baldwin made sure a child actor was not near him when a gun was being discharged.

The affidavit released Sunday also included statements by director Joel Souza, who was standing behind Hutchins and was wounded.

It detailed the moments before the shooting and showed that there was turmoil on the set the day of the shooting. Several members of the camera crew walked off the production in a dispute over payment and lodging, Russell said, and he was left with a lot of work to do. Only one camera was available to shoot, and it had to be moved because the light had shifted and there was a shadow.

Souza said he was focused on how the scene would appear on camera. He said he recalled hearing the phrase "cold gun" before the shooting, the affidavit said.

He said the scene did not call for the use of live rounds. After a lunch break, Souza said he was not sure if the firearm had been checked again. Souza was looking over Hutchins' shoulder when he heard the gunshot, according to the affidavit.

The film's chief electrician, Serge Svetnoy, blamed producers for Hutchins' death in an emotional Facebook post on Sunday. Svetnoy said he had worked with Hutchins on multiple films and faulted "negligence and unprofessionalism" among those handling weapons on the set. He said producers hired an inexperienced armorer.

Baldwin, who is known for his roles in "30 Rock" and "The Hunt for Red October" and his impression of former President Donald Trump on "Saturday Night Live," has described the killing as a "tragic accident."

Italie reported from New York. Associated Press writers Ryan Pearson in Los Angeles, Gillian Flaccus in Portland, Oregon, and Michelle Eaton in Newport Beach, California, contributed to this report.

COVID cases falling, but trouble signs arise as winter looms

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

Tumbling COVID-19 case counts have some schools around the U.S. considering relaxing their mask rules, but deaths nationally have been ticking up over the past few weeks, some rural hospitals are showing signs of strain, and cold weather is setting in.

The number of new cases nationally has been plummeting since the delta surge peaked in mid-September. The U.S. is averaging about 73,000 new cases per day, dramatically lower than the 173,000 recorded on Sept. 13. And the number of Americans in the hospital with COVID-19 has plummeted by about half to around 47,000 since early September.

In Florida, Miami-Dade County's mask mandate could be loosened by the end of October if the encouraging numbers continue, and nearby Broward County will discuss relaxing its requirement on Tuesday. The superintendent in metro Atlanta said he will consider waiving mask requirements at individual schools.

A high school outside Boston became the first in Massachusetts to make masks optional after it hit a state vaccination threshold. With about 95% of eligible people at Hopkinton High inoculated, school leaders voted to allow vaccinated students and staff to go maskless for a three-week trial period starting Nov. 1.

Still, there are some troubling indicators, including the onset of cold weather, which sends people indoors, where the virus can more easily spread.

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With required mask use reduced in much of the U.S., the University of Washington's influential COVID-19 forecasting model is predicting increasing infections and hospitalizations in November.

Also, COVID-19 deaths per day have begun to creep back up again after a decline that started in late September. Deaths are running at about 1,700 per day, up from close to 1,500 two weeks ago.

The virus is still striking unvaccinated communities, many of them rural areas in states including North Dakota, Wyoming, Alaska and Minnesota. More than 67% of the nation's eligible population is fully vaccinated, and the Biden administration is getting closer to enacting a workplace vaccine mandate for every business in the country with more than 100 employees.

In Alaska, which has ranked at or near the top in per-capita case rates over the last month, hospitals remain strained, but health care workers are not speaking out the way they had, said Jared Kosin, president and CEO of the Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association. A recent debate over masks in Alaska's largest city, Anchorage, grew heated, and hospital and public health officials last month reported hostilities toward health care workers related to COVID-19.

It's not yet clear, he said, if the state has peaked in terms of cases in this latest surge.

"It's not letting up and I think that's the hardest part with this. It's not like you can see hope on the horizon, you know we're going to see a rapid decline and get through it. It just seems to come and go and when it comes it hits really hard."

In sparsely populated Wyoming, which has one of the nation's lowest vaccination rates, hospitals are coping with more patients than at any other point in the pandemic. The vast majority of hospitalized patients in Wyoming haven't gotten the vaccine, the state's vaccination rate is only about 43%. Only West Virginia ranks lower.

"It's like a war zone," public health officer Dr. Mark Dowell told a county health board about the situation at Wyoming Medical Center, the Casper Star Tribune reported. "The ICU is overrun."

In smaller hospitals in North Dakota, many people are getting long-delayed treatments for other ailments, but combined with COVID patients, facilities are pushed to the limit, said Dan Olson, executive director of a network that includes many of those facilities.

"You can talk in the morning and they have beds and by afternoon they might be at capacity," Olson said.

In rural Minnesota, a man waited two days for an intensive care bed and later died. Bob Cameron, 87, had gone to his hometown hospital in Hallock with severe gastrointestinal bleeding and COVID-19. Officials searched for space in a larger center.

The bleeding exhausted the hospital's blood supply, and state troopers drove 130 miles (209 kilometers) with new units, but his condition worsened after surgery and he died Oct. 13, the Minneapolis Star Tribune reported.

"We can't say for certain, of course, that if he got to an ICU bed sooner that he would have survived, but we just feel in our hearts that he would have," said Cameron's granddaughter, Janna Curry.

During a three-week stretch this month, rural hospitals in Minnesota were caring for more COVID-19 patients than those in the state's major urban center, Minneapolis-St. Paul.

Associated Press writers Carla Johnson in Washington state, Dave Kolpack in Fargo, North Dakota, and Becky Bohrer in Juneau, Alaska, contributed to this report.

Facebook profits rise amid revelations from leaked documents

By BARBARA ORTUTAY and KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writers

Amid fallout from the Facebook Papers documents supporting claims that the social network has valued financial success over user safety, Facebook on Monday reported higher profit for the latest quarter.

The company's latest show of financial strength followed an avalanche of reports on the Facebook Papers — a vast trove of redacted internal documents obtained by a consortium of news organizations, including The Associated Press — as well as Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen's Monday testimony to British lawmakers.

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Facebook said its net income grew 17% in the July-September period to \$9.19 billion, buoyed by strong advertising revenue. That's up from \$7.85 billion a year earlier. Revenue grew 35% to \$29.01 billion. The results exceeded analyst expectations for Facebook's results.

The company's shares rose 2.5% in after-hours trading after closing up 1% for the day.

"For now, the revenue picture for Facebook looks as good as can be expected," said eMarketer analyst Debra Aho Williamson. But she predicted more revelations and described the findings so far as "unsettling and stomach-churning."

CEO Mark Zuckerberg made only a brief mention of what he called the "recent debate around our company." Largely repeating statements he made after Haugen's Oct. 5 testimony before a U.S. Senate subcommittee, he insisted that he welcomes "good faith criticism" but considers the current storm a "co-ordinated effort" to paint a "false picture" of the company based on leaked documents.

"It makes a good soundbite to say that we don't solve these impossible tradeoffs because we're just focused on making money, but the reality is these questions are not primarily about our business, but about balancing difficult social values," Zuckerberg said.

Haugen, meanwhile, told a British parliamentary committee Monday that the social media giant stokes online hate and extremism, fails to protect children from harmful content and lacks any incentive to fix the problems, providing momentum for efforts by European governments working on stricter regulation of tech companies.

While her testimony echoed much of what she told the U.S. Senate this month, her in-person appearance drew intense interest from a British parliamentary committee that is much further along in drawing up legislation to rein in the power of social media companies.

Haugen told the committee of United Kingdom lawmakers that Facebook Groups amplifies online hate, saying algorithms that prioritize engagement take people with mainstream interests and push them to the extremes. The former Facebook data scientist said the company could add moderators to prevent groups over a certain size from being used to spread extremist views.

"Unquestionably, it's making hate worse," she said.

Haugen said she was "shocked" to hear that Facebook wants to double down on what Zuckerberg calls "the metaverse," the company's plan for an immersive online world it believes will be the next big internet trend.

"They're gonna hire 10,000 engineers in Europe to work on the metaverse," Haugen said. "I was like, 'Wow, do you know what we could have done with safety if we had 10,000 more engineers?'" she said.

Facebook says it wants regulation for tech companies and was glad the U.K. was leading the way.

"While we have rules against harmful content and publish regular transparency reports, we agree we need regulation for the whole industry so that businesses like ours aren't making these decisions on our own," Facebook said Monday.

It pointed to investing \$13 billion (9.4 billion pounds) on safety and security since 2016 and asserted that it's "almost halved" the amount of hate speech over the last three quarters.

Haugen accused Facebook-owned Instagram of failing to keep children under 13 — the minimum user age — from opening accounts, saying it wasn't doing enough to protect kids from content that, for example, makes them feel bad about their bodies.

"Facebook's own research describes it as an addict's narrative. Kids say, 'This makes me unhappy, I feel like I don't have the ability to control my usage of it, and I feel like if I left, I'd be ostracized,'" she said.

The company last month delayed plans for a kids' version of Instagram, geared toward those under 13, in order to address concerns about the vulnerability of younger users.

Pressed on whether she believes Facebook is fundamentally evil, Haugen demurred and said, "I can't see into the hearts of men." Facebook is not evil, but negligent, she suggested.

It was Haugen's second appearance before lawmakers after she testified in the U.S. about the danger she says the company poses, from harming children to inciting political violence and fueling misinformation. Haugen cited internal research documents she secretly copied before leaving her job in Facebook's civic integrity unit.

The documents, which Haugen provided to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, allege Facebook prioritized profits over safety and hid its own research from investors and the public. Some stories based on the files have already been published, exposing internal turmoil after Facebook was blindsided by the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol riot and how it dithered over curbing divisive content in India. More is to come.

Representatives from Facebook and other social media companies plan to speak to the British committee Thursday.

Haugen is scheduled to meet next month with European Union officials in Brussels, where the bloc's executive commission is updating its digital rulebook to better protect internet users by holding online companies more responsible for illegal or dangerous content.

Under the U.K. rules, expected to take effect next year, Silicon Valley giants face an ultimate penalty of up to 10% of their global revenue for any violations. The EU is proposing a similar penalty.

See full coverage of the "Facebook Papers" here: <https://apnews.com/hub/the-facebook-papers>

Associated Press writer Marcy Gordon in Washington contributed to this report.

Sheriff: Newly ID'd Gacy victim's death was news to family

By DON BABWIN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) —

When the discovery of more than two dozen bodies stashed under John Wayne Gacy's house near Chicago was making headlines all over the world in the late 1970s, Francis Wayne Alexander's family in North Carolina didn't think much of it. The way they saw it, Alexander had cut off communication with them because he wanted to be left alone.

Then came news this month that for more than 40 years, the man they knew as Wayne was known as Victim #5 in the city where he had gone to start a new life. They were told that DNA tests on the remains of one of the half-dozen unidentified victims of the notorious serial killer were Alexander's.

"They just loved him, but they thought that he wanted nothing more to do with them, so that's why there was never a missing person's report," Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart said at a news conference Monday announcing the latest victim identification.

Though Dart said Alexander's mother and other relatives didn't want to speak publicly about his identification as a Gacy victim, Alexander's sister, Carolyn Sanders, made clear that the family never stopped thinking of what might have become of him.

"It is hard, even 45 years later, to know the fate of our beloved Wayne," Sanders wrote in a statement released by Dart's office. "He was killed at the hands of a vile and evil man. Our hearts are heavy, and our sympathies go out to the other victims' families. ... We can now lay to rest what happened and move forward by honoring Wayne."

Alexander's remains were among 26 sets that police found in the crawl space under Gacy's home just outside the city. Three other victims were found buried on Gacy's property and another four people whom Gacy admitted killing were found in waterways south of Chicago.

Eight victims, including Alexander, were buried before police could determine who they were. But Dart's office exhumed the eight sets of remains in 2011 and called on anyone who had a male relative disappear in the Chicago area in the 1970s, when Gacy was trolling for victims, to submit DNA.

Within weeks, the sheriff's office announced that it had identified one set of remains as those of William Bundy, a 19-year-old construction worker. In 2017, it identified a second set as those of 16-year-old Jimmy Haakenson, who disappeared after he phoned his mother in Minnesota and told her that he was in Chicago.

Dart and Lt. Jason Moran shared what they knew about Alexander. Born in North Carolina, he moved to New York, where he was married, and then on to Chicago in 1975, where he soon divorced.

The last known records of Alexander's life were traffic tickets he received, the last of which came in January 1976. Unlike many victims who were lured to Gacy's home with the promise that he'd get them construction work, Alexander worked in bars and clubs and there was no record of him working in con-

struction or having made contact with Gacy.

But Alexander did live in an area that Gacy frequented and that was where some Gacy's other victims had lived, including Bundy.

Unlike with Bundy and Haakenson, who were identified because family members heeded Dart's 2011 call for the public to submit DNA, Alexander was identified through a partnership between the sheriff's office and the DNA Doe Project. The nonprofit compared Victim #5's DNA profile to profiles on a genealogy website to find potential relatives. That led it to Alexander's family, and Alexander's mother and half-brother provided their DNA for comparison.

Between the genetic testing, financial records, post-mortem reports and other information, investigators were able to confirm that the remains were Alexander's. They were able to get a general sense of when he was killed because they knew when the victim who was buried on top of him went missing.

Dart and Moran said the department might be able to use the method used to identify Alexander to identify scores of other people in the county who died and were buried anonymously.

"This is one of the newest investigative tools for investigations of missing and unidentified persons," Moran said.

Dart declined to give Alexander's hometown, saying the family hasn't said if it wants to bring his remains to North Carolina or keep them where they've been buried for all these years. But in its news release, the sheriff's office did thank the police department in Erwin, about 35 miles (56 kilometers) south of Raleigh, for its help.

The submission of DNA from people who suspected Gacy might have killed their loved ones has helped police solve at least 11 cold cases of homicides that had nothing to do with Gacy, who was executed in 1994. It has also helped families find loved ones who while missing, were alive, including a man in Oregon who had no idea his family was looking for him.

Tesla's market value tops \$1T after Hertz orders 100K cars

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — Hertz announced Monday that it will buy 100,000 electric vehicles from Tesla, one of the largest purchases of battery-powered cars in history and the latest evidence of the nation's increasing commitment to EV technology.

The news of the deal triggered a rally in Tesla's stock, driving the carmaker's market value over the \$1 trillion mark for the first time.

The purchase by one of the world's leading rental car companies reflects its confidence that electric vehicles are gaining acceptance with environmentally minded consumers as an alternative to vehicles powered by petroleum-burning internal combustion engines.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Mark Fields, Hertz' interim CEO, said that Teslas are already arriving at the company's sites and should be available for rental starting in November.

Hertz said in its announcement that it will complete its purchases of the Tesla Model 3 small cars by the end of 2022. It also said it will establish its own electric vehicle charging network as it strives to produce the largest rental fleet of electric vehicles in North America.

Fields wouldn't say how much Hertz is spending for the order. But he said the company has sufficient capital and a healthy balance sheet after having emerged from bankruptcy protection in June.

The deal likely is worth around \$4 billion because each Model 3 has a base price of about \$40,000. It also ranks at the top of the list of electric vehicle orders by a single company. In 2019, Amazon ordered 100,000 electric delivery vans from Rivian, a startup manufacturer of electric van, pickup trucks and SUVs. Amazon is an investor in Rivian.

The Hertz order sent Tesla shares soaring nearly 13% to a record closing price of \$1,024.86, and pushed the world's most valuable automaker's total market value to just over \$1 trillion. The wealth of CEO Elon Musk, the richest person in the world, grew 11.4% to \$255.8 billion, according to Forbes.

In his interview with the AP, Fields made clear his belief that electric vehicles are increasingly moving into

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the mainstream and that Hertz intends to be a leading provider of EVs to rental customers. He pointed to surveys showing that over the past five years, consumer interest in electric vehicles has grown dramatically.

"More are willing to try and buy," he said. "It's pretty stunning."

Fields said that Hertz, which is based in Estero, Florida, is in discussions with other automakers, too, about buying additional electric vehicles as it expands its EV fleet as more models enter the marketplace.

Hertz also is investing in its own charging network. Fields said it has plans for 3,000 chargers in 65 locations across the United States by the end of 2022 and 4,000 by the end of 2023. Many of the sites will be at Hertz locations such as airports, he said, while others will be in suburban areas.

Customers also would be able to use Tesla's own large charging network for a fee, Fields said. The company has a network of about 25,000 chargers worldwide.

Fields declined to say how much Hertz will charge to rent the Teslas or whether they would be more expensive for customers than gas-powered vehicles.

Daniel Ives, a technology analyst at Wedbush Securities, wrote in a note Monday to investors that Hertz's order represents a "major feather in the cap" for Tesla and shows that a broad adoption of electric vehicles is under way "as part of this oncoming green tidal wave hitting the U.S."

China and Europe have been ahead of the U.S. on vehicle electrification. But demand in the United States is accelerating, Ives noted, with Tesla leading the way, followed by startup Lucid Motors, General Motors, Ford and others that are chasing a potential \$5 trillion market opportunity over the next decade.

In an interview, Ives said he expected other rental car companies to follow Hertz's lead.

"It's a wake-up call for the rest of the industry as well," he said.

Ives suggested that the deal will help Tesla and other manufacturers by giving thousands of consumers the experience of driving electric vehicles who might not otherwise have done so.

"It's the ultimate test drive," he said. "For a company that doesn't normally market, this is the best brand and marketing deal they've ever struck," he said of Tesla.

Hertz's order may also help alleviate a nationwide shortage of rental cars, he said. Automakers have slashed production and sales to rental car companies because of a global shortage of computer chips.

Still, Ives said he doesn't expect Hertz to receive significant numbers of Teslas until the automaker's new factory near Austin, Texas, starts producing late next year.

Hertz likely will charge customers more to rent the Model 3s compared with conventional vehicles with combustion engines, Ives noted.

Hertz Global Holdings Inc. filed for bankruptcy protection in May 2020, two months after the coronavirus erupted across the country. It was among the first major corporations to be felled by the pandemic as infections surged and shut down travel on a global scale for both companies and vacationers.

In October, Hertz named Fields, a former Ford Motor Co. CEO, as its interim chief executive.

Shortly after Hertz's announcement Monday, the National Transportation Safety Board released a letter from its chairwoman chastising Tesla for failing to respond to recommendations that emerged from several fatal crash investigations involving the company's Autopilot partially automated driver-assist system. The agency recommended four years ago that Tesla limit where its Autopilot system can operate and that it better monitor drivers to make sure they're paying attention.

Texas governor approves state voting maps redrawn by GOP

By ACACIA CORONADO Report for America/Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Republican Texas Gov. Greg Abbott on Monday signed redrawn voting maps that pave a safer path for the GOP's slipping majority, leaving opponents hoping courts will block the newly gerrymandered districts before they can be used in the 2022 elections.

Abbott signed the maps Monday, according to a spokeswoman for the governor. The governor's office did not make an announcement.

Civil rights groups have already filed federal lawsuits that accuse GOP mapmakers of disenfranchising Hispanic and Black residents who are driving the state's rapid growth. Texas added 4 million new residents

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since 2010, but under the new U.S. House maps, Republicans added no new districts where Latinos hold a majority.

The new maps end a highly charged year over voting rights in Texas, where Democrats this summer left the state to begin a 38-day holdout in protest of a sweeping elections overhaul.

"The only time that communities of color can get justice is going to the courthouse," Democratic state Rep. Rafael Anchia said before the final vote on the maps in the Texas House last week.

The newly signed maps mark an end to the state's once-in-a-decade redistricting process in which lawmakers decide how Texas' nearly 30 million residents are sorted into political districts and who is elected to represent them. Texas was the only state awarded two additional congressional seats in the 2020 census, increasing the state's already outsize political clout.

The state's Mexican American Legislative Caucus, who are mostly Democrats, are seeking documents over who had a hand in the drawing of the maps. The Mexican American Legal Defense Fund, along with other minority and voting advocacy groups, have also filed a separate lawsuit challenging the maps in a federal court.

According to Census figures, more than 9 of 10 new Texans in the last decade were people of color.

Texas Republicans have defended the maps, saying race was not taken into account, except for when preserving equal representation. Republican state Sen. Joan Huffman, who authored the maps and leads the Senate Redistricting Committee, told fellow lawmakers that they were "drawn blind to race." She also said they were scrutinized by a legal team for violations of the Voting Rights Act.

Texas has had to defend redrawn district lines in court since the Voting Rights Act took effect, but this is the first time since a U.S. Supreme Court ruling said Texas and other states with a history of racial discrimination no longer need to have the Justice Department scrutinize the maps before they are approved.

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

Officials: Iran behind drone attack on US base in Syria

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and ROBERT BURNS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. officials say they believe Iran was behind the drone attack last week at the military outpost in southern Syria where American troops are based.

Officials said Monday the U.S. believes that Iran resourced and encouraged the attack, but that the drones were not launched from Iran. They were Iranian drones, and Iran appears to have facilitated their use, officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss details that have not been made public.

Officials said they believe the attacks involved as many as five drones laden with explosive charges, and that they hit both the U.S. side of al-Tanf garrison and the side where Syrian opposition forces stay.

There were no reported injuries or deaths as a result of the attack.

U.S. and coalition troops are based at al-Tanf to train Syrian forces on patrols to counter Islamic State militants. The base is also located on a road serving as a vital link for Iranian-backed forces from Tehran all the way to southern Lebanon and Israel.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby declined to provide details when asked about the report during a news conference Monday. He called it a "complex, coordinated and deliberate attack" and said the U.S. has seen similar ones before from Shia militia groups that are backed by Iran. But he would not go into specifics and said he had no update on the munitions used in the attack.

Kirby also declined to say if troops were warned ahead of time or whether the U.S. intends to make a military response.

"The protection and security of our troops overseas remains a paramount concern for the secretary," Kirby said, referring to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, "and that if there is to be a response, it will be at a time and a place and a manner of our choosing, and we certainly won't get ahead of those kinds of

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decisions.”

Pro-Iran media outlets have been saying that the attack on Tanf was carried out by “Syria’s allies” — an apparent reference to Iran-backed groups — in retaliation for an attack days earlier near the historic Syrian town of Palmyra. Israel has been blamed for the attack, but U.S. officials say America was not involved with it.

“You can consider that the strike on Tanf was an implementation” of previous promises by Syrian allies to retaliate for Palmyra, according to an official with the so-called Axis of Resistance, an anti-Western political-military alliance that includes Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and other groups fighting alongside Syrian President Bashar Assad’s forces.

The al-Tanf attack came in a period of rising tensions with Iran. The Biden administration this week said international diplomatic efforts to get Iran back into negotiations to return to a 2015 nuclear deal were at a “critical place” and that patience is wearing thin.

The last major Iranian attack on U.S. forces was in January 2020, when Tehran launched a barrage of ballistic missiles on al-Asad air base in Iraq. U.S. and coalition troops were warned of the incoming missiles and were able to take cover, but more than 100 U.S. service members received traumatic brain injuries as a result of the blasts.

The Iran attack was in response to the U.S. drone strike earlier that month near the Baghdad airport that killed Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi militia leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

Two months after the al-Asad assault, U.S. fighter jets struck five sites in retaliation, targeting Iranian-backed Shiite militia members believed responsible for the January rocket attack.

_____ Associated Press writer Bassem Mroue in Beirut contributed to this report.

UN: Greenhouse gas levels hit a new record, cuts fall short

By JAMEY KEATEN and FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Greenhouse gas concentrations hit a new record high last year and increased at a faster rate than the annual average for the last decade despite a temporary reduction during pandemic lockdowns, the World Meteorological Organization said in a report published Monday.

The news came as the United Nations climate office warned that the world remains off target for meeting its goal of cutting emissions as part of international efforts to curb global warming.

Both announcements came days before the start of a U.N. climate change conference in Glasgow, Scotland. Many environmental activists, policymakers and scientists say the Oct. 31-Nov. 12 event, known as COP26 for short, marks an important and even crucial opportunity for concrete commitments to the targets set out in the 2015 Paris climate accord.

“The Greenhouse Gas Bulletin contains a stark, scientific message for climate change negotiators at COP26,” World Meteorological Organization Secretary-General Petteri Taalas said of his agency’s annual report on heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere. “At the current rate of increase in greenhouse gas concentrations, we will see a temperature increase by the end of this century far in excess of the Paris agreement targets of 1.5 to 2 degrees Celsius (2.7-3.6 Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels.”

According to the report, concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide were all above levels in the pre-industrial era before 1750, when human activities “started disrupting Earth’s natural equilibrium.”

The report draws on information collected by a network that monitors the amount of greenhouse gases that remain in the atmosphere after some quantities are absorbed by oceans and the biosphere.

In its report, the Geneva-based agency also pointed to signs of a worrying new development: Parts of the Amazon rainforest have gone from being a carbon “sink” that sucks carbon dioxide from the air to a source of CO2 due to deforestation and reduced humidity in the region, it said.

“One of the striking messages from our report is that the Amazonian region, which used to be a sink of carbon, has become a source of carbon dioxide,” Taalas said. “And that’s because of deforestation. It’s because of changes of the global local climate, especially. We have less humidity and less rainfall.”

Oksana Tarasova, chief of WMO’s atmospheric and environment research division, said the results showing

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the Amazon going from sink to source were a first, but he noted they were from a specific southeastern portion of the Amazon, not the entire rainforest.

The U.N. climate office said separately Monday that its assessment of the formal commitments made by countries that signed up to the Paris accord suggests the world could reduce its emissions by 83-88% by 2050 compared with 2019.

More worryingly, emissions in 2030 are projected to be 16% higher than in 2010, based on formal pledges so far.

"Such an increase, unless changed quickly, may lead to a temperature rise of about 2.7C (4.9F) by the end of the century," the U.N. said.

Experts argued that emissions must halve by 2030 compared with 2010 levels and essentially hit zero by mid-century, if the Paris goal of capping global warming at 2C, ideally no more than 1.5C, is to be achieved.

"Overshooting the temperature goals will lead to a destabilized world and endless suffering, especially among those who have contributed the least to the GHG emissions in the atmosphere," said Patricia Espinosa, who heads the U.N. climate office.

"We are nowhere near where science says we should be," she added.

However, recent announcements by China and India, the world's number one and number three emitters, weren't yet included in the analysis because they have yet to formally submit their targets to the U.N.

And Alok Sharma, who will preside over the U.N. talks in Glasgow, said progress had been made since the Paris deal was struck in 2015, when projections of existing emissions cuts pointed to warming of up to 4C.

The global average concentration of carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas, hit a new high of 413.2 parts per million last year, according to the WMO report. The 2020 increase was higher than the annual average over the last decade despite a 5.6% drop in carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels due to COVID-19 restrictions, WMO said.

Taalas said a level above 400 parts per million – which was breached in 2015 -- "has major negative repercussions for our daily lives and well-being, for the state of our planet and for the future of our children and grandchildren."

Human-incurred carbon dioxide emissions, which result mostly from burning fossil fuels like oil and gas or from cement production, amount to about two-thirds of the warming effect on the climate. WMO said overall, an economic retreat last year because of the pandemic "did not have any discernible impact on the atmospheric levels of greenhouse gases and their growth rates, although there was a temporary decline in new emissions."

Jordans reported from Berlin.

Follow AP's climate change coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/climate>

Microsoft: Russian-backed hackers targeting cloud services

By ALAN SUDERMAN Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Microsoft said Monday the same Russia-backed hackers responsible for the 2020 SolarWinds breach continue to attack the global technology supply chain and have been relentlessly targeting cloud service companies and others since summer.

The group, which Microsoft calls Nobelium, has employed a new strategy to piggyback on the direct access that cloud service resellers have to their customers' IT systems, hoping to "more easily impersonate an organization's trusted technology partner to gain access to their downstream customers." Resellers act as intermediaries between giant cloud companies and their ultimate customers, managing and customizing accounts.

"Fortunately, we have discovered this campaign during its early stages, and we are sharing these developments to help cloud service resellers, technology providers, and their customers take timely steps to help ensure Nobelium is not more successful," Tom Burt, a Microsoft vice president, said in a blog post.

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The Biden administration downplayed Microsoft's announcement. A U.S. government official briefed on the issue who insisted on anonymity to discuss the government's response noted that "the activities described were unsophisticated password spray and phishing, run-of-the mill operations for the purpose of surveillance that we already know are attempted every day by Russia and other foreign governments."

The Russian Embassy did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

U.S. and Russian ties have already been strained this year over a string of high-profile ransomware attacks against U.S. targets launched by Russia-based cyber gangs. U.S. President Joe Biden has warned to Russian President Vladimir Putin to get him to crack down on ransomware criminals, but several top administration cybersecurity officials have said recently that they have seen no evidence of that.

Supply chain attacks allow hackers to steal information from multiple targets by breaking into a single product they all use. The U.S. government has previously blamed Russia's SVR foreign intelligence agency for the SolarWinds hack, a supply-chain hack which went undetected for most of 2020, compromised several federal agencies and badly embarrassing Washington.

The hacking campaign is called SolarWinds after the U.S. software company whose product was used in that effort. The Biden administration in April placed new sanctions against six Russian companies that support the country's cyber efforts in response to the SolarWinds hack.

Microsoft has been observing Nobelium's latest campaign since May and has notified more than 140 companies targeted by the group, with as many as 14 believed to have been compromised. The attacks have been increasingly relentless since July, with Microsoft noting that it had informed 609 customers that they had been attacked 22,868 times by Nobelium, with a success rate in the low single digits. That's more attacks than Microsoft had flagged from all nation-state actors in the previous three years.

"Russia is trying to gain long-term, systematic access to a variety of points in the technology supply chain and establish a mechanism for surveilling – now or in the future – targets of interest to the Russian government," Burt said.

Microsoft did not name any of the hackers' targets in their latest campaign. But cybersecurity firm Mandiant said it had seen victims in both Europe and North America.

Mandiant Chief Technology Officer Charles Carmakal said the hackers' method of going after resellers make detection difficult.

"It shifts the initial intrusion away from the ultimate targets, which in some situations are organizations with more mature cyber defenses, to smaller technology partners with less mature cyber defenses," he said.

AP Business Writer Matt Ott in Silver Spring, Maryland, contributed to this report.

Moderna says its low-dose COVID shot works for kids 6 to 11

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

Moderna said Monday that a low dose of its COVID-19 vaccine is safe and appears to work in 6- to 11-year-olds, as the manufacturer joins its rival Pfizer in moving toward expanding shots to children.

Pfizer's kid-size vaccine doses are closer to widespread use. They are undergoing evaluation by the Food and Drug Administration for youngsters in nearly the same age group, 5 to 11, and could be available by early November. The company's vaccine already is authorized for anyone 12 or older.

Moderna hasn't yet gotten the go-ahead to offer its vaccine to teens but is studying lower doses in younger children while it waits.

Researchers tested two shots for the 6- to 11-year-olds, given a month apart, that each contained half the dose given to adults. Preliminary results showed vaccinated children developed virus-fighting antibodies similar to levels that young adults produce after full-strength shots, Moderna said in a news release.

The study involved 4,753 children ages 6 to 11 who got either the vaccine or dummy shots. Moderna said that like adults, the vaccinated youngsters had temporary side effects including fatigue, headache, fever and injection site pain.

The study was too small to spot any extremely rare side effects, such as heart inflammation that some-

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times occurs after either the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines, mostly among young men.

Moderna released no further details and hasn't submitted its data to a scientific journal but said it plans to share the interim results with the FDA and global regulators soon. The study is still going on, and the company cannot calculate the vaccine's effectiveness in actually preventing infections in children unless there are sufficient COVID-19 cases to compare rates between vaccinated and unvaccinated participants.

The FDA hasn't yet ruled on the company's application to expand its vaccinations to 12- to 17-year-olds, although some countries have cleared Moderna's shots for adolescents.

But the U.S. is expected to begin vaccinating children under 12 sometime next month, if the FDA clears low doses of the Pfizer vaccine for 5- to 11-year-olds. Pfizer reported last week that its kid-size doses proved nearly 91% effective at preventing symptomatic COVID-19 in that age group, even as the extra-contagious delta variant was spreading widely.

FDA's advisers will weigh Pfizer's evidence in a public meeting Tuesday. If the agency authorizes Pfizer's kid shots, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention the following week is set to recommend who should receive them.

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Biden 'positive' on budget deal; Manchin OK with wealth tax

By LISA MASCARO and HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Pivotal Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin appears to be on board with White House proposals for new taxes on billionaires and certain corporations to help pay for President Joe Biden's scaled-back social services and climate change package.

Biden said Monday he felt "very positive" about reaching agreement on his big domestic policy bill, aiming for votes in Congress as soon as this week — though that is far from certain.

"That's my hope," the president said before leaving his home state of Delaware for a trip to New Jersey to highlight the child care proposals in the package and his infrastructure measure.

Democrats are working intensely to try again to wrap up talks, scaling back what had been what had been a sweeping \$3.5 trillion plan so the president can spotlight his administration's achievements to world leaders at two overseas summits on the economy and climate change that get underway later this week.

Biden huddled with the conservative West Virginia Democrat Manchin and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer at the president's Delaware home on Sunday as they work on resolving the disputes between centrists and progressives that have stalled the Democrats' wide-ranging bill. A person who insisted on anonymity to discuss Manchin's position told The Associated Press the senator is agreeable to the White House's new approach on the tax proposals.

It's now being eyed as at least a \$1.75 trillion package. That's within a range that could still climb considerably higher, according to a second person who insisted on anonymity to discuss the private talks.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said that even at "half" the original \$3.5 trillion proposed, Biden's signature domestic initiative would be larger than any other legislative package with big investments in health care, child care and strategies to tackle climate change.

"It is less than what was projected to begin with, but it's still bigger than anything we have ever done in terms of addressing the needs of America's working families," Pelosi said Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union."

Biden met with Manchin and Schumer, D-N.Y., at the president's home in Wilmington after Democrats missed last week's deadline to resolve disputes. Biden has said he'd like to see a \$2 trillion package and they are trying again this upcoming week to reach agreement.

Resolving the revenue side is key as the Democrats insist the new spending will be fully paid for by the various taxes.

Manchin and another Democrat, Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, have almost on their own halted Biden's

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proposal from advancing. With Republican opposition and an evenly split 50-50 Senate, Biden has no votes to spare, and the two Democratic senators have insisted on reducing the size of the enormous package and pressed for other changes.

One key debate has been over the revenues to pay for the package, after Sinema rejected an earlier plan to reverse the Republican-led 2017 tax cuts and raise rates on corporations earning more than \$5 million a year and wealthy Americans earning more than \$400,000, or \$450,000 for couples.

Instead, the White House is considering a tax on the investment incomes of billionaires — fewer than 1,000 of the wealthiest Americans with at least \$1 billion in assets. It also has floated a 15% corporate minimum tax that is designed to ensure all companies pay what Biden calls their “fair share” — ending the practice of some big-name firms paying no taxes.

It’s unclear what level of the new taxes Manchin would support, but he generally backs the White House proposals, according to the person who insisted on anonymity to discuss Manchin’s position. Neither person insisting on anonymity was authorized to discuss the negotiations by name.

The White House said the breakfast meeting was a “productive discussion” about the president’s agenda. The talks appeared to last for hours, but no decisions were announced. The Democrats “continued to make progress,” the White House said in its post-meeting statement.

Democrats initially planned that Biden’s package would contain \$3.5 trillion worth of spending and tax initiatives over 10 years. But demands by moderates led by Manchin and Sinema to contain costs mean its final price tag could well be less than \$2 trillion.

Disputes remain over far-reaching investments, including plans to expand Medicare coverage with dental, vision and hearing aid benefits for seniors; child care assistance; and free pre-kindergarten.

Pelosi, D-Calif., said on CNN that Democrats were still working to keep in provisions for four weeks of paid family leave but acknowledged that other proposals such as expanding Medicare to include dental coverage could prove harder to save because of cost.

Pelosi reiterated that about 90% is wrapped up and said she expected an agreement by week’s end, paving the way for a House vote on a separate \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill before next Sunday, Oct. 31, when a series of transportation programs will lapse. The Senate approved over the summer the package of road, broadband and other public works projects, but the measure stalled in the House during deliberations on the broader Biden bill.

Manchin, whose state has a major coal industry, has opposed Biden’s initial climate change proposals, which involved a plan to penalize utilities that do not switch quickly to clean energy. Democrats are now also compiling other climate change strategies to meet Biden’s goal of reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030.

Democrats were hoping Biden could cite major accomplishments when he attends a global conference in Scotland on climate change in early November after attending a summit of world leaders in Rome.

Sen. Angus King, a Maine independent who caucuses with Democrats, said the expected cuts to the clean energy provisions in the spending bill were especially disappointing.

“If we’re going to get the rest of the world to take serious steps to remedy this problem, we’ve got to do it ourselves,” King said on NBC’s “Meet the Press.”

Democrats also want to make progress that could help Democrat Terry McAuliffe win a neck-and-neck Nov. 2 gubernatorial election in Virginia.

Associated Press writers Alan Fram and Darlene Superville contributed to this report.

Plan for UK coal mine brings hope to some, horror to others

By JO KEARNEY and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

WHITEHAVEN, England (AP) — In the patchwork of hills, lakes and sea that make up England’s northwest corner, most people see beauty. Dave Craddock sees broken dreams.

The coal mine where the 74-year-old once worked has long closed. The chemical factory that employed thousands is gone. The nuclear power plant is being decommissioned.

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To Craddock, a plan for a new coal mine that could bring hundreds of jobs is a sign that "at least someone's interested in the area" and an opportunity "for people who have got mining in their blood."

But environmentalists view the proposed mine with horror. They say it sends a disastrous message as the United Kingdom welcomes world leaders, advocates, diplomats and scientists to Glasgow, Scotland, for a United Nations Climate Change Conference that starts Oct. 31.

Many scientists and activists consider the two-week COP26 conference a last chance to nail down carbon-cutting promises that could keep global warming within manageable limits.

"The U.K. sets itself out as a leader, but it's building a coal mine, which is the most polluting thing that you can do," Rebecca Willis, a professor of energy and climate governance at Lancaster University, said. "It sends a signal to the rest of the world that the U.K. isn't actually serious."

The proposed deep mine symbolizes a dilemma facing the British government: It aims to generate all of the U.K.'s electricity from clean energy sources by 2035 and to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. But Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson has also pledged to boost prosperity in England's neglected north with new factories, roads, railways and other infrastructure that environmentalists say is at odds with the government's green agenda.

West Cumbria Mining, the company hoping to build Britain's first deep coal mine in three decades, wants to extract coking coal — a type used to make steel rather than for fuel — from under the Irish Sea. It plans to process the coal on the site of a shuttered chemical plant in Whitehaven, 340 miles (550 kilometers) northwest of London.

The company describes the project as a new kind of mine, far removed from the dirty, dangerous behemoths whose brick and steel skeletons dot the region's landscape. West Cumbria Mining says it will be the world's first net-zero coal mine, with all of its carbon emissions reduced or offset by credits to the Gold Standard Foundation, an environmental organization. Plans show curved modern buildings that blend in with the surrounding hills.

Alexander Greaves, a lawyer for the mining company, said while opening a new coal mine might look bad at first glance, the Cumbria County project aims to be different by design.

"Showing these mines can be made by law...to capture greenhouse gas emissions and required to offset any residual impact...is true environmental leadership," he said.

Environmentalists scoff at that idea.

"It's blindingly obvious that the quickest way to stop these carbon emissions and to make radical changes — which we have to do in the next 10 years — is to stop opening any new coal mines," said Maggie Mason, a local opponent of the mine. "The same is true for oil wells and gas wells."

Nature and industry have long vied for supremacy in this part of England. Whitehaven sits on the edge of the Lake District National Park, an area whose beauty inspired William Wordsworth and Beatrix Potter. The area also once was home to industries that offered hard, dirty jobs in factories and mines.

These days, wind turbines spin beside the sea — a sign of Britain's transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, which last year produced almost half of the country's electricity. That share shrank this year, however, partly due to a lack of wind.

With the cost of imported natural gas soaring and plans for new nuclear plants moving at a crawl, the U.K. government is still considering new fossil-fuel projects.

In the North Atlantic, west of the Shetland islands, Shell and Siccar Point Energy plan to extract 170 million barrels of oil from the Cambo oilfield. Environmental groups are trying to force the British government to stop the drilling. Johnson's administration is reluctant to intervene, saying "sources like Cambo are still required" to meet Britain's energy needs as it shifts to a low-carbon economy.

"We need to transition our existing oil and gas sector to a decarbonized platform," Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said last month in the House of Commons, accusing Cambo opponents of wanting "a complete eclipse" of the oil and gas industries "with 250,000 jobs vanishing overnight."

In West Cumbria, the local authority approved the mine a year ago. The area's Conservative mayor, Mike Starkie, says it will be "transformational."

The British government, under pressure from opponents and its own environmental commitments,

intervened in March and ordered an inquiry by a planning inspector. The inspector says he will make a recommendation around the end of the year. Then the U.K. government will make a final decision — well after COP26 has ended.

Local supporters of the mine believe they are the silent majority, at risk of being drowned out by environmental activists. Some rallied at the site this month, holding signs that read “Part of the answer, not part of the problem” and “Cumbria coke is the real thing.”

“It’s been very simplified in the press that it’s jobs against the climate,” said John Greasley, who helps run a Facebook page in support of the mine. “And, of course, the climate is going to win every time. But it’s deeper than that.”

Lawless reported from London.

Follow AP’s climate coverage at <http://apnews.com/hub/climate>

China to start vaccinating children to age 3 as cases spread

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Children as young as 3 will start receiving COVID-19 vaccines in China, where 76% of the population has been fully vaccinated and authorities are maintaining a zero-tolerance policy toward outbreaks.

China becomes one of the very few countries in the world to start vaccinating children that young against the virus. Cuba, for one, has begun a vaccine drive for children as young as 2. The U.S. and many European countries allow COVID-19 shots down to age 12, though the U.S. is moving quickly toward opening vaccinations to 5- to 11-year-olds.

Local city and provincial level governments in at least five Chinese provinces issued notices in recent days announcing that children ages 3 to 11 will be required to get their vaccinations.

The expansion of the vaccination campaign comes as parts of China take new clampdown measures to try to stamp out small outbreaks. Gansu, a northwestern province heavily dependent on tourism, closed all tourist sites Monday after finding new COVID-19 cases. Residents in parts of Inner Mongolia have been ordered to stay indoors because of an outbreak there.

The National Health Commission reported that 35 new cases of local transmission had been detected over the past 24 hours, four of them in Gansu. An additional 19 cases were found in the Inner Mongolia region, with others scattered around the country.

China has employed lockdowns, quarantines and compulsory testing for the virus throughout the pandemic and has largely stamped out cases of local infection while fully vaccinating 1.07 billion people out of a population of 1.4 billion.

In particular, the government is concerned about the spread of the more contagious delta variant by travelers and about having a largely vaccinated public ahead of the Beijing Olympics in February. Overseas spectators already have been banned from the Winter Games, and participants will have to stay in a bubble separating them from people outside.

China’s most widely used vaccines, from Sinopharm and Sinovac, have shown efficacy in preventing severe disease and transmission of the virus, based on public data. But the protection they offer against the delta variant has not been answered definitively, although officials say they remain protective.

Hubei, Fujian and Hainan provinces all issued provincial level notices alerting new vaccination requirements, while individual cities in Zhejiang province and Hunan province have also issued similar announcements.

China in June had approved two vaccines — Sinopharm’s from the Beijing Institute of Biological Products and Sinovac — for children ages 3 to 17, but it has only been vaccinating those 12 and older. In August, regulators approved another, Sinopharm’s from the Wuhan Institute of Biological Products.

After the vaccines received domestic approval for children in China, foreign governments began giving the shots to children in their own countries. Cambodia uses both Sinovac and Sinopharm’s shots in children 6 to 11. Regulators in Chile approved Sinovac for children as young as 6. In Argentina, regulators approved

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the Sinopharm vaccine for children as young as age 3.

Many developing countries left out of the race to get shots from Western pharmaceutical companies like Pfizer and Moderna bought Chinese vaccines. China has shipped more than 1.2 billion doses as of September, according to its Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Even with widespread domestic and global use, not every parent is reassured about the vaccine, citing less publicly available data on the shots.

Wang Lu, who lives in the southern city of Fuzhou in Fujian province, said she isn't particularly rushing to get her 3-year-old son vaccinated. "I'm just not very clear on the vaccine's safety profile, so I don't really want to get him vaccinated, at the very least, I don't want to be the first," Wang said.

Sinovac started an efficacy trial with 14,000 child participants across multiple countries in September. Its approval in China was based on smaller phase 1 and phase 2 trials. Sinopharm's Beijing shot was also approved based on smaller phase 1 and phase 2 trials. These were published later in peer-reviewed journals.

Other parents said they weren't concerned, given that many other people had already gotten the shot.

Wu Cong, a mom of a 7-year old, said her daughter's school in Shanghai hadn't yet notified them of any vaccinations.

"I think this isn't too different from the flu vaccine, there's already been so many people vaccinated, so I don't have too many worries," said Wu.

Associated Press researcher Chen Si in Shanghai contributed to this report.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Oct. 26, the 299th day of 2021. There are 66 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On October 26th, 2001, President George W. Bush signed the USA Patriot Act, giving authorities unprecedented ability to search, seize, detain or eavesdrop in their pursuit of possible terrorists.

On this date:

In 1774, the First Continental Congress adjourned in Philadelphia.

In 1825, the Erie Canal opened in upstate New York, connecting Lake Erie and the Hudson River.

In 1861, the legendary Pony Express officially ceased operations, giving way to the transcontinental telegraph. (The last run of the Pony Express was completed the following month.)

In 1881, the "Gunfight at the O.K. Corral" took place in Tombstone, Arizona, as Wyatt Earp, his two brothers and "Doc" Holliday confronted Ike Clanton's gang. Three members of Clanton's gang were killed; Earp's brothers and Holliday were wounded.

In 1944, the World War II Battle of Leyte (LAY'-tay) Gulf ended in a major Allied victory over Japanese forces, whose naval capabilities were badly crippled.

In 1965, the Beatles received MBE medals as Members of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire from Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace.

In 1975, Anwar Sadat became the first Egyptian president to pay an official visit to the United States.

In 1979, South Korean President Park Chung-hee was shot to death by the head of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency, Kim Jae-kyu.

In 1984, "Baby Fae," a newborn with a severe heart defect, was given the heart of a baboon in an experimental transplant in Loma Linda, California. (Baby Fae lived 21 days with the animal heart.)

In 2002, a hostage siege by Chechen rebels at a Moscow theater ended with 129 of the 800-plus captives dead, most from a knockout gas used by Russian special forces who stormed the theater; 41 rebels also died.

In 2010, Iran began loading fuel into the core of its first nuclear power plant.

In 2018, former Fox News Channel personality Megyn Kelly was fired from her NBC morning show after

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triggering an uproar by suggesting it was OK for white people to wear blackface at Halloween.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama recalled his struggles with student loan debt as he unveiled a plan at the University of Colorado Denver aimed at giving millions of young people some relief on their payments. In a verdict that disappointed pro-democracy activists, two Egyptian policemen who beat a man to death were convicted of the lesser charge of manslaughter and given a relatively light sentence in a case that helped spark Egypt's uprising.

Five years ago: The Pentagon worked to stave off a public relations nightmare, suspending efforts to force California National Guard troops who served in Iraq and Afghanistan to repay enlistment bonuses that might have been improperly awarded. The Chicago Cubs beat Cleveland 5-1 in Game 2 for their first victory during a World Series since 1945.

One year ago: Amy Coney Barrett was confirmed to the Supreme Court by a deeply divided Senate, with Republicans overpowering Democrats to install President Donald Trump's nominee days before the election and secure a likely conservative court majority for years to come. Police in Philadelphia shot and killed Walter Wallace, a 27-year-old Black man with a history of mental health problems, after yelling at him to drop his knife; the shooting, which brought the issues of policing and racism back into the presidential campaign in its closing days, was followed by days of civil unrest and store break-ins that led the mayor to impose an overnight curfew the following night.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Jaclyn Smith is 76. TV host Pat Sajak is 75. Hillary Rodham Clinton is 74. Musician Bootsy Collins is 70. Actor James Pickens Jr. is 69. Rock musician David Was is 69. Rock musician Keith Strickland (The B-52s) is 68. Actor Lauren Tewes is 68. Actor D.W. Moffett is 67. Actor-singer Rita Wilson is 65. Actor Patrick Breen is 61. Actor Dylan McDermott is 60. Actor Cary Elwes is 59. Singer Natalie Merchant is 58. Actor Steve Valentine is 55. Country singer Keith Urban is 54. Actor Tom Cavanagh is 53. Actor Rosemarie DeWitt is 50. Actor Anthony Rapp is 50. Writer-producer Seth MacFarlane (TV: "Family Guy") is 48. TV news correspondent Paula Faris is 46. Actor Lennon Parham is 46. Actor Florence Kasumba is 45. Actor Hal Ozsan is 45. Actor Jon Heder is 44. Singer Mark Barry (BBMak) is 43. Actor Jonathan Chase is 42. Actor Folake Olowofoyeku (foh-LAH'-kay oh-low-wow-foh-YAY'-koo) is 38. Olympic silver medal figure skater Sasha Cohen is 37. Rapper Schoolboy Q is 35. Actor Beulah Koale (TV: "Hawaii Five-0") is 30.